



Department of Commerce
Innovation is in our nature.

FAQ

FOR THE

Consolidated Homeless Grant Guidelines

January 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

8/10/2016

**NOTE: Dates in red indicate new additions
to this revision of the FAQ**

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1 Grant Basics

1.1 Overview

1.2 Authorizing Statute and Fund Sources

2 Administrative Requirements of Lead Grantees

2.1 Homeless System Responsibilities

2.1.1 Prioritize Unsheltered Homeless Households

2.1.2 Coordinated Entry

3/21/16

Question: If a household needs more assistance after exiting a program, must they go back through coordinated entry or can they return directly to the program that served them initially?

Answer: Coordinated entry can be designed in many ways; communities should follow their coordinated entry policies and procedures.

2.1.3 Reporting Requirements

2.2 Grant Management

2.2.1 Changes to Guidelines

2.2.2 Commerce Monitoring

2.2.3 Subgrantee Requirements

2.3 Fiscal Administration

2.3.1 Budget Categories

1/6/2016

Question: Are non-profit landlord rent payments billed to our "Rent Payment" budget category or do we bill the payments to "Other Housing Costs"?

Answer: Non-profit rent should be charged to the budget categories Rent Assistance Other Rent and Housing Costs and TANF Other Rent and Housing Costs. (The "other rent" is rent paid to non-profit and government entities.) Rent paid to private for-profit entities should be charged to Rent Assistance For-Profit Rent and TANF For-Profit Rent

2.3.2 Budget Caps

2.3.3 Reimbursements

2.3.4 Budget Revisions

3 Allowable Interventions

3.1 Temporary Housing Interventions

3.1.1 Drop-in Shelter

3.1.2 Continuous-stay Shelter

3.1.3 Interim Housing

3.2 Permanent Housing Interventions

3/21/16

Question: Are month to month leases/rental agreements in hotel/motels an allowable expense for rent subsidy?

Answer: Yes. If you use a hotel/motel for permanent housing, all rent assistance rules apply. Other requirements may apply depending on other program type.

3.2.1 Targeted Prevention

3.2.2 Rapid Re-Housing

3.2.3 Permanent Supportive Housing

4 Household Eligibility

4.1 Housing Status Eligibility

1/6/2016

Question: Is the housing status based on where the household stayed last night?

Answer: Yes. Please refer to the Housing Status and Program Type Eligibility Cheat sheet on the [HMIS website](#).

4.1.1 Homeless

4.1.1.1 Unsheltered Homeless:

1/6/2016

Question: How does HMIS relate to the definition of unsheltered homeless?

Answer: People are considered unsheltered homeless if they are living outside or in places not meant for human habitation OR are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against

the household member(s). This is measured in HMIS using the existing fields: Prior Living Situation - Place not mean for human habitation OR Housing Status: Category 4 - Fleeing domestic violence.

1/6/2016

Question: When do we use Housing Status Category 4 - Fleeing Domestic Violence?

Answer: Category 4- Fleeing domestic violence should be used when the household is homeless because they are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the household member(s). For more information check out the [HMIS Data Standards](#) or contact the [HMIS team](#).

4.1.1.2 Sheltered Homeless:

1/6/2016

Question: How does HMIS relate to the definition of sheltered homeless?

Answer: People are considered sheltered homeless if they are living in a temporary housing program or exiting a system of care or institution. This is measured in HMIS using several responses to the existing field: Prior Living Situation.

Please note “unsheltered” and “sheltered” homeless are not terms that HUD or the HMIS data standards use. We separated “Homeless” into these subcategories in order to provide clarity around the requirement to prioritize unsheltered homeless households.

4.1.2 At Imminent Risk of Homelessness

1/6/2016

Question: Are households who are doubled up (staying with friends or family) considered homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness?

Answer: Households who are staying with family and friends are not considered homeless. They MAY BE considered at imminent risk of homelessness if they meet the following requirements:

- ✓ they will lose their primary nighttime residence within 14 days of the date of application for assistance
- ✓ AND no subsequent residence has been identified
- ✓ AND the household lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing

Once the housing status is determined at imminent risk, grantees need to complete the Targeted Prevention Eligibility Screening Form if providing rent assistance.

4.2 Documentation of Housing Status

4.3 Income Eligibility

3/21/16

Question: When someone is found to be over income in a permanent supportive housing (PSH) program are there any prohibitions for terminating the household?

