

HMIS Training Part 1 – Policies and Procedures

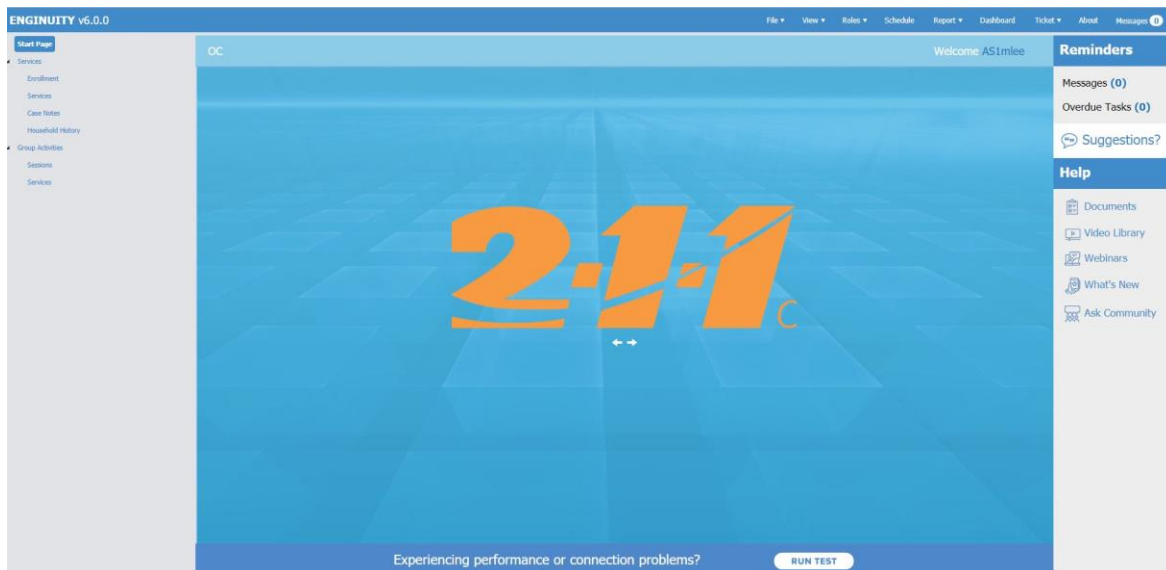
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Lesson 1 - Introduction to HMIS

What is HMIS?

HMIS stands for **H**omeless **M**anagement **I**nformation **S**ystem. Every CoC (**C**ontinuum of **C**are) across the United States uses an HMIS to track client data. In Orange County, our HMIS is a web based application that you can access from browsers like Microsoft Edge, Mozilla Firefox, or Google Chrome. Below is a screenshot of the welcome page of our HMIS:



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Key HMIS Features

- In HMIS, each client has one client record that multiple agencies can edit and add enrollments to. This provides us with an unduplicated count of the population being served by our CoC's agencies.
- Custom and canned (or pre-made) reports are available in HMIS which allows agencies to manage their contract requirements by demonstrating the number of clients they serve and what services clients receive.
- Case managers are able to record Case Notes and Services in HMIS which keeps their case management documentation all in the same place.
- Client demographics that are required in HMIS include gender, race, disability status, ethnicity, and more. HMIS also allows for the optional recording of client employment and education history which makes it easy for agencies to have a clear picture of the populations they serve.

Lesson 2 - Why Does HUD Require HMIS?

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other planners and policymakers use aggregate HMIS data to better inform homeless policy and decision making at the federal, state, and local levels. HMIS enables HUD to collect national-level data on the extent and nature of homelessness over time. Specifically, an HMIS can be used to produce an unduplicated count of homeless persons, understand patterns of service use, and measure the effectiveness of homeless programs. Data on homeless persons is collected and maintained at the local level. HMIS implementations can encompass geographic areas ranging from a single county to an entire state.

