



# **Homeless Individuals and Families Information System 4.0 (HIFIS) Reference Guide**

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## REVISION HISTORY

Date	Version	Description	Author
20 April 2022	1.0	Initial release of Guide	Randy Sarju

## PURPOSE

The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System 4.0 (hereafter referred to as “HIFIS”) is a web-based, electronic client management information system providing for a standardized assessment of client needs, individualized service plans and service records. Both BC Housing and service providers that receive funding from BC Housing and provide shelter and outreach services in B.C. use HIFIS to understand the nature of homelessness, develop policies and initiatives to address homelessness, and coordinate case management services. HIFIS was created by Employment and Social Development Canada (Government of Canada). BC Housing’s review of the HIFIS application prior to implementation resulted in a variety of enhancements to the system to accommodate BC-specific privacy and user needs.

The primary purpose of this Guide is to provide users of the BC Housing instance of HIFIS with guidelines for data entry so that consistent application practices can be achieved, leading to improved reliability and usefulness of the data. The Guide is primarily a compilation of questions asked by users and the answers to those questions. Should you have additional questions or require further support please contact HIFIS Support at 1-833-454-5435 or email us at [HIFISsupport@bchousing.org](mailto:HIFISsupport@bchousing.org).

The Guide does not address the use of HIFIS for shelters using the Group Activities module of HIFIS for reporting aggregate nightly stats – Capacity Expansion or Extreme Weather.

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## CLIENTS

### 1) **When should a client record be created in HIFIS?**

Records are created for clients who receive a service provided through a designated BC Housing funded program (i.e. AHOP/CHB-HPP/ESP/HOP/HPP/ICM/IOM/Temp Shelter) for which the Service Provider is contracted by BC Housing to provide. [Also see #2.]

### 2) **Is a client record created for a minor?**

Client records need not be created for dependent children in families supported by an outreach program, but a client record should be created for every person who stays at a shelter regardless of age.

### **NOTE REGARDING UNACCOMPANIED MINORS:**

The Provider will not provide Services to any child under the age of nineteen (19) years unless:

- a. the child is accompanied by the child's parent(s) or legal guardian; or
- b. the child is referred to the Provider by a social worker acting under the Child, Family and Community Service Act.

If a child presents themselves to the Provider requesting Services, the Provider:

- a. will immediately inform the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) that the child is homeless, and request instructions on how to proceed;
- b. will document the date and time of their contact with MCFD, the name of the MCFD worker spoken to, and the instructions received and agreed to; and
- c. may, if requested by MCFD, provide Services to the child until MCFD is able to make other arrangements, but only if the Provider can provide a private sleeping space for the child.

### 3) **What if more than one record is discovered for the same client?**

If you find more than one record in HIFIS for the same client, email the details (e.g. Client IDs) to [HIFISupport@bchousing.org](mailto:HIFISupport@bchousing.org), who will send a confirmation email once the merge is completed. Prior to sending the request to HIFIS Support you should review the Client Vitals and clarify any discrepancies between the files, indicating what is correct (e.g. differences in spellings for a name, date of birth, Indigenous Status, etc.).

### 4) **What should be done if a client changes a name?**

Find the client record and edit the name in the application to reflect the new name. The client should also sign a new consent form which reflects the name change.

### 5) **What should be done if a client changes gender?**

Find the client record and edit the gender field in the application to reflect the change.

### 6) **How is a person who is no longer a client removed from HIFIS?**

Once a client record is created it remains, regardless of the client's status. The only records removed from HIFIS are those created in error. Whether a client moves, has passed away, or no longer needs assistance, makes no difference. Within HIFIS there are different "Client State" values which determine the degree of access a user will have to a record.

### 7) **May contact information for a client be added without a client's request?**

No, the client should always consent to the contact information in their HIFIS record.

### 8) **Can documents be uploaded to a client record in HIFIS?**

Once a client record is created service providers should only upload documents to HIFIS which help clients to navigate the system of supports. Please note, health records should never be uploaded and only upload documents to modules in the Client Management menu (exception: consent forms).