Answer: CHG does not require recertification of income for PSH. CHG does not have any prohibitions against terminating a household from PSH. Efforts should be made to maintain housing stability after exit from PSH.

3/21/16

Question: Can income include an average of three months gross income?

Answer: No. Gross income should be current income. Documentation dated within 30 days is acceptable.

3/21/16

Question: What constitutes as “current income”?

Answer: The income the household is currently receiving. Income recently terminated should not be included. Documentation dated within 30 days is acceptable.

1/14/16

Question: The following statement “For all clients receiving TANF services, proof of TANF Enrollment from DSHS as documented in the Benefits Verification System (BVS) is required” implies that BVS documentation is required for all TANF households. Are there other forms of allowable documentation?

Answer: TANF enrollment can be documented by any allowable documentation listed on the Consolidated Homeless Grant Verification of Household Eligibility and Income Recertification form.

1/6/2016

Question: In a rapid re-housing program, does the 90 days before income eligibility is measured begin at housing search or when the subsidy begins?

Answer: In a rapid re-housing program, the 90 days before income eligibility requirements are applied begins when the subsidy begins.

4.4 Documentation of Income Eligibility

3/21/16

Question: Can BVS be used as documentation of SSI?

Answer: No, you may not use BVS. Refer to the allowable income documentation in the CHG Verification of Household Eligibility and Income Recertification Form.

4.4.1 Annualizing Wages and Periodic Payments

4.5 Income Recertification

2/3/2016

Question: Is quarterly income recertification required for households in Permanent Supportive Housing?

Answer: Income recertification is not required for households in Permanent Supportive Housing.

1/6/2016

Question: Is income recertification required for households that are HEN or TANF enrolled?

Answer: Recertification is required at least every three months for all households, except for those households in Permanent Supportive Housing.

Households supported with HEN funded rent assistance must be found to have a HEN referral and be at or below 30% AMI at recertification. In other words, you must check that the household is both HEN eligible and within the income requirements at recertification.

Households with TANF as income must be found to be TANF enrolled at recertification. In other words, you only need to check that the household is still enrolled in the TANF program at recertification.

4.5.1 Income Ineligible at Recertification

4.6 Eligibility Requirements for Essential Needs Assistance Only

4.7 Additional Eligibility Requirements for Permanent Supportive Housing

4.7.1 Documentation of a Disability

4.7.2 Maintaining Homeless Status for Permanent Housing

5 Allowable Expenses

5.1 Administration

5.2 Operations

5.2.1 System-wide Expenses

5.2.2 Programmatic Expenses

7/18/2016

Question: Can CHG fund a portable toilet?

Answer: Yes, if the portable toilet is linked to a facility or coordinated entry site and is intended to be used by homeless clients. CHG funds cannot support public portable toilets not used in connection with homeless services. If used in support of a facility, charges should be billed to Facility Support – Other Lease and Facility Costs budget category. If used in support of a coordinated entry site, charges should be billed to the Operations budget category.

5.2.3 Flexible Funding

1/14/16

Question: How can providers pay for items such as food, gas, diapers or work shoes if they do not give a voucher or gift card?

Answer: Examples include program staff accompanying households to purchase goods, ordering goods online, developing reimbursement procedures with local vendors and a 'flexible funding' supply closet for frequently requested items (comparable to HEN essential needs supply closets). Gas vouchers are allowable.

1/6/2016

Question: Does a household need to be enrolled in a rapid re-housing program in order to receive flexible funding?

Answer: Any type of intervention can use flexible funding for homeless households. Flexible funding can be

used to divert eligible homeless household from needing additional interventions, or could be administered in conjunction with other interventions. It also can be used on its own, independent of a housing intervention.

1/6/2016

Question: How is flexible funding different from what a household would receive in a rent assistance program?

Answer: Flexible Funding is the provision of goods or payments of expenses that directly help a homeless household to obtain or maintain permanent housing. Homeless households are eligible for flexible funding up to \$1,500 per household. Flexible funding can pay nontraditional expenses that help a homeless household obtain or maintain housing. For example, James was recently housed with the assistance of your rapid re-housing program. Yesterday he was hired at a local restaurant. He needs to buy his uniform in order to start the job. Flexible funding can pay for that expense because increasing income will help James maintain his housing. This was not previously allowable.

1/6/2016

Question: Where do I bill flexible funding expenses?

Answer: Flexible Funding is billed in the Operations budget category.

