

# DEFINING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

## Why do we define “Chronic Homelessness”?

- Definition of “chronically homeless” provides a way to prioritize people with longest histories of homelessness and most severe needs
- Seeks to ensure that persons with highest needs are prioritized for permanent supportive housing

## To determine that this is an “individual with a disability”:

A disability is defined as having BOTH (1) & (2) of these criteria:

- (1) Be diagnosed with any of these, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions:
  - substance abuse disorder
  - a serious mental illness
  - developmental disability
  - chronic physical illness or disability
- (2) Condition limits an individual's ability to work or perform one or more activities of daily living.

## To determine EMERGENCY SHELTER:

- **An emergency shelter is any facility the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary or transitional shelter for the homeless** in general or for specific populations of the homeless
- **NOTE:** Although this definition includes the term transitional shelter, persons coming from transitional housing are not considered chronically homeless.

## To determine HOMELESS EPISODES:

- **Occasion is defined by a break of at least seven nights** not residing in an emergency shelter, safe haven, or residing in a place meant for human habitation (e.g., staying with a friend, in a hotel/motel paid for by the individual)



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## CHRONIC HOMELESS DEFINITION:

**Must be one of these (3) criteria:**

- (1) **A “homeless individual with a disability,” AND** Lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter;  
**AND:**
  - a. **EITHER:** Has been homeless (as described above) continuously for at least 12 months
  - b. **OR:** on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined occasions must total at least 12 months
- (2) An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition, before entering that facility; or
- (3) A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraphs (1) or (2) of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.

## ALL PSH projects that dedicate beds for Chronically homeless Individuals or families require DISABILITY documentation:

- The recipient must maintain and follow written intake procedures that:
  - Require documentation at intake of the evidence relied on to verify status of disabling condition(s).
  - Establish the following order of priority for obtaining evidence:
    - Third-party
    - Intake worker observation
    - Certification from the person seeking assistance

*(HOMELESS DOCUMENTATION criteria listed on next page)*

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## HOMELESS DOCUMENTATION CAN BE:

- Documenting an individual's time in a place not meant for human habitation, an emergency shelter, or a safe haven.
- Third party documentation is preferred; however:
  - For all clients, up to 3 months can be documented through self-certification
  - In emergency circumstances, up to the full 12 months can be obtained through self-certification
- Documenting an individual's time in a place not meant for human habitation, an emergency shelter, or a safe haven (cont.):
  - Single encounter in a month is sufficient to consider household homeless for entire month unless evidence of a break
  - If third-party documentation cannot be obtained, a written record of intake workers due diligence to obtain, the intake worker's documentation of the living situation, AND the individual's self-certification of the living situation.
- Evidence of a break can be documented by:
  - Third party evidence
  - The self-report of the individual seeking assistance
  - 100% of the breaks can be documented by self-report
- Discharge paperwork or written or oral referral from a social worker, case manager, or other appropriate official stating the beginning and end dates of the time residing in the institutional care facility
- Where the above is not attainable, a written record of intake workers due diligence to obtain AND the individual's self-certification that he or she is exiting an institutional care facility where resided less than 90 days



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