

HOPE System Comparable Database Policies and Procedures

San Francisco Department of Homelessness and
Supportive Housing

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1. General

The Department of Homelessness & Supportive Housing (HSH) collaborated with survivors of violence, Victim Service Providers (VSPs)¹, and other impacted providers to establish comparable databases that safeguard program participant data.

A comparable database is a relational database that meets all Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Data Standards set forth by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Comparable databases must also meet minimum standards related to HMIS privacy and security requirements.

The reason for establishing comparable databases is that VSPs and other agencies that receive funding from certain sources² are prohibited from entering data into the Continuum of Care's (CoC's) HMIS, which is called the ONE System in San Francisco.

In order to meet HUD reporting requirements, CoC- and ESG- funded programs operated by VSPs and other agencies prohibited from entering data into HMIS must track data in a comparable database.

The solution to this issue has been the development of the Housing Opportunities for People Experiencing Violence (HOPE) System, which operates as a framework for ensuring that each comparable database partner agency in San Francisco has software that meets HUD's reporting requirements while also safeguarding survivor confidentiality.

¹ <https://www.hudexchange.info/faqs/programs/continuum-of-care-coc-program/program-requirements/coordinated-entry/how-does-hud-define-victim-service-provider/#:~:text=HUD%20defines%20a%20victim%20service,to%20victims%20of%20domestic%20violence.>

² <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HMIS-When-to-Use-a-Comparable-Database.pdf>

The content in this policy and procedures guide is intended to provide minimum, baseline standards to guide the use of the closed comparable database environments housed within the HOPE System.

1.1. Introduction and Guiding Principles

In order to ensure the safety and privacy of adult, youth, and child survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening circumstances, it is the policy of HSH and comparable database partners to protect the confidentiality and privacy of those who seek services and to hold confidential all personally identifying or individual information. This includes communications, observations, and information gathered about program participants.

All comparable database users are charged with maintaining the confidentiality of program participants as outlined in their individual agency policies and in federal and state law. Comparable database users shall not disclose any personally identifying information or individual information collected in connection with services requested, utilized, or denied through its programs, or reveal any individual client information without the informed, written, reasonably time-limited consent of the person about whom information is sought. For more information on informed consent, review the Informed Consent Policy in Appendix 4.

Comparable database users will avoid any inadvertent release of personally identifying information or individual information about any program participant. The obligation to maintain confidentiality does not end when the service to a program participant is concluded. Confidentiality extends to all current and former program participants, including those who were denied services.

Comparable database users must keep the physical address of any undisclosed agency locations, as well as the employment, residence, and family addresses of program participants, staff, volunteers, counselors, advocates, board members, and student interns confidential.

Confidential information can be released from comparable databases to third parties only in accordance with the guidelines set out below.

1.2. Compliance

HSH and comparable database partner agencies shall collaborate to ensure that comparable databases protect all data entered as required by:

- HMIS Data and Technical Standards as announced by the CoC Interim Rule at 24 CFR 578.7(a)(8),
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 ("HIPAA"),
- California Confidentiality of Medical Information Act,
- Any other federal, state, or local statutes providing additional protection for medical, mental health, and substance abuse information,
- The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA),
- The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), and the
- Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).

Additionally, sharing de-identified data should clear all requirements outlined in HIPAA, the California Confidentiality of Medical Information Act, and any other federal, state, or local statutes providing additional protection for medical, mental health, and substance abuse information.

2. Comparable Database Security and Access

2.1. Access Overview

As mandated by VAWA, FVPSA, and VOCA, each agency's comparable database is a closed system only accessible to the comparable database partner agency that the database has been established for.

All data held in that comparable database environment is owned by the partner agency and the program participant it concerns.

HSH and its comparable database vendor, Bitfocus are prohibited from accessing a comparable database partner agency's client level data. Each comparable database partner agency is responsible for working with HSH and Bitfocus to ensure the security of the data kept in that agency's closed data environment.

Comparable database implementation may not allow for client information to be shared across multiple providers.

