

# HMIS UNIVERSAL DATA ELEMENTS

## RATIONALES FOR COLLECTION

**Collection of the Universal Data Elements is **required** for all projects participating in HMIS, **regardless of funding source.****

The Universal Data Elements (UDEs) are the basis for producing unduplicated estimates of the number of people experiencing homelessness, accessing services from homeless assistance projects, basic demographic characteristics of people experiencing homeless, and patterns of service use, including information on shelter stays and homelessness over time.

## Universal Identifier Elements

*One and Only One Value per Client Record*

Data elements 3.1 through 3.7 are required to be **collected once per client**, regardless of how many project stays they have. Incorrect or outdated **data must be corrected in the original record.**

### 3.1 Name

**Rationale** To support the unique identification of each person served.

### 3.2 Social Security Number

**Rationale** To support the unique identification of each person served.

- » An important objective for ending homelessness is to **increase access and utilization of mainstream programs** by persons who are experiencing homelessness or are at-risk of homelessness. Since **SSN is a required data element for many mainstream programs**, projects may need the SSN in order to help their clients access mainstream services.

### 3.3 Date of Birth

**Rationale** To calculate the age of persons served at time of project start or at any point during project enrollment and to support the unique identification of each person served.

### 3.4 Race

**Rationale** To indicate clients' self-identification of one or more of five different racial categories. Supports system planning, local, and national understanding of who is experiencing homelessness.

### 3.5 Ethnicity

**Rationale** To indicate clients who do and do not identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino. Supports system planning, local, and national understanding of who is experiencing homelessness.

### 3.6 Gender

**Rationale** To indicate whether clients self-identify as male, female, transgender female, transgender male, or gender non-conforming. Supports system planning, local, and national understanding of who is experiencing homelessness.

### 3.7 Veteran Status

**Rationale** To indicate whether clients are veterans of the United States armed forces. Allows for an accurate count of how many veterans experience homelessness. Useful for screening for possible housing and service interventions and for gaining understanding of veterans' service needs.

## Universal Project Stay Elements

*One or More Value(s) Per Client or Household Project Stay*  
Data elements 3.8+ are to be collected at least once per project stay.

### 3.8 Disabling Condition

**Rationale** To indicate whether or not clients have a disabling condition. This data element is to be used with other information to identify whether a client meets the criteria for chronic homelessness.

### 3.10 Project Start Date

**Rationale** To determine the start of each client's period of participation with a project. All projects need this data element for reporting time spent participating in the project. Paired with 3.20 *Housing Move-In Date*, it becomes possible to determine the length of time from project start to housing placement for all PH clients, not just clients in RRH.

### 3.11 Project Exit Date

**Rationale** To determine the end of a client's period of participation with a project. All projects need this data element for reporting time spent participating in the project.

### 3.12 Destination

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

### 3.15 Relationship to Head of Household

**Rationale** To identify one person to whom all other household members can be linked to at the time they enter a project. This facilitates the identification and enumeration of households. In addition, specifying the relationship of household members to the head of household facilitates reporting on household composition.

### 3.16 Client Location

**Rationale** To link client household data to the relevant CoC. Necessary for projects that operate across multiple CoCs for data export purposes and to ensure accurate counts of persons who are served within a CoC.

### 3.20 Housing Move-in Date

**Rationale** To document the date that a household admitted into a Permanent Housing project moves into housing. This data is critical to point-in-time and housing inventory counts as it differentiates households which are enrolled in a Permanent Housing project but are still literally homeless (in emergency shelter, Safe Haven, transitional housing, or on the street) as they prepare to move into an available unit from households which have already moved into permanent housing.

### 3.917 Prior Living Situation

**Rationale** To identify the type of living situation and length of stay in that situation just prior to project start for all adults and heads of households. This data element is to be used with other information to identify whether a client appears to meet the criteria for chronic homelessness at various points of enrollment.

- » The element has been constructed to avoid collecting information which is irrelevant or inappropriate for the client population being served in a particular situation. For example, eligibility for Homelessness Prevention requires that a client be in housing. By definition, a person in housing is not chronically homeless, so some of the fields in this data element used to determine chronic homeless status are not required in that situation.