The HEARTH Act, enacted into law on May 20, 2009, requires that all communities have an HMIS with the capacity to collect unduplicated counts of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Through their HMIS, a community should be able to collect information from projects serving homeless families and individuals to use as part of their needs analyses and to establish funding priorities. -

[HUDEXchange, HMIS Requirements](#)

HUD requires that federally funded homeless service agencies use an HMIS in order to demonstrate how they serve clients. HUD says that "if it's not in HMIS, it didn't happen." In other words, if a client is served in some way that isn't recorded in HMIS, HUD considers that service to not have happened since there is no way to demonstrate that the service took place using HMIS data.

Increasingly, private funders are also beginning to require the use of HMIS. Private funders are starting to agree with HUD that one of the best ways to demonstrate efficient homeless service practices is through the thorough data collection that HMIS requires.

Lesson 3 - How Does Our HMIS Work?

All participating agencies share data in the same HMIS. Any HMIS user in our CoC is able to see client records that have been entered by another agency in our CoC. This means that if a client is served by an agency in the Orange County CoC, a client record will be created for them there. Then, if that same client is served by

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another agency in the Orange County CoC, that agency will be able to find the client's record and simply update the record instead of creating a new one. This system of one client record for each client that multiple agencies can add on to provides an unduplicated count of homeless clients served in Orange County.

The bulk of this training is designed to cover the most important aspects of the [HMIS Policies and Procedures Manual](#). Although this training will not go over every part of the P&P Manual, **as an HMIS User you are responsible for reading and understanding all of the Policies and Procedures outlined in the manual**. If you have questions about a Policy or Procedure, please contact your Agency Administrator.

211OC provides HMIS Help Desk support to participating agencies. If you are not the Agency Administrator for your agency, you should contact your Agency Administrator when you need help with HMIS. If your Agency Administrator is unable to solve the issue, they will contact the HMIS Help Desk. HMIS Help Desk hours are Monday through Friday (excluding holidays) from 9am to 5pm.

Lesson 4 – Privacy and Security

HMIS Security

HMIS is accessed over the internet in a web browser such as Microsoft Edge, Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome. Because HMIS collects very sensitive personal information from clients such as their names, dates of birth, and social security numbers, security measures are required in order to protect client privacy. The basic requirements for all computers used to access HMIS are:

- Internet Access
- Virus Protection
- Firewall
- Up to Date Internet Browser
- Password Protected Screensaver

HMIS complies with HIPAA, and all federal, state, and local confidentiality laws to protect client confidentiality. Personal client information is stored on an encrypted centralized database, and our HMIS vendor uses a secure connection (https) when information is transferred over the web. This means that HMIS itself is secure, however, **when using email to communicate information about clients in HMIS it is absolutely imperative to only identify clients by their Identifier number**. HMIS automatically generates an Identifier number for each client entered into HMIS. NO identifying client information should ever be sent over email (including but not limited to first names, last names, dates of birth, or social security numbers.)

If you need to email a report that contains client identifying information to the HMIS Help Desk, you must [encrypt the file with a password](#).

Your Responsibilities

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- Every HMIS User is granted a unique user ID and password. You should never share your HMIS password with anyone for any reason, including but not limited to: coworkers, IT personnel, clients, your Executive Director, etc.
- You should make an effort to obscure your computer screen from unauthorized users while working in HMIS.
- Lock your computer when you are away from it.
- Keep physical client files in a locked cabinet or office

Every year, 211OC conducts an Agency Audit where we will check for your agency's compliance with the Privacy and Security Standards outlined in this lesson and the OC HMIS Policies and Procedures handbook.

Client Rights

Clients have the right to obtain and inspect their information in HMIS whenever they request it. Agency Administrators are required to review the client's HMIS data with them if requested by the client. Clients may only request *their own* HMIS records. Clients are not entitled to the HMIS records of any other client, even clients within their household, with the exception of a parent/guardian requesting their child/dependent's record, based upon existing agency guidelines.