2.2. Agency Leads

Each comparable database partner agency is responsible for designating an **Agency Lead**. This person acts as a liaison between their agency and the Bitfocus Help Desk and Community Administration team, as well as relevant HSH staff. Agency Leads are responsible for the following security tasks:

- **Authorizing new comparable database system accounts.** Agency leads should determine the appropriate level of access based on a user's role and program participant privacy needs.
- **Deactivating user accounts.** When users leave an agency, agency leads must submit a request to Bitfocus to deactivate their account within one (1) workday.
- **Reactivating user accounts.** When a user account has been deactivated due to 90 days of inactivity or by request, the request to reactivate must come from the Agency Lead.
- **Access role changes.** If a user's job role changes and they need a different access level, the agency lead should notify Bitfocus within one (1) workday of the appropriate change.
- **Performing bi-annual internal data audits.** These audits will ensure that only the appropriate users and entities are accessing client information.

2.3. New Users

New comparable database user accounts may be requested by the comparable database partner Agency Lead. Agency Leads will email the name, email address, and access role of the requested new user to the Help Desk at onesf@bitfocus.com. Bitfocus staff will verify that the user has completed required training and that they meet any additional requirements, and will set up the new user account.

Required Training

Before receiving authorization to access a comparable database, all potential users must complete the following trainings, which are available on the [Bitfocus website](#):

- **HOPE System Training**, which will teach users how to enter data into their agency's database, how to maintain data quality, how to run reports, and how to provide aggregate data to HSH when necessary.
- **Supporting Survivor Choice & Autonomy**, embedded within the HOPE system training, the Supporting Survivor Choice & Autonomy module provides an overview of the importance of maintaining survivor confidentiality, prioritizing survivor autonomy, and best practices for collecting information in an empathic and trauma-informed manner.
- **Program Specific Training:**
 - **Coordinated Entry for Survivors:** This training will also cover how comparable database users will coordinate with HSH to send and receive referrals between HMIS-restricted agencies and the ONE System while also maintaining program participant confidentiality. This training will also

inform access point staff about issues related secondary trauma and dealing with crises at access points.

- **Rapid Rehousing & Emergency Housing Vouchers:** This training will cover how comparable database users will enter client information, including program enrollment, exit, move-in dates, and services provided as a part of rapid rehousing and other scattered site programming.
- **Shelter:** This training will cover how HUD-funded shelter services will be recorded in the comparable database including program enrollment, exit, and exit destinations.
- **Clarity General Training:** This course introduces end users to the basics of Clarity Human Services through a series of short, easy-to-understand videos. Registration is available online through the ONE SF Help Center. After completing the General Training, contact your Agency Lead for further instructions on Clarity Human Services account access.

2.4. Access Roles for Comparable Database

The access roles below describe the levels of access and functionality that different comparable database users will have.

VSP Agency Lead

Staff in this role will have access to all client-level information, the ability to run all types of required reporting, and the ability to delete and restore certain pieces of information.

Agency Leads serve as liaisons to HSH and Bitfocus and assist with quality assurance.

VSP Staff

Staff in this role will have access to all client-level information and the ability to run all types of required reporting. They do not have access to delete or restore information.

For additional detail regarding access roles, please visit the [Bitfocus Access Roles site](#).

2.5. Internal Audits

In order to ensure that only the appropriate users are accessing client information, the Agency Lead for each partner agency will run the Staff Client Data Activity Report bi-annually. This report states which staff have interacted with a profile, shows details such as creation, editing and deletion. Agency Leads are responsible for ensuring that no unauthorized users have made changes to client level data.

2.6. Passwords

User authentication is controlled by user account and password, PIN, or other equally secure or more secure means. User authentications should require complex passwords of a fixed length that use a combination of numeric and alphanumeric characters, as well as a combination of upper and lowercase letters. The system also utilizes two factor authentication which will require users to enter a code listed in the authenticator application. The user should be automatically logged off after a defined period of inactivity.