## CONSENT

### 9) **When does consent expire?**

Consent forms do not have an expiration date. Consent remains in effect indefinitely or until a client withdraws consent. BC Housing recognizes that agencies may have their own policy regarding the “renewal” of client consent; however, because consent in the integrated cluster of HIFIS is “shared” an agency would need to manage any type of consent renewal outside of HIFIS.

### 10) **If a client declines an agency’s consent does that end consent in HIFIS?**

No, a client’s explicit consent in HIFIS does not automatically end if they refuse to sign an agency’s consent form. The user must clarify if the client desires to also withdraw HIFIS consent or simply desires not to oblige with the agency’s consent in the moment. Should HIFIS consent be withdrawn a user must first check there is no active rent supplement on file with another agency since clients receiving a supplement cannot withdraw consent. If in doubt, contact HIFIS Support before ending consent.

### 11) **How is a record treated when a client changes their consent?**

If a client who previously provided consent withdraws consent you will need to create an anonymous record for the client. If a client who previously did not provide consent decides to provide consent you will need to determine if:

- consent is retroactive, in which case end the declined consent, edit Client Vitals as needed, and continue to use the pre-existing record;
- consent is not retroactive, in which case create a new (non-anonymous) record for the client.

You may therefore have two records for the same client, and data within the two records will not be linked.

### 12) **Is “sign off” required to record an entry in Case Planning?**

No, client “sign off” is not required for a worker to enter data in the Case Management module.

### 13) **Is landlord consent required for their name to be recorded?**

No, the name of a landlord may be entered in the client record of HIFIS without the landlord’s consent. The collection of the landlord’s name and contact information is not an invasion of privacy. It is reasonable for a landlord to expect that their name and contact information will be used by their tenant, as it is an expectation of being a landlord.

### 14) **Is consent required for minors?**

Yes, consent is required for everyone for whom a record is created within HIFIS. The consent form outlines to parents/guardians that personal information will be recorded for children who accompany them, and in such cases the “Inherited” consent option should be selected. For an unaccompanied minor, it is assumed that they are “capable minors” and as such they would be requested to sign their own consent form. For an accompanied minor consent is only required from one parent.

### 15) **Is information in HIFIS subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) rules?**

Yes, information in HIFIS is subject to FOI rules.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

### 16) **How are contributing factors reported?**

Contributing factors should be self-reported by the client.

**17) What happens when a contributing factor is no longer applicable?**

When a contributing factor is no longer applicable enter an end date in HIFIS, rather than attempting to have it deleted.

**FOLLOW-UPS**

**18) Can a client decline a follow-up?**

Yes, a client may decline a housing follow-up. We hope service providers will explain why follow-ups are important to understanding program wide effectiveness.

**HOUSING**

**19) What is the difference between Housing History, Housing Loss Prevention and Housing Placement?**

Because all three terms contain “housing” they can be confusing to the users.

- Housing History (HH) is where a user creates records to record where a client has lived, including periods of homelessness. Users have the option on the HH screen to display shelter stays entered in a client’s HIFIS Admission module, so those shelter stays should not be entered in HH.
- When a client is living somewhere and goes to an agency for assistance to maintain that living arrangement then a Housing Loss Prevention is added to the active/open HH record which must already exist or first be created.
- A Housing Placement (HP) record is created by a service provider who assists a client to secure stable accommodations. Once the move-in step is completed for a HP a corresponding record is automatically added in HH (i.e. a user does not create a HH record for an address when adding a HP record).

**20) Why am I unable to complete a “move in”?**

The most common reason for not being able to complete the “move in” step in a Housing Placement (HP) is because the client has an active/open Housing History (HH), which may be the result of another active HP. Ending a HH which is associated with a HP will not “close” the record. The only way to end an active HP is by completing a final follow-up, and that can only be completed by the service provider who created the HP or by HIFIS Support.