Lesson 5 - Forms and Documents

Please visit the [HMIS Forms and Documents](#) page of the OCHMIS website to find each form and document discussed in this lesson. **Please visit this page every time you need a form to ensure that you are always using the most updated forms.** 211OC DOES NOT RECOMMEND that you save these files to your computer because doing so means you will likely use outdated forms after the forms are updated.

Client Forms

1. [Statement of Client Rights Brochure](#) - A written explanation of privacy practices and security measures that will be enforced to protect the client's information on the HMIS. This brochure should be visibly displayed to any clients that enter any of your projects, and should also be available to be handed out to clients.
2. [Consent to Share Protected Personal Information](#) - This form must be signed in order for client identifying information to be shared with other Participating Organizations throughout the OC HMIS. This form only needs to be filled out by a client once every seven years for each agency in which they participate in a project. For example, if a client comes to your project and participated in the same or another project at your agency three years ago, they are not required to fill out a new Consent to Share Protected Personal Information *unless the form has been updated or changed during that time.*
3. [Client Revocation of Consent to Release Information](#) - When a client gives permission via the Consent to Share Protected Personal Information form and later decides that they no longer want their information in HMIS, they have the right to revoke permission to share or release personal information in the HMIS system. Clients must be informed of this right upon project entry.

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4. [Grievance Form](#) - Clients have the right to file a grievance with 211OC if they feel there has been a violation of their rights as an HMIS client or if they disagree with a decision made about their “Protected HMIS Information”. Clients must be informed of this right upon project entry.

HMIS User Forms

1. [Acknowledgement Form](#) - This form must be signed by all potential HMIS Users after they have completed HMIS Part I Training, indicating that they received a copy of the OC HMIS Policies and Procedures Manual. The form is located on the very last page of the OC HMIS Policies and Procedures Manual.
2. [HMIS User Agreement](#) - This form must be signed and submitted to 211OC upon successful completion of the HMIS Part II Training in order to be issued an HMIS account.

Notices to be Posted at Each Intake Location

The following notices must be visible at each and every location client intakes are conducted. This means that if your agency conducts intakes at each individual case manager's desk, the notices must be posted at every desk, and if your agency conducts intakes in specific rooms, the notices must be posted in each specific room, etc.

1. [Note Regarding Collection of Personal Information](#)
2. [Privacy Notice](#)

Lesson 6 - HMIS Data Collection and Data Quality

Why do we collect data?

The data in HMIS tells the story of the work you do; it demonstrates what services you provide to your clients and if clients are able to achieve more stable housing through your agency. HUD requires the use of HMIS and the collection of data to determine who is being served with federal funding (i.e., what kind of demographics are represented in clients served by participating agencies) and what kinds of services and projects help clients achieve housing stability.

This is called "evidence based practice," which helps agencies focus their efforts. After an agency has started to use HMIS to track client data they could find that there are demographics that the clients they serve share. For example, an agency might not specifically serve victims of domestic violence, but after reviewing their Program Specific Data Elements report they discover that 10 out of 30 clients answer "Yes" to "Have you been a victim of domestic violence or a victim of intimate partner violence?" The agency can use this information from HMIS data to make decisions like hiring a staff member with domestic violence service experience or offering domestic violence related materials to clients upon entry.

Data Quality

An agency's "data quality" is the extent to which the data entered into HMIS is accurate. Data quality is determined by the following:

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1.

1. **Timeliness and Frequency of Data Entry** - HMIS Users should make every effort to record data in HMIS within three calendar days of it occurring.
2. **Data Completeness** - HMIS Users should strive to complete all required fields in HMIS, and avoid the use of "Client Refused," "Client Doesn't Know," and "Data Not Collected" responses whenever possible. HUD considers these three response categories to be "missing," or the same as a blank response.
3. **Data Accuracy** - HMIS Users should make sure to enter accurate data in HMIS. This means clearly communicating to clients what each question means, and taking care to avoid typos when entering data.
4. **Data Consistency** - HMIS Users should consistently enter required data across all projects.