If a comparable database user forgets a password, the user should be required to do one of the following:

- Initiate BitFocus' password reset process
- If unable to reset password, contact a System Administrator:
 - Help Center Support Desk email: onesf@bitfocus.com
 - Help Center Support Desk phone: 415-429-4211
- If unable to reach a System Administrator, use paper files until access is restored. Paper files shall be stored and destroyed as set forth in the Partner Agency's policies and procedures.

3. Supporting Survivor Choice and Autonomy

The CoC and comparable database partner agencies prioritize client choice and autonomy in providing assistance to survivors of violence.

Survivor autonomy is the belief that survivors possess their own sense of agency and have the right to define their needs and to make their own choices about how to meet those needs.

HSH values meaningful inclusion of feedback from persons with lived experience, and operates using the following shared ethics and values:

- Recognizing that procedural processes necessary to provide effective care for populations experiencing harm have significant impact on their lives and have residual and lasting effects.
- There is a unified responsibility to protect any notes or client level data from disclosure or theft, and to provide services in ways that center best practices of incorporating responsive, anti-oppressive, consistent, empathetic, mutually cooperative, and respectful communications, while also providing tools to promote personal power, and support survivors' right to be self-governing.

Prior to entering any program participant-level data into the comparable database, partner agency staff will review their agency's policies with regard to client

confidentiality and inform survivors that they have the right to opt-out of having their information entered into the comparable database.

This decision to opt-in or opt-out cannot be the basis for providing or denying them assistance. If a program participant requests that their information be omitted from the database, they should and would be informed how their decision may limit the services they are able to receive from the Homelessness Response System (HRS).

4. Third Party Disclosures

Please note that these policies and procedures do not cover releases of information for comparable database partner agencies to disclose information to third parties. Each provider should follow their agencies existing VAWA/FVPSA/VOCA-compliant policies and procedures and the Informed Consent Policy in Appendix 4 regarding those disclosures.

Human Services Agency Releases of Information

Human Services Agency Releases of Information are optional, but highly recommended where VAWA/FVPSA/VOCA-compliant. Such releases allow information to be exchanged between the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and the Human Services Agency to:

- Coordinate economic support and self-sufficiency services for people served both by Human Services Agency and the by Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing;
- Evaluate and improve Human Services Agency housing related programs; and/or
- Comply with mandated reporting requirements; the Human Services Agency may access information regarding my housing status, such as which services I am connected to.

5. Coordinated Entry and Cross-System Referrals

Survivors of violence will continue to engage Coordinated Entry through mainstream access points if they choose to do so. If Access Points become aware of a household who may be fleeing or experiencing violence at any point during the Coordinated Entry process, Access Point staff will offer the survivor an optional, immediate referral to a Victim Service Provider. Survivors can choose to continue with the mainstream Coordinated Entry process, or to seek services solely through the Victim Service Provider.

Federal law prohibits Victim Service Providers from entering survivor data into HMIS. However, HSH collaborates closely with Victim Service Providers to facilitate survivor access to housing and homeless services available through both Coordinated Entry and Victim Service Provider systems. Victim Service Providers may also refer any household seeking homeless services—including housing placement—to mainstream Access Points.

5.1. Assessments

The CE for Survivors Assessment Tool is a scored interview tool used to assess vulnerability to homelessness, barriers to housing, and chronicity of homelessness. Based on the score, households are referred and matched to available permanent supportive housing (PSH) or rapid rehousing (RRH). Households are provided continuous Problem-Solving interventions to identify other pathways to housing without needing to access the Homelessness Response System. These can include housing location assistance and relocation support outside San Francisco. The CE for Survivors Assessment tool was developed in partnership with the community. The tool was designed to gather only enough participant information to determine the program participant's severity of need and eligibility for housing and related services. Assessment tools are subject to revision as a result of community input and changes to the Homelessness Response System. All assessments will be conducted in a safe and private space to ensure all participants' sensitive information is protected.

Individuals who choose not to participate in data collection upon initial assessment or project entry may later decide that their information can be collected and entered into HMIS. Participant data in HMIS can be updated after an initial Coordinated Entry data collection period and throughout project enrollment to reflect emergence of new information, corrections to previously collected information, or additions of previously unanswered questions.