1/6/2016

Question: Can pet deposits be paid with flexible funding?

Answer: Yes, if this will directly help a homeless household to obtain or maintain permanent housing and is noted in the household's housing stability plan.

1/6/2016

Question: Are moving costs, such as a moving truck, still allowable expenses?

Answer: Yes, this is allowable under Flexible Funding if it will directly help a homeless household to obtain or maintain permanent housing. Reasonable moving costs, such as truck rental were previously allowable under "Other Costs Associated with Rent."

5.2.3.1 Ineligible Expenses

5.2.4 HEN Essential Needs

5.2.4.1 Ineligible Expenses

5.3 Rent

5.3.1 Rent Payments

7/18/2016

Question: If there are late fees associated with rental arrears, can CHG pay for them?

Answer: Yes.

5.3.2 Other Housing Costs

5.3.3 Ineligible Expenses

1/13/16

Utility assistance to homeowners is not allowable.

5.4 Facility Support

5.4.1 Lease Payments

5.4.2 Other Facility Costs

7/18/2016

Question: Can CHG fund a portable toilet?

Answer: Yes if the portable toilet is linked to a facility or coordinated entry site and is intended to be used by homeless clients. CHG funds cannot support public portable toilets not used in connection with homeless services. If used in support of a facility, charges should be billed to Facility Support – Other Lease and Facility Costs budget category. If used in support of a coordinated entry site, charges should be billed to the Operations budget category.

5.4.3 Ineligible Expenses

5.4.4 Maintenance Activities vs. Building Rehabilitation

6 Requirements of all Lead Grantees and Subgrantees Providing Direct Service

6.1 Progressive Engagement

1/6/2016

Question: Does making supportive services voluntary mean that clients can choose not to participate in case management?

Answer: CHG grantees and sub-grantees may require participation with housing stability planning, but should not require participation in specific supportive services. It is best practice to offer flexible services that build on the individual strengths and resources of each household, respecting their autonomy.

(Supportive service examples include substance abuse treatment, financial planning classes, and resume workshops.)

6.2 Assessment and Housing Stability Planning

6.3 HMIS

6.3.1 Data Entry Timeliness

6.3.2 Consent for Entry of Personally Identifying Information

6.3.2.1 Identified Records

6.3.2.2 Anonymous Records

6.3.2.3 Special Circumstances

6.4 Additional Requirements

6.4.1 Fraud

6.4.2 Grievance Procedure

6.4.3 Termination and Denial of Service Policy

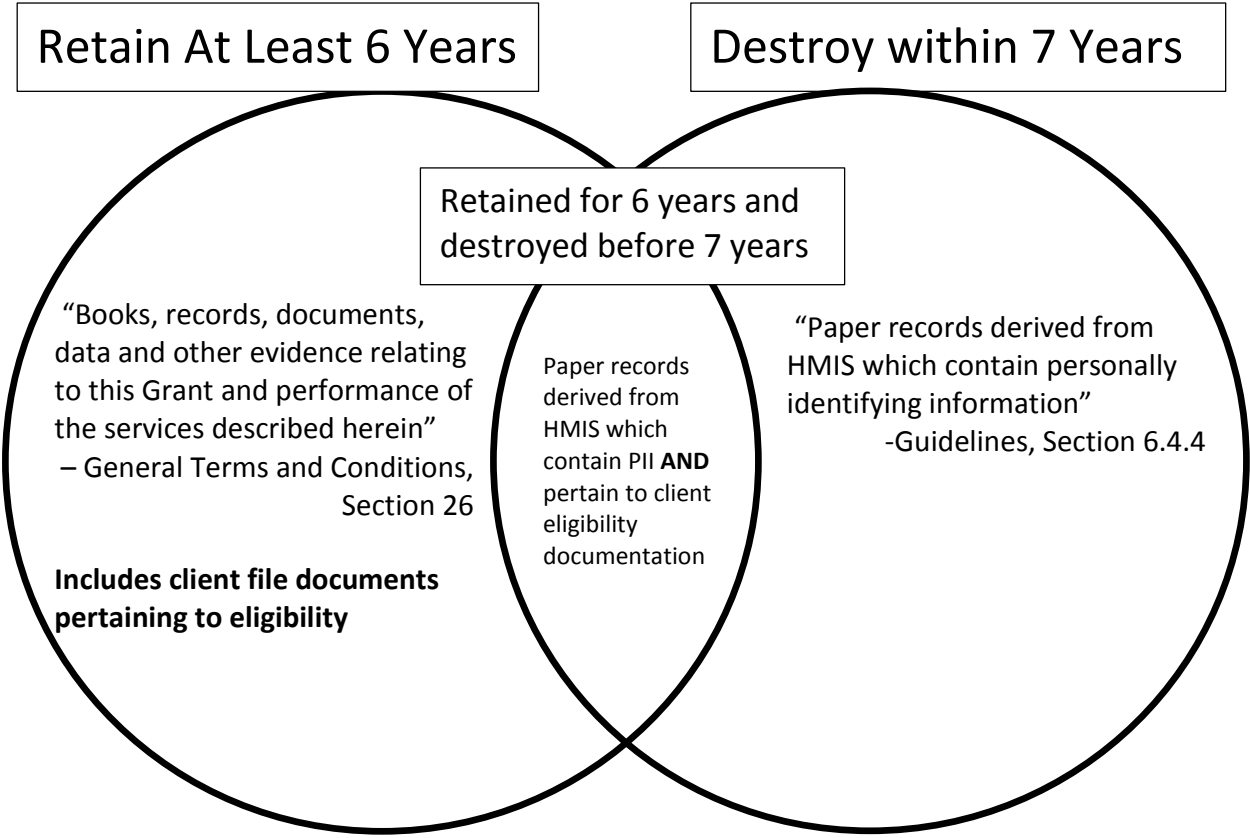
6.4.4 Records Maintenance and Destruction