Lesson 7 - HUD Data Standards Manual

HUD publishes a manual that explains each HMIS Data Element in depth. It is highly recommended that HMIS Users familiarize themselves with the HMIS Data Standards Manual so that they fully understand each data element they are responsible for collecting. **Please open the [HMIS Data Standards Manual](#), as you will need to navigate it to answer some of the upcoming quiz questions.**

The following categories are explained for each Data Element in the HMIS Data Standards Manual:

- **Rationale** – provides a basic rationale for data collection for the element.
- **Collection Point(s)** - defines when data collection is required for each element. There are five different collection points:
 1. *Record creation* – Indicates the element is required to be collected when the client record is created.
 2. *Project Start* – Indicates the element is required to be collected at every project entry.
 3. *Update* –These data elements represent information that is either collected at multiple points during project enrollment in order to track changes over time (e.g., Income and Sources) or is entered to record project activities as they occur (e.g., Services Provided).
 4. *Annual assessment* – must be recorded no more than 30 days before or after the anniversary of the client's Project Entry Date, regardless of the date of the most recent 'update' or 'annual assessment'
 5. *Project exit* - Indicates the element is required to be collected at every project exit.
- **Subjects** - identifies the persons for whom data collection is required.
- **Data Collection Instructions** - provides overall instructions for data collection and entry.

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If you have questions about a particular data element, the fastest way to get your answer is generally to check the [HMIS Data Standards Manual](#).

Lesson 8 – Data Quality Codes

Personal Identifying Information refers to a client's First Name, Last Name, Date of Birth, and Social Security Number. Each of these data elements is accompanied by a required Data Quality Code, which describes how complete each data element is. The Data Quality Codes should be completed after saving the client's information on the HH Members tab.

Below are descriptions of when each Data Quality Code should be used, and a screenshot of the pop up window in the HH Members tab where the Data Quality Codes are entered:

Save information for Program 'HMIS'

Name:	xxLuke xxTest
Name Quality Code:	<input type="text"/> ▼ 
SSN:	123-12-1234
SSN Quality Code:	<input type="text"/> ▼ 
Date of Birth:	9/21/1983
Date of Birth Quality Code:	<input type="text"/> ▼ 
 Race:	<input type="checkbox"/> Client refused <input type="checkbox"/> Data not collected

Name Data Quality

- **Full Name Reported** - The client has provided their full First Name and Last Name.
- **Partial, street name, or code name reported** - The client has reported part of their name or a street/code name.
- **Client Doesn't Know** - The client doesn't know their First and Last Name.
- **Client Refused** - The client refused to give their First and Last Name.
- **Data not Collected** - The intake worker did not ask the client for their First and Last Name.

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DOB Code

- **Full DOB Reported** - The client has provided their day, month, *and* year of birth.
- **Approximate or Partial DOB Reported** - The client has provided their day, month, and/or year of birth, but not all three. If a client knows how old they are but not the day or month they were born on, calculate their year of birth based on their age and enter 1/1/____ and fill in their year of birth.
- **Client Doesn't Know** - The client does not know their Date of Birth or age.
- **Client Refused** - The client refused to give their Date of Birth or age.
- **Data Not Collected** - The intake worker did not ask the client for their Date of Birth or age.

NOTE: If Client Doesn't Know, Client Refused, or Data Not Collected is selected for the client's DOB code, the DOB field should be left blank.

SSN Code

- **Full SSN Reported** - The client has reported their full nine digit Social Security Number.
- **Approximate or Partial SSN Reported** - The client reported only part of their nine digit Social Security Number. NOTE: If a client knows less than nine digits of their Social Security Number, do not replace the digits they do not know with 0's. For example, if a client only knows the last four digits of their SSN enter "____-__-1234" in HMIS, not "000-00-1234."
- **Client Doesn't Know** - The client does not know any part of their Social Security Number.
- **Client Refused** - The client refused to give any part of their Social Security Number.
- **Data Not Collected** - The intake worker did not ask the client for their Social Security Number.