**21) How is information entered when a client is staying in temporary accommodations?**

Clients who are staying at a shelter or transition house should not be entered as being placed in housing. The creation of a Housing Placement (HP) record is intended for stable accommodations, which are long-term housing solutions allowing for a tenancy of more than 30 days. Rather, clients staying in temporary housing, allowing for a tenancy of no more than 30 days, even if the stay could be extended, should be recorded in Housing History. Examples of living situations which would not be created as HP include boat (other than a houseboat), car, camper, jail (incarceration for more than 30 days in a correctional facility is not considered housing), storage locker, or tent. A “month-to-month” lease is considered “stable housing”. Because “Is client housed elsewhere” refers to “other stable housing”, if a person was previously housed and moved to temporary accommodations they would not be considered “housed elsewhere”.

**22) How do I know the Status (condition) of a new housing unit?**

When a provider places a client into a housing unit, they will strive to ensure it is appropriate for the client. This includes, the housing unit provides a reasonable standard of accommodation for the client, and the immediate living environment, given available resources, provides satisfactory accommodations.

## RENT SUPPLEMENT

### **23) How are rent supplements recorded if there is more than one adult receiving the supplement at the same address?**

If rent supplements are given to more than one adult living at the same address, an entry should be made for each adult. For example, if a couple receives a rent supplement, take the total amount of the rent supplement, divide it by two, and then record the amount (i.e. half of the total rent supplement) in each person's record.

However, no rent supplement would be recorded for children, including (dependent) adult children, who are part of the household. In fact, for outreach programs records for children of a family being served would not be created in HIFIS (also see #1 and #2).

### **24) What if a rent supplement which was issued is returned or not used?**

Since HIFIS does not allow for a negative entry to be created, users should have the rent supplement entry deleted.

### **25) Can a rent supplement be used to pay a pet deposit?**

If a link exists between the rental supplement payment and a client securing and/or maintaining housing then yes, as it is viewed as removing a barrier to housing. This would be entered as a Good in HIFIS.

## SHELTER STAYS/ADMISSIONS MODULE

### **26) What is a "shelter stay"?**

A "shelter stay" is the utilization of a bed on the night, or part of the night, of the date the client entered the shelter, and will count as an occupancy for the night if the client exits the shelter the following day or continues to stay. In other words, the client's 'entry date' and 'exit date' are different and the bed, whether used, was "reserved/held" for the client and was not available for allocation to another client.

### **27) Are there shelter stays which should not be entered?**

Shelters operating as Capacity Expansion or Extreme Weather Response (EWR) should not enter stays in the Admissions module of a client's record. During an EWR activation, clients counted as an EWR nightly stay must be "exited" from the Admissions module in HIFIS. BC Housing provides a different means for recording EWR occupancy.

Shelter funded by BC Housing which have additional beds/mats funded from their own resources may contact HIFIS Support should they want extra/non-funded beds added to their shelter configuration so that stays in those spaces can be entered into HIFIS.

### **28) What if a client enters the shelter after midnight?**

The entry date should be that of the day the client enters the shelter. In the Admissions module anytime a book-in is being created after the client entered the shelter be sure to edit the Start Date because HIFIS always defaults date/time to the current date/time.

### **29) How do you record if two persons share one bed?**

If your room/bed configuration does not provide for extra/non-funded beds contact HIFIS Support to have an extra bed created, because each individual needs to be booked into a separate shelter space. A client record is created for every person who stays at a shelter, regardless of age or bed utilization arrangements.



### 30) How are clients under 19 years of age classified in the Occupancy Report?

Classification in the Occupancy Report is based on age and consent at the time of book-in (i.e. associating clients as part of a family does not impact occupancy report classification).