3/21/16

Question: What types of records does the six year records retention policy apply to?

Answer: Fiscal documents and client file documents related to program eligibility must be retained for six years, including documents derived from HMIS which contain personally identifying

information (PII) pertaining to client eligibility. HMIS documents containing PII must then be destroyed within seven years after the last day of service.



6.4.5 Client File Check List

6.4.6 Consent to Review Information in the Benefits Verification System

6.4.7 Client Satisfaction Survey

3/21/16
Question: Can we add questions to the survey?
Answer: Your agency can collect any and all questions they want. You only need to report to us (through Survey Monkey) our questions.

1/6/2016
Question: How often must the household complete the client satisfaction survey?
Answer: Clients should be offered the survey at the end of their program participation.

1/6/2016
Question: Where can grantees get a hard copy of the client satisfaction survey?
Answer: Email your program manager and request a hard copy of the client satisfaction survey.

6.4.8 Prohibitions

1/6/2016

Question: When does the following prohibition apply?

“Lead/subgrantees may not deny shelter to households that are unable to pay fees for shelter.”

Answer: The prohibition applies for continuous-stay shelters (up to 90 days) and for drop-in shelters. The prohibition does not apply to interim housing programs (continuous-stay greater than 90 days) or permanent housing interventions.

6.4.9 Nondiscrimination

6.5 Habitability

3/21/16

Question: For trailer or RV lot rent or RV rent subsidy, is an inspection or certification required?

Answer: CHG habitability requirements apply to trailers and RVs.

1/6/2016

Question: When using motel vouchers, does the motel need to be inspected?

Answer: No.

6.5.1 For Rent Assistance

6.5.1.1 Allowable Methods for Unit Habitability Determination

6.5.1.2 Habitability Complaint Procedure

6.5.2 For Facilities

1/6/2016

Question: What is the inspection requirement for a drop in shelter with mats on the floor or in a church basement?

Answer: Facilities, including congregate facilities, must conduct and document an inspection at least once a year using the HHS form or HQS form.

6.6 Lead Based Paint Assessment

6.6.1 For Rent Assistance

6.6.2 For Facilities

1/20/16

Question: The guidelines say “All facilities constructed prior to 1978 must conduct an annual lead-based paint visual assessment...” There is no mention of children under 6 or pregnant woman residing in the facility. Does the same requirement for rent assistance apply to facilities?

Answer: Facilities are required to do lead-based paint visual assessments if a child under the age of six or pregnant woman resides in the facilities. Next revision of the guidelines we will clarify.

6.6.3 Exceptions to the Lead-Based Paint Visual Assessment Requirement

7 Additional Requirements of Lead Grantees and Subgrantees Providing Rent Assistance

7.1 Interested Landlord List

7.2 Outreach to Landlords

7.3 Washington Residential Landlord-Tenant Act

7.4 Rental Agreements

7.4.1 Lease

7.4.2 Certification of Payment Obligation

7.5 Targeted Prevention

1/6/2016

Question: Can grantees make changes to the Targeted Prevention Eligibility Screening form?