Lesson 9 – Disability

Data Element 3.8 Disabling Condition

See pages 43 and 44 of the [HMIS Data Standards Manual](#)

Rationale: Disabling condition is used to count the number of clients who have a disabling condition at project entry. This data element is to be used with other information to identify whether a client meets the criteria for chronic homelessness.

Collection Point(s): At project entry.

Subjects: All clients

Record whether the client has a disabling condition based on one or more of the following:

- A physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or brain injury that must meet **all three of the conditions below:**

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1. Is expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration;
 2. Substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently; and
 3. Could be improved by the provision of more suitable housing conditions.
- A developmental disability, as defined in section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15002); or
 - The disease of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) or any condition arising from the etiologic agency for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV).

Additionally, for veterans note: if the client is a veteran who is disabled by an injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated during active military service and whose disability meets the disability definition defined in Section 223 of the social security act they should be identified as having a disabling condition.

In order to qualify as a disability in HMIS, the condition must meet the definition above. For example, a client may receive a disability check due to pregnancy, but a pregnancy is not considered a disability according to HUD because a pregnancy is not "expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration."

When a client enters a program they may self report their disability. After the client has been in the project for 45 days they must provide proof of their disability in order to continue to be considered disabled in HMIS.

Acceptable proof/documentation includes:

1. Written verification of the disability from a professional licensed by the state to diagnose and treat the disability and his or her certification that the disability is expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration and that the disability substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently.
2. Written verification from the Social Security Administration.
3. The receipt of a permanent disability check.
4. Other documentation approved by HUD.

Lesson 10 - Chronic Homelessness

Chronic Homelessness

In order for a client to be considered chronically homeless, they must meet the following criteria:

1. Have a disability that meets HUD's definition of a disability,
2. Is living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, an emergency shelter, or an institution where they stayed for less than 90 days AND entered the institution from the streets/emergency shelter/safe haven; and
3. Has been homeless (as described above) continuously for at least 12 months or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined occasions must total at least 12 months (Occasions

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are separated by a break of at least seven nights, and stays in institutions of fewer than 90 days do not constitute a break).

For clients who are in families, **the head of household must meet all of the above criteria** for the family to be considered chronically homeless. For example, if a non-disabled single mother comes to your project with her disabled child, and Mom has been on the streets for 12 consecutive months, the family is not considered chronically homeless because Mom does not have a disability.

HMIS Version 6 determines clients' Chronically Homelessness Status automatically; nevertheless 211OC has created an [interactive tool](#) to help you determine Chronic Homelessness status should you want to determine it manually.

Lesson 11 - Living Situation 3.917A

Living Situation 3.917A

Please see pages 56-61 in the [HMIS Data Standards Manual](#). This data element applies to only the following Project Types:

- **Street Outreach,**
- **Emergency Shelter**
- **Safe Haven**

Subjects: All clients

Collection Point: Project Start

Data Collection Instructions

Intake staff should ask clients about their homeless history, including specific instances the client spent on the street, in an Emergency Shelter, or Safe Haven project. This may require explaining what each of these situations are, relative to the HUD definition for each. It will be beneficial to keep the [HMIS Data Standards Manual](#) handy while completing these questions with clients.

1. Record the type of living arrangement the head of household and each client was residing in just prior to entry into the Street Outreach, ES, or SH project. For projects that do not provide lodging, the 'last' living situation will be the same as the current living situation. For projects that do provide lodging, this will be the client's living situation prior to moving in to the project-provided residence. Members of the same household may have different prior living situations.
2. Record the length of time the client was residing in just their previous place of stay.
3. Record the Approximate date this homeless situation began. Have the client look back to the date of the last time the client had a place to sleep that was not on the streets, ES, or SH and enter that date.

