COVID-19 Response: changes for King County HMIS Partner Agencies

Note: Information contained in this document has been sent via monthly HMIS Newsletter and part of individual announcements and trainings beginning March 2020. Questions should be sent to the HMIS System Administration Team at kc-admin@bitfocus.com

- **Public Alerts for COVID-19 Notifications**
- **"Health Check-in Needed" added to Location Tab**
- **Changes to HMIS Consent Policy and Process**
- **Conducting CE Assessments over the Phone**
- **Resources added CE Assessment (Housing Triage Tool)**

Public Alerts for COVID-19 Notifications

The HMIS Public Alert feature is being used for critical notifications during this time. These temporary alerts are part of fulfilling obligations to protect and support the health of individuals experiencing homelessness and agency staff. As a result, it is important to:

- **Keep HMIS data up-to-date and accurate at all times**
- **Pay attention to Public Alert banners and click to read the full text of alert (see screenshot below)**
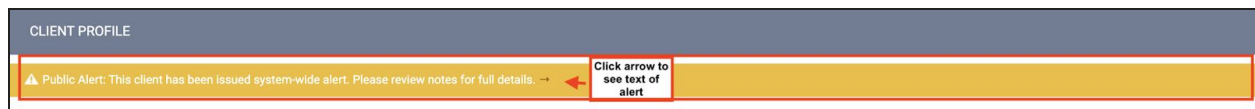

During the COVID Response period, the King County Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) is charged with operating Isolation and Quarantine facilities. In a situation where an individual unexpectedly leaves one of the facilities and is known to be COVID+ , there is a duty and the authorization to notify homeless programs that the individual may be returning to the program(s) where they are actively enrolled and receiving services.

If staff have any questions about this Public Alert protocol, please reach out to your HMIS Agency Lead and they can work with the System Administration Team to locate relevant resources for your agency.

Additional resources can also be found at the Health Care for the Homeless Network COVID-19 Resource Page

"Health Check-In Needed" Added to Location Tab

The list of **Address Types** (shown below) has now been updated to include the option for **Health Check-in Needed**. Outreach staff and other providers can use this option to flag that a client needs to be checked on when staff are accessing the client's record in HMIS. While this new Health Check-In Needed address type is now available, please contact your supervisor to verify criteria and expectations regarding its use. **HMIS does not collect information about specific health conditions, including whether someone has COVID-19. Additional resources for supporting people experiencing homelessness during this crisis can be found by visiting:** Health Care for the Homeless Network COVID-19 Resource Page
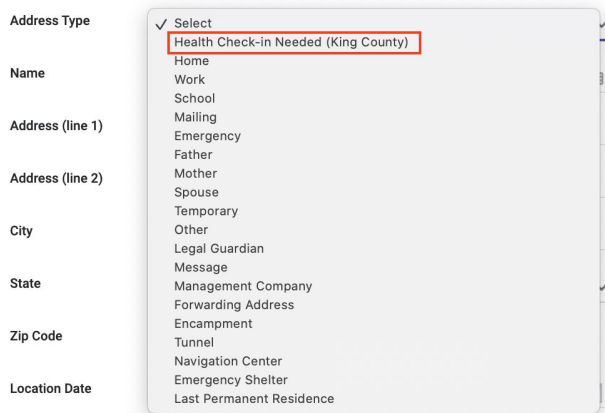
Two different types of location records can be entered and reviewed on the Location Tab to help support clients and fellow providers:

1. **Manual Add Address with Health Check-in** - enter this type of location to indicate that a health check-in is needed for this client by selecting Health Check-in Needed as Address Type. Staff can then complete remaining fields with as much information as possible and save the screen. Even if Address is a corner or general location, the map will show a pin based on zip code.

2. **Field Interaction - Auto-Geolocation** - in addition, staff can also add a pin to the map in the client's record for a "field interaction" using the geolocation data of the mobile device being used. If staff want to record the exact location when interacting with a client then they can click the Locator Icon, allow location access from device's browser, and the map will pin the location using GPS.
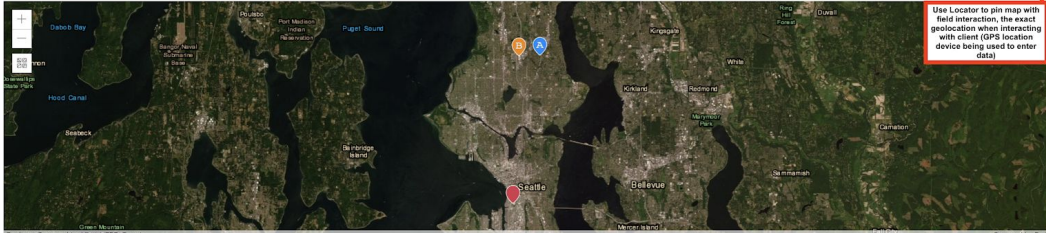
- Address Type, provides a picklist of general address and/or contact information categories. This is where to select: Health Check-in Needed (King County).
- Name can be used as a brief description field for the location like "Blue Tent"
- Address (line 1): provide a street address, or cross streets, or general location. With City & Zip the system will attempt to map based on the data entered.
- The following fields: Name, Address (line 1), City, State, Location Date will need some data entered before the screen can be saved.
- The Active Location toggle defaults to "on" to indicate that this location is still relevant.
- Private toggle - should not be used and should remain off so that location record can be easily found and reviewed by other staff as needed.