Currently, San Francisco Adult & Youth Coordinated Entry Assessments are active for 90 days. People experiencing homelessness are not expected to conduct a new assessment simply due to a new symptom or a change in their household status.

San Francisco's Coordinated Entry uses a unique Housing Primary Assessment for Households with children. In the event a household experiences a change in household type (e.g., the addition of a new child, or departure of an adult) that household may be immediately re-assessed. Family Primary Housing Assessments for households with children can be re-conducted every three months. Households in Problem Solving status who believe their status does not reflect their current needs can pursue an Administrative Review.

For more information regarding assessments and Coordinated Entry please refer to the Coordinated Entry written standards available on the HSH website.

5.2 Facilitation Guide- CE for Survivors Assessment Tool

The following is suggested language that the Victim Service Provider staff can use to introduce the purpose of the assessment and explain the process. Victim Service Provider staff are not required to read this word for word but adapt this guide using cultural competency and humility in messaging to consistently convey this general information and message based on who you're serving.

The assessment should be conducted privately with the survivor to keep the discussion as confidential as possible. For the purpose of facilitating an assessment, avoid temptation to probe for unnecessary details. Obtain only the information needed to provide appropriate care or make relevant referrals. Be prepared to respond to a potential trauma reaction, like the use of breathing techniques, and connect your participant to resources that can enhance their safety and quality of life, also discuss their concerns that may arise from the assessment.

Inform the survivor that there are questions that will be asked, questions that will carry over from the enrollment, and one question based on observation.

INTRODUCTION

First, I want to explain what we're doing today.

San Francisco uses a process to help people who are experiencing homelessness, so they have equitable access to the limited housing resources available. The questions I am about to ask you are part of this process.

You have the option of completing the assessment with a Victim Service Provider (VSP) or a mainstream access point. Depending on where you complete an assessment, there may be an impact on the type of resources that you and your household are referred to.

As part of our ethical standards, [VSP name and/or HSH] preserves the confidentiality of information you may provide to us, or information we have obtained with your permission and consent, from other sources before, during, and after the course of our professional relationship. Potential exceptions to confidentiality include; when a

communication reveals the intent to commit a crime or harm oneself or others. A brief note on mandatory reporting. Mandated reporters are people required by law to report suspected or known instances of abuse, suspected child abuse, neglect, or exploitation to Child Protective Services or Adult Protective Services in the case of older adults and adults with disabilities.

[VSP/assessor to insert here any other mandatory reporter language as applicable to the agency, position, or process in place]. We will not use confidential communications that we discuss for any promotional advantage, or to the disadvantage of survivors without exercising and considering methods of safety planning and trauma-informed practices.

I want you to know that we respect your privacy, both as an agency and as a federal mandate, and our communications in the space.

The goal of this assessment is to support you in your journey towards housing, including housing options in and outside of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing.

I am going to ask you a series of questions to understand your experience of housing insecurity, housing needs, and housing barriers. Every question is designed to help us help you. Most of these questions are yes or no. Information disclosed during the assessment will not be used to discriminate you. You can refuse to answer questions, but the more questions you answer honestly and thoroughly, the better I am able to assist you. I recognize that some of these questions are personal and may bring up feelings for you. If at any point you want to pause, not answer a question, or to take a break, you are welcome to do so.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

SECTION I

Questions 1-4 are required by HUD, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development and include assessment date, location, type, and level.

5. Are you in a safe place for me to ask you some questions? or Are you safe to sit down and talk for a while?

Why we are asking this question: To ensure that the present time is safe for the survivor to answer the questions in the assessment. Take into consideration a survivor's phone calls or location may be monitored, or it may be an uncomfortable space to share. More information about technological abuse is available [here](#).

A "no" response to this question will trigger a message to the assessor for you to ask the survivor how they would like to proceed.