Answer: The Targeted Prevention Eligibility Screening form may be modified if all of the original content is included. You may also adjust the screening threshold to better meet the needs of your community. It is recommended that any modifications be evidence-based. Lead/subgrantees are encouraged to submit modified forms to Commerce for review.

1/6/2016

Question: If a household with a HEN referral does not score high enough on the targeted prevention form, can we serve them?

Answer: You cannot assist a HEN referral with HEN or CHG rent assistance if they do not score high enough on the targeted prevention form. However, the form has an Override Approval section that a supervisor may sign with added justification. All HEN referred clients (regardless of housing status) are eligible for Essential Needs assistance.

7.6 Rent Limit

1/6/2016

Question: When a client is entering a rapid re-housing program we don't need to check their income for 90 days. Does this mean they do not have to pay a portion of their rent?

Answer: Homeless households entering a rapid re-housing program are exempt from income eligibility requirements for the first 90 days of program participation. This exemption is regarding CHG income eligibility. This is not connected to how a program determines the rent subsidy amount or the household's share of rent.

1/6/2016

Question: If a household has income at the 90 day recertification, do they need to pay 30% of their income towards rent?

Answer: Not according to the CHG guidelines. If your program's procedure for determining the amount of rent subsidy for each household is that they pay 30% of their income towards rent, then yes.

CHG does not prescribe how rent subsidies are determined by programs, although programs are required to have a standardized procedure for determining the amount of rent subsidy for each household.

7.7 Determining Rent Subsidy

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: Required Forms

1/6/2016

Question: If someone is only receiving TANF income and is at risk of homelessness, do we need to complete the new Section 4 of the Consolidated Homeless Grant Verification of Household Eligibility and Income Recertification Form?

Answer: All households, regardless of income source, who are at imminent risk of homelessness, must have their housing status thoroughly documented using sections 1-4 of the Consolidated Homeless Grant Verification of Household Eligibility and Income Recertification Form. (This is the same requirement in the federal ESG grant program.)

8.2 Appendix B: Required Policies and Procedures

8.3 Appendix C: Client File Documentation

Chart updated to include Permanent Supportive Housing. 1/28/2016

Documentation	Homeless					At Imminent Risk of Homelessness
	Drop-in Shelter (see Section 14)	Continuous Stay Shelter: 90 Days or less	Interim Housing: More than 90 days and up to 24 months	Rapid Re-housing Rent Assistance	Permanent Supportive Housing	Prevention Rent Assistance
Client File Checklist		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HMIS Consent (unless DV <u>OR</u> client refuses consent)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DSHS Client Consent for eJAS and/or BVS, if applicable		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CHG Verification of HH Eligibility and Income Recertification		If staying longer than 90 days	✓	✓	✓	✓
CHG Income Eligibility Worksheet (or equivalent, where applicable)			✓	✓	✓	✓
Targeted Prevention Eligibility Screening Form						✓
Landlord Habitability Certification <u>OR</u> HHS or HQS			✓	✓	✓	
Lead-based Paint Assessment, if applicable			✓	✓	✓	✓
Utility-Only Assistance form, if applicable						✓
Lease <u>OR</u> Certification of Payment Obligation (for friends/family)				✓	✓	✓
Household Rent Share / Rent Subsidy Calculations				✓	✓	✓
Assessment and Housing Stability Planning		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Temporary Absence, if applicable				✓	✓	✓
The following is only required for non-HEN clients. Documentation does not necessarily need to be kept in client files.						
Print-out from county parcel website to document <u>OR</u> Case note documentation of oral verification from county assessor's office <u>OR</u> For-Profit Certification Form completed by landlord				✓	✓	✓
Print-out from IRS non-profit search, if applicable				✓	✓	✓

8.4 Appendix D: Performance Measurements

3/21/16

Question: Does the measurement of 35% unsheltered include services only programs?

Answer: The benchmark formula does not include services only programs.

1/6/2016

Question: If we serve a household who is in shelter, but has been unsheltered in the past two years, is this household considered unsheltered?

Answer: A household residing in an emergency shelter is considered sheltered homeless when documenting CHG eligibility. However, if the household has program entry records in the two year time period with the Prior Living Situation: Place not mean for human habitation OR Housing Status: Category 4 - Fleeing domestic violence they will be counted as unsheltered in the measurement of the prioritization requirement.