Changes to HMIS Consent Policy and Process

The following temporary changes are effective March 25, 2020.

Verbal Consent by Clients

- King County HMIS policies will now **temporarily allow for verbal consent and release of information.** Staff must explain the information contained in the [Client Consent to Data Collection & ROI (2020)](#) and [Client Information Sheet](#), and answer any questions to allow for meaningful informed consent before asking client to consent, and before creating a client profile in HMIS that contains personally identifying information (PII), such as Name, SSN, and Date of Birth. (Note: additional languages can be found on [HMIS Webpage](#))
- If verbal consent is granted by the client, **the client's consent must still be documented in HMIS behind Privacy Shield in HMIS by marking "verbal consent"** (see screenshot below).
- The verbal consent may be in place until the staff is able to obtain a signed ROI for uploading into HMIS at the next available opportunity when in-person contact can happen.
- As part of collecting or verifying the identifying information over the phone, staff should be sensitive to any concerns re: safety/domestic violence and must never release/verify to caller any information that the staff person is seeing in HMIS...even if caller has shared PII that matches what is currently showing in HMIS.
- Under existing policy, clients need to consent at one agency only within the King County Continuum of Care so staff should continue to search for existing client profiles in HMIS before creating a new one.

Paper Copies of HMIS Consent Form

Since staff complying with new social distancing work locations may no longer have a convenient way to scan and upload a PDF into HMIS, they may now temporarily keep the paper ROI Form on file until upload can happen. **To indicate that the client has provided a signed consent form and the staff has the paper copy in possession, the staff should select "Signed Paper Document" as the option when Adding ROI behind the Privacy Shield.** Staff must keep the paper copy of the signed ROI in a secure location approved by the Agency until staff are able to scan and upload the PDF per usual.

Note: as agencies and systems work to respond to the current COVID-19 crisis, guidance is being updated on an ongoing basis. We will continue to provide updates on these and other topics as new issues arise and/or as we obtain updated guidance. **Please reach out to your HMIS Agency Lead and/or the** [Help Desk](#) **if you have any questions at any time.**

Conducting CE Assessments over the Phone

Along with the HMIS ROI process allowing for over the phone HMIS ROI consent.

The Housing Triage Tool (HTT), otherwise referred to as the VI-SPDAT) can also be updated or created via phone as necessary. Starting April 1, you will have the option to select the method of information collection. The HTT is the housing assessment tool used by Housing Assessors to enter clients into the Coordinated Entry for All system.

For New Assessments - Select the Assessment Type Phone

* I confirm that I read the above script to this client (enter staff initials & date):	JR 4/1/2020
	Select
Assessment Type	✓ Phone
	Virtual
	In person

For Updating Assessments - Enter in the Update Location - "Phone"

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING ONLY IF YOU ARE UPDATING THE ASSESSMENT, OTHERWISE LEAVE BLANK. SAVE.

Date of Update	04/01/2020
Updated by First Name	Assessor Name
Updated by Last Name	Assessor Name
Updated Location	Phone

Resources added CE Assessment (Housing Triage Tool)

Instructions and resources related to COVID-19 have been added to HTT Assessments temporarily. During the assessment process, clients might express concerns regarding the COVID-19 outbreak and their safety, the text below was added to assist with providing information and resources in those situations:

I confirm that I read the above
script to this client (enter staff
initials & date):

Assessment Type   Select   ⌄

***** COVID-19 INFORMATION/RESOURCES *****

KING COUNTY COVID-19 CALL CENTER: 206-477-3977 (DAILY 8AM TO 7PM) CLIENTS CAN CALL IF
THEY BELIEVE THEY WERE EXPOSED OR EXPERIENCING SYMPTOMS, OR TO FIND TESTING SITES

COVID-19 RESOURCES INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESOURCES: HTTPS://WWW.UWKC.ORG/NEED-
HELP/COVID-19-RESOURCES/

SHELTER/STREET OUTREACH/ DAY/HYGIENE CENTERS HAVE SCREENING GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19
AND OTHER INSTRUCTIONS FROM PUBLIC HEALTH

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SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

Please continue to follow instructions by your supervisor and public health related to COVD-19.