Tip #1: Ask if we must take a break for whatever reason or get disconnected, is it safe for me to call or text you to reschedule an appointment or to leave a message? If the survivor is not available at all ask for the best date and time to call back. Ensure that this time works with your schedule, if not, ask for an alternate date and time. More information on best practices in phone communication with survivors can be found [here](#). Recommendation is to complete the assessment process within the same week, if the assessment gets disrupted.

Tip #2: If the survivor says that they are not in safe place, you can also ask if they would like you to call 911 and give 911 the number that appears in Caller ID. For additional guidance on safety planning refer to your agency's internal policies and to the CE for Survivors of Violence safety planning protocol.

6. How many people are in your household?

Why we are asking this question: To get a sense of the household composition. There may be different housing options if the person being assessed is in a couple, has minor children, or a large household. Take into consideration couch surfing, unsheltered homelessness, living in a place deemed inhabitable, and mixed family/room-share households.

7. Are you or is anyone in your household in the following age ranges?

Why we ask this question: Age influences eligibility for specific programs for transitional age youth, seniors, or households with children under the age of 18.

SECTION II

Questions 8-11 refer to current living situation and experience of homelessness, and cascade forward from the enrollment.

11. Have you moved frequently?

Why we ask this question: Current living situations can change, from staying with friends, to sleeping in a vehicle. We want to understand your current housing situation for the past two months.

SECTION III

Questions 12-18 refer to living with disabilities.

12. Is anyone in your household living with a disability?

Why we ask this question: The purpose of these questions is to determine if the person or anyone in their household has any disabling conditions (as reflected by their own self report) and what disabilities they are living with. Generally, there is a correlation between multiple disabling conditions and the need for Permanent Supportive Housing. By discussing disabling conditions VSP staff are seeking to understand what the households risk factors for homelessness and the probability are of needing permanent supportive housing.

Asking people about disabilities can feel very uncomfortable, but it is critical to gather this information as part of the assessment, in part because people who have specific disabling conditions may be eligible for specialized housing or services. Remember that the person being interviewed is always free to decline to respond. The assessor should always ask all the questions. There can be fear or stigma especially with conditions such as HIV/AIDs, mental health, and substance use. It can help to assure the person being interviewed that the law does not allow any discrimination against people who have disabilities, and it will not work against them in any way if they disclose having one or more disabilities. This information is based on self- disclosure, documentation is not needed upfront. But if a household does have documentation, it may be required at the point of referral to housing.

Also, we cannot assume that survivors need help with a certain resource, simply because they have a disability. If a survivor expresses a need for a resource, there is a resource you can visit with the survivor or share with them [here](#).

Tip #1: Use empathy and a strengths-based approach to acknowledge the reality of multiple forms of trauma.

Tip #2: It can help to preface this section with some introductory language, such as “now we will move into some questions about your health.”

Tip #3: Be honest about your role, as an assessor you are not a health care professional and that all health care information is protected health care information protected under HIPPA.

13. **Physical disability**
14. **Developmental disability**
15. **Chronic health condition**
16. **HIV/AIDS**
17. **Mental health condition**
18. **Substance abuse**

SECTION IV

Questions 19-23 regarding income are not scored, as to not advantage or disadvantage survivors based on income. Income information is collected solely for matchmaking to units that have minimum or maximum income requirements.

SECTION V

Questions 24-32 are about survivorship. These questions are asked in the assessment to include the unique vulnerabilities faced by survivors in the prioritization process for housing. These questions allow the survivor to self-assess current experiences of violence and ongoing impact on housing instability. Be sure that your questions include reference to knowing that sometimes people lose their housing because they had to leave a dangerous person in their household, or because they were being stalked or harassed.

Consider take a pause here. For the assessor, an opportunity to check their unconscious bias. For the survivor, an opportunity to indicate that they're okay to continue or that they need to take a break. Check-in with the survivor's well-being, for example if they need to use the restroom or get a glass of water. Check-in with them on the time and whether they have time to continue or need to schedule a follow-up. While it's encouraged to complete the assessment in one encounter, follow-ups can be scheduled if needed.