Column Heading	Definition
Adult LGBTQ2+	Clients 19 years and over with Gender type of Transgender, Transgender-Female, Transgender-Male, Two-Spirit, Non-Binary and Other
Adult Unknown	Clients 19 years and over with Gender type of Unknown
Minor	Clients under 19 years of age whose Consent was Explicit or Declined, or a Child with Consent which was Inherited <u>after</u> Book-In Date
Child	Clients under 19 years of age whose Consent was Inherited (see exception above under Minor)

### SHELTER TURN-AWAYS

*The collection of turn-away details was discontinued by BC Housing on Monday, November 3, 2014.*

### SYSTEM ISSUES

#### 31) What if I forgot my password?

Click on the “Forgot Password” link on the login screen to recover your password. An email will be sent to the email address associated with your HIFIS account wherein you will have a link to complete the password reset process.

#### 32) How do I change my password?

Once logged in to HIFIS, in the “My Account” option of the main menu selections along the top of the user interface there is a ‘Change Password’ option.

#### 33) How often should I change my password?

The current password age limit setting, which is determined by BC Housing, is 180 days. This setting will be reviewed from time to time and may be adjusted by BC Housing. When this is done it will be communicated to users via a Bulletin notice. If a user has concerns that their password may have been compromised, they should change it immediately and contact HIFIS Support.

#### 34) How do I change Client State from “Inactive” to “Active”?

Client State of “inactive” is system generated based on the Start Date of transactions in the modules listed below, and the threshold is set by BC Housing. If none of the transactions listed have a Start Date in the last 365 days, the Client State will become “inactive”. An “inactive” Client State will not prevent you from accessing and updating a client’s record. It should be noted that a client in receipt of an on-going rent supplement (i.e. entry in the Subsidy tab) does not impact Client State.

Module	Transaction
Admissions	Client is booked into a shelter
Assessment	Assessment is conducted (SPDAT, VI-SPDAT, VAT)
Calls and Visits Log	New record (Add Log) in Call and Visit Log is created

Module	Transaction
Case Management	New record (Add Case) in Client - Case Management List is created
Case Management	New record (Add Session) under the Sessions tab in Display Case Management is created;
Case Management	New record (Add Comment) under the Case Comments tab in Display Case Management is created
Food Banks	New record (Add Food Bank Transaction) in Client – Food Banks is created
Goods and Services	New record (Add Goods and Services Transaction) in Client – Goods and Services is created
Group Activities	Client is identified as an Attendee in a Group Activity
Housing Placements	New record (Add Housing Placement) in Housing Placement List is created
Housing Placement	New record (Add Follow-up or Add Housing Placement Attempt) in Housing Placement Details is created
Housing Loss Prevention	New record Housing Loss Prevention interaction is created
Medication Dispensing	Client is provided medication through Medication Dispensing in Front Desk – Medication Dispensing
Service Restrictions	New record (Add Service Restriction) in Client – Service Restrictions is created
Storage	New record (Add Storage Item) in Client – Storage is created
Survey	Client takes a survey in Client Management- Survey

**35) How do I change Client State from “Archived”?**

Only a user with Site Admin rights (or HIFIS Support) can change Client State for a client who is “archived”, and it would be changed to “inactive”. Once an applicable transaction is entered the system will change Client State to “active” (see prior question).

**VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT TOOL (VAT)**

**36) Are VATs required to be entered in HIFIS?**

Yes, VATs are required to be entered in HIFIS. HIFIS allows the ability to upload a VAT, and if this is done then it is not necessary to enter the full narrative in the Description text box.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AHOP	- Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program
CHB-HPP	- Canada Housing Benefit-Homeless Prevention Program
ESP	- Emergency Shelter Program
EWR	- Extreme Weather Response
FOI	- Freedom of Information
HH	- Housing History
HIFIS	- Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
HLP	- Housing Loss Prevention
HOP	- Homeless Outreach Program
HP	- Housing Placement
HPP	- Homeless Prevention Program
ICM	- Intensive Case Management
IOM	- Integrated Offender Management (now ITRP – Integrated Transitional and Release Planning)
MCFD	- Ministry of Child and Family Development
VAT	- Vulnerability Assessment Tool