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4. Regardless of where the client stayed last night enter the number of times the client has been homeless on the streets, in ES, or SH in the past three years including today. (Note – if this is the first time the client has been homeless in the past three years then the response is One Time)
5. Record the total number of months homeless the client has been on the streets, in ES or SH in the past three years. (The number of cumulative, but not necessarily consecutive months spent homeless.)

NOTE: Although documentation is required by some funders for projects targeting chronic homeless persons, completing the data fields in HMIS does not require documentation -- a client's responses are all that is required.

Because this Data Element allows for multiple configurations of required questions, HUD recommends that direct data entry should be completed in HMIS rather than using a paper form to record the information. The OC HMIS has been programmed to automatically display only the questions that are required of each client based on their unique situation and the Project Type of the project they are entering. However, 211OC has continued to provide paper intake forms at the request of agencies. To see the required 3.917A questions on the paper form, please see pages 4 and 6 of the [HMIS General Intake Form](#).

Lesson 12 - Living Situation 3.917B

Description of 3.917B Living Situation

Please see pages 56-61 in the [HMIS Data Standards Manual](#). This data element applies to only the following Project Types:

- **Transitional Housing,**
- **Permanent Housing** (including Permanent Supportive Housing, Other Permanent Housing, and Rapid Re-housing),
- **Services Only,**
- **Day Shelter,**
- **Homeless Prevention,**
- **Coordinated Entry System**

Subjects: All clients

Collection Point: Project Start

Data Collection Instructions

HUD strongly encourages HMIS users to just ask the client for the information and record their answer. Attempting to tie each individual's response with definitions or documentation requirement is not the attempt of this question.

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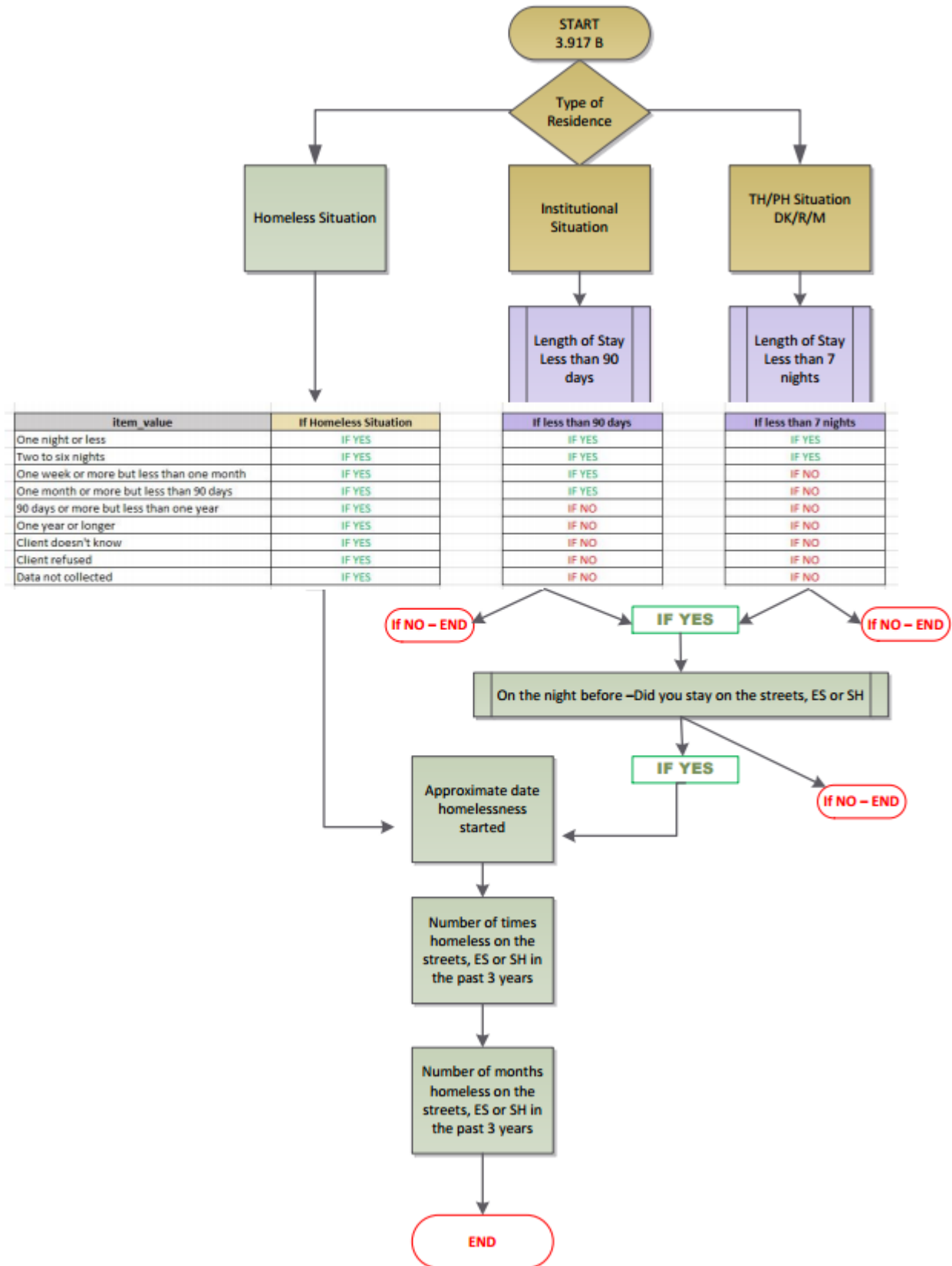
The questions are designed to flow from the client's last living situation. The flow of questions is different depending on the client's last living situation:

- Homeless situation
- Institutional situation
- Transitional or Permanent Housing situation or if the client refused to answer, didn't know or if the information is missing

The flowchart below (pg 111 of the [HMIS Data Standards Manual](#)) will guide you through the questions that will be required to be answered based on the client's responses to each question. HMIS has been programmed to include or exclude questions based on this flowchart.

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Exhibit 3: 3.917B Flow Chart



Because this data element allows for multiple configurations of required questions, HUD recommends that direct data entry should be completed in HMIS rather than using a paper form to record the information. The

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OC HMIS has been programmed to automatically display only the questions that are required of each client based on their unique situation and the Project Type of the project they are entering. However, 211OC has continued to provide paper intake forms at the request of agencies. To see the required 3.917B questions on the paper form, please see pages 5 and 6 of the [HMIS General Intake Form](#).

Lesson 13 – Destination

Please review pages 48-51 of the [HMIS Data Standards Manual](#):

Rationale: To identify where a client will stay just after exiting a project for purposes of tracking and outcome measurement.

Collection Point(s): At project exit.

Subjects: All clients

Data Collection Instructions: Select the response category that best describes where the client will be living after the date on which they exit the project. For non-lodging projects this may be the same as the place where the client was living during project participation.

Destination information should be collected from all clients upon their exit from your project. Most Destination options are self-explanatory, however please see the following special notes:

- For clients who will be staying with family or friends select the response that includes the expected tenure of the destination (permanent or temporary).
- For “Rental by client” and “Owned by client,” select the response that includes the type of housing subsidy, if any, the client will be receiving. A housing subsidy may be tenant-, project-, or sponsor-based and provides ongoing assistance to reduce rent burden. This includes housing subsidies provided through HUD-funded subsidies (e.g., public housing, Housing Choice Voucher or “Section 8”) or other housing subsidy (e.g., state rental assistance voucher).
- If a client exits without providing destination information to project staff, the “No exit interview completed” response value should be used; **in such instances, destination information will be considered missing.**
- 211OC has yet to identify any situation in which "Other" is an appropriate response to Destination. Please contact your Agency Administrator (who will then, if necessary, contact the HMIS Help Desk) before selecting "Other" for Destination. If you do select "Other" for Destination, you must provide an explanation in the "Other Destination" field.