24. Are you or is anyone in your household experiencing any of the following (allow multiple answers up to 3 responses:

- a. **Sexual Assault**
- b. **Community Violence**
- c. **Stalking**
- d. **Dating Violence**
- e. **Economic Abuse**
- f. **Technological Abuse**
- g. **Legal Abuse**
- h. **Child Abuse**
- i. **Elder Abuse**
- j. **None of these**
- k. **Other life-threatening conditions**

Why we ask this question: we heard directly from survivors that focusing only on domestic violence left out survivors of other forms of abuse and violence. Asking about different types of violence ensures that survivors are not left out of critical housing services.

When a person is exposed to multiple forms of violence over the course of their lifetime this is called poly-victimization. Often, a survivor is not only a survivor of one form of violence, but a survivor may also experience multiple forms of abuse simultaneously such as being a survivor of domestic violence and stalking and technological abuse. A person doing harm may utilize multiple forms of abuse to maintain power and control over the other person. More information on poly-victimization is available [here](#).

Tip #1: Survivors may not identify themselves with a term, when asking to use an example to help the survivor understand what you are asking about. For example- technological abuse can look like a person using technology to monitor or control another person. Refer to Appendix 2 for more definitions.

25. How long have you been in an unsafe situation?

Why we ask this question: To understand how long the survivor has been in the abusive situation.

26. Are you or is anyone in your household a survivor of domestic violence?

Why we ask this question: To understand whether a person is a survivor of domestic violence.

Tip: Do not criticize or condemn the abuser or exploiter. A survivor may experience distress and come to the defense of the person or group of persons causing harm.

27. Sometimes, people are exploited, are threatened with harm or harm to their loved ones or forced to do things they do not want to make money for someone else. I am going to read some statements and let me know if any of these apply to you or if you worry this could happen

- a. I or my family have been threatened with harm or deportation if I leave my job.
- b. I work abnormal hours, can't take off of work if I am sick, or I have no breaks.
- c. I owe my employer money, or I am working to pay off a debt.
- d. Another person is holding onto my passport or identification, or immigration visa.
- e. I was hired for a different job based on false promises or advertising.
- f. I am not working.
- g. None of these apply.

Why we ask this question: Based on survivor feedback this question was added to help identify survivors of labor trafficking who may not identify with the term but would recognize this situation.

Tip #1: Here providing a contrasting or personal example is helpful, such as, when I am at work, I am paid what I agreed to, and do not have to pay my employer back.

Questions 28.a and 28.b are conditional questions. Any response other than a "no" response to question 28.a. will trigger 28.b.

28.a. Do you have control and choice about who and when you have sexual relations with someone?

- a. Yes**
- b. No**
- c. Client doesn't know**
- d. Client prefers not to answer**
- e. Data not collected**

Why we ask this questions 28a and 28b: This question is to prioritize survivors of sexual assault, sex trafficking, and rape crisis. And to provide an opportunity for survivors of sex trafficking who may not self-identify to obtain points. Based on survivor feedback these observational questions are meant to identify the signs of a person that is being trafficked. If any of the signs are observed, the staff conducting the assessment should follow their agency's protocol for supporting survivors of sex trafficking. The combination of both questions establish checks and balance between the verbally stated and observational question when there is apparent conflict between what the person said and what the interviewer observed.

28.b. Based on interviewer's observations: Does the client show any of the following signs?

- a. Person has physical injuries or branding such as name tattoos on face or chest, tattoos about money and sex, or pimp phrases.**
- b. Person is being accompanied or monitored.**
- c. Identification documents are held by another person.**
- d. Another person is speaking on their behalf or being coached on what to say.**
- e. Person shows signs of being accompanied, monitored, or controlled.**
- f. Person appears to be fearful during the assessment**
- g. Person shows signs of impairment due to substance use or mental health or health condition**
- h. None of these are observed the interviewer.**
- i. Interviewer unable to observe-phone assessment**

Tip1: Keep in mind that tattoos and face tattoos can carry cultural significance and NOT be an indicator that a person is experiencing sex trafficking.