1/6/2016

Question: If we are only starting to distinguish unsheltered and sheltered now, how will Commerce measure households that have been unsheltered in the past two years so we can work to meet the 35% requirement?

Answer: Commerce is using existing HMIS fields (prior living situation and housing status) to count how many unsheltered households were served in the two year time period that will serve as the baseline for the prioritization requirement. These were already mandatory HMIS data elements.

1/6/2016

Question: Would a household in a domestic violence shelter be considered unsheltered or sheltered homeless?

Answer: A household in a domestic violence shelter is fleeing domestic violence and would be considered unsheltered homeless in the current performance measurement: prioritization of unsheltered homeless households.

8.5 Appendix E: Process for Identifying Private, For-profit Landlords

8/8/2016

Question: What types of entities are considered “Government Owners”?

Answer: If the property owner is one of the following, they are a government owner:

- City, County, or State Government
- Tribes / Tribal Governments
- Housing Authority

Any rent payment made to a government owner should be charged to “Other Lease and Facility Costs” or “Other Rent and Housing Costs.”

8/8/2016

Question: If an organization does not show up on the IRS search, but I know they are a non-profit organization, what should I do?

Answer: If the property owner is a known non-profit organization you do not need to continue with an IRS Search. Any rent payment made to a known non-profit owner should be charged to “Other Lease and Facility Costs” or “Other Rent and Housing Costs.”

8/8/2016

Question: Are tax credit properties and LLCs considered for profit owners?

Answer: Tax credit properties may be for profit owners. Follow the procedure to determine the correct status

8.6 Appendix F: Documentation of Housing Status

Chart updated to clarify housing status documentation. 2/8/2016

Homeless				At Imminent Risk of Homelessness (losing housing within 14 days)		
Unsheltered (Place Not Meant for Human Habitation)	Residing in a Temporary Housing Program	Exiting a System of Care and Previously Homeless	Fleeing Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, etc.	Staying With Friends/Family or Hotel Motel	Renting	Exiting a System of Care
Third party verification OR Self-declaration signed and dated by applicant stating where they are residing. <u>Self-declaration of housing status should</u>	Letter signed and dated from the provider of the temporary housing. OR A telephone call to the provider of temporary housing that is documented, signed, and dated by the case manager making the call	Letter signed and dated by system of care representative. Letter must include: a. Statement verifying current stay of household member(s), and b. Indicate household member(s) have no	Signed and dated self-declaration by applicant.	Letter signed and dated from the provider of the temporary residence. Letter must include: a. Statement verifying the applicant's current living situation, and b. Date when the household must vacate the temporary housing OR Certification of Payment Obligation and Potential Eviction from Friend/Family	Copy of lease naming household member as lease holder or other written occupancy agreement identifying them as legal tenant of unit. AND "Pay or Vacate" notice or eviction notice that includes the date when the household	Letter signed and dated by system of care representative. Letter must include: a. Statement verifying current stay of household member(s), and b. Indicate household member(s) have no

<u>be used very rarely and only when written third-party verification cannot be obtained.</u>	<p>OR</p> <p>Current HMIS record from homeless housing program, including dates of stay</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Self-declaration signed and dated by applicant stating where they are residing. <u>Self-declaration of housing status should be used very rarely and only when written third-party verification cannot be obtained.</u></p>	<p>available housing option after exiting</p>		<p>form (if applicable).</p> <p>OR</p> <p>A telephone call to the provider of temporary housing that is documented, signed, and dated by the case manager making the call</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Self-declaration signed and dated by applicant stating where they are residing. <u>Self-declaration of housing status should be used very rarely and only when written third-party verification cannot be obtained.</u></p> <p>AND</p> <p>Completion of Section 4 – No Subsequent Residence and Insufficient Resources/Support Networks, on the CHG Verification of Eligibility and Recertification Form.</p>	<p>must vacate</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Completion of Section 4 – No Subsequent Residence and Insufficient Resources/Support Networks, on the CHG Verification of Eligibility and Recertification Form.</p>	<p>available housing option after exiting.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Completion of Section 4 – No Subsequent Residence and Insufficient Resources/Support Networks, on the CHG Verification of Eligibility and Recertification Form.</p>
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8.7 Appendix G: Income Inclusions and Exclusions

8.8 Appendix I: Benefits Verification System and eJAS Data Security Requirements

8.9 Appendix J: Lead Based Paint Visual Assessment Requirements