Photo credit: <https://www.storiesandink.com/en-us/blogs/journal/women-indigenous-tattooing>

Tip 2: Eye contact: If a person demonstrates fearful behavior or avoids eye contact this can be a sign of trafficking¹. For example, avoiding eye contact with a person of the opposite sex. On the other hand, prolonged eye contact in some cultures can be seen as a sign of disrespect or confrontation. Be mindful and sensitive to cultural difference and acculturation when making your observations.

SECTION VI

Questions 29-30 are equity related questions, acknowledging that survivors may face distinct barriers due to their race, gender, sexual orientation or other identity.

29. Do you feel that discrimination based on your race or culture has prevented you from obtaining or retaining housing?

Why we ask this question: Based on self-disclosure, we are seeking to understand from the survivor's perspective if they have faced discrimination based on an identity.

Landlords will not often explicitly state race or culture as the reason why they are denying a person housing. However, it is widely understood that Black Indigenous People of Color are systemically discriminated against in housing due to historical and present racial inequities. This question is based on the survivor's perception.

30. Do you feel that your gender identity, sexual orientation, age, family status, social class or immigration status has prevented you from obtaining or retaining housing?

Why we ask this question: This question asks about several identities other race. A survivor may also discrimination based on these identities which can impact obtaining housing.

SECTION VII

Questions 31-33 are meant to gather information on what supportive services would help a survivor either obtain or retain housing and to end the assessment on more of a positive note.

31. If you are not feeling safe where you are staying, how can we help you be more safe?

For additional guidance on safety planning refer to your agency's internal policies and to the CE for Survivors of Violence Safety Planning Protocol.

Why we ask this question: Asking if a survivor “feels safe” is to help uncover other types of harm the participant may be experiencing, for example, financial abuse, gaslighting, other unsafe situations that may not fall under the category of domestic violence and human trafficking, etc. This question is meant to be a conversation starter.

Tip #1: If the client says they don't feel safe, it would be a good time to remind them that any information they give is protected so that they feel safe providing more information. See HOPE system training- Supporting Survivor Choice and Autonomy for reference

32. Documents (such as a government issued ID or social security card) are hard to get, do you need support in gathering documents for housing?

Why we ask this question: VSP staff are expected to support survivors in obtaining key documents such as an ID, social security card, income documents, or birth certificates for children. The specific documents needed will differ based on household composition and on the type of housing opportunity the survivor is offered.

33. What supportive services (ex. Employment services, financial coaching, mental health) do you need to be successful in housing?

Why we ask this question: To not make assumptions about what survivors need but to ask directly what resources would help a survivor in either obtaining or sustaining housing in the long term.

Tip #1: Use a strength-based approach in conveying responses. Use active listening throughout the assessment. Do not attempt to ignore the problems and difficulties, rather attempt to identify the positive resources (or what may need to be added) and strengths that will lay the basis to address the challenges resulting from the problems.

Tip #2: When asking whether the person needs help with daily activities, it is acceptable to ask if they need an in-home support worker or someone to come in to help them

5.3. Housing Conference

Overview of Housing Conferencing

The goal of the Housing Conference is to provide coordinated and integrated systems of care services across Victim Service Providers (VSPs) for all Gender-Based Violence (GBV) survivors experiencing homelessness in the San Francisco community. This effort is to connect participants to safe housing and supportive services. The vision also includes identifying systemic barriers to housing access and stability and reducing participant resharing traumatic events to access services.

Attendance and Scheduling

The Housing Conference will be attended by a representative from each the three VSP Access Points:

- Asian Women's Shelter
- SafeHouse
- St. Vincent de Paul - Riley Center

and the Department of Homeless and Supportive Housing (HSH) represented by:

- Coordinated Entry Program Manager for Survivors, and/or
- Coordinated Entry Program Access Point Lead, and/or
- Housing for Survivors Program Manager, and/or
- Other authorized HSH staff.

Housing Conference meetings are closed to any other non-authorized personnel, to protect and ensure the privacy of participants and their housing navigation process, to promote safety and well-being for those fleeing from abusive environments.

In the Housing Conference, VSP staff will represent the participants. In accordance with the [Letter on Related Information, Benefits, and Potential Risks document](#), information communicated between the participant and the VSP throughout their relationship will not be disclosed to third parties. The VSP will only disclose to authorized agency officials when the participant has given informed consent and when disclosure is necessary to further the participant's housing and supportive services goals. Throughout the informed consent process, VSP staff will be meeting with participants to listen to their preferences and engage in a survivor-centered housing solutions process.

The Housing Conference will be held on bi-weekly basis but may be adjusted as needed depending on the availability of housing opportunities. Meetings may be conducted virtually or in-person, whichever format is most efficient and effective as determined by the majority of attendees. Meetings will be scheduled by the HSH Coordinated Entry for Survivors Program Manager. VSPs are responsible for notifying HSH which staff should receive Housing Conference invitations to represent their organization. VSPs should select staff for Housing Conference meetings who have confidential knowledge about the status, needs, and preferences of the participant being reviewed; and can make decisions regarding the provision of housing-related services with their agency's values on trauma-informed care always at the forefront.

It is recommended that Housing Conference attendees commit to one in-person meeting per fiscal year. At this annual meeting, Housing Conference attendees will:

- Discuss the of results of the Housing Conference model,
- Review the previous year's progress,
- Make recommendations for improvements, and
- All partners can share accomplishments to date.

Prior to the Housing Conference

Informed Consent Form

Prior to the Housing Conference, VSP staff must receive informed consent from the program participant. The Informed Consent Form authorizes HSH and the VSPs to share information either identified or de-identified at the preference of the program

participant. The Informed Consent Form also authorizes HSH and VSPs to discuss and share housing opportunities that the program participant might be considered for at a Housing Conference.

For more information, review the Informed Consent Policy in Appendix 4.

Tracking Spreadsheet

After receiving informed consent from the program participant, VSP staff will add the program participant's non-personally identifiable information to the tracking spreadsheet. The tracking spreadsheet will be used to ensure all participants enrolled in Coordinated Entry for survivors experiencing or fleeing violence can be considered for available housing opportunities. HSH will manage the tracking spreadsheet in a shared Box folder. Only authorized representatives of HSH and VSPs will have access to the tracking spreadsheet, and it will be password protected.

No Personally Identifying Information (PII) will be included on the tracking spreadsheet. The only household data on the tracking sheet will be the program participant's unique identification number, the program participant's assessment score, and the designation of Adult, Family, or Youth. Households will be ordered on the tracking spreadsheet based on the assessment score. Households with the highest scores will be at the top of the tracking spreadsheet and cascade down. Where two households have the same score, the household with the earlier assessment will be prioritized.

Sample of Tracking Sheet

HOPE ID	ONE ID	Household Composition	Assmt Score	Assmt Date	Assessor Agency	Staff Name	Staff E-mail

Housing Conference Preparation

HSH will be prepared to share all housing opportunities that are available for program participants. Prior to the housing conference, HSH will notify VSP staff by email how many housing opportunities will be available for program participants at the upcoming Housing Conference.

When there are less than 10 Gender Based Violence Specific Scattered Site Housing Programs slots available, they will be divided evenly between survivors served by VSPs and those served by other Access Points. When there is an inventory of more than 10 Gender Based Violence Specific Scattered Site Housing Opportunities HSH will develop an allocation plan based on the specific eligibility criteria of that program.

VSP staff will come prepared to participate in the Housing Conference. When feasible and appropriate, VSP staff will meet with program participants prior to the housing conference to allow them to express their preferences and household considerations and engage in problem-solving and analysis.

For each household that will be discussed at the Housing Conference, VSP staff should be prepared to discuss the following questions:

- What are the program participant's safety concerns as they relate to housing?
- Are there any zip codes or geographic areas that the program participant says need to be avoided for safety and protection purposes?
- What are the known issues that act as barriers to safe and stable housing (e.g. background check issues)?
- Has anything changed since the program participant was assessed (e.g. housing size and composition, income, disability, or engagement with the VSP)?
- Has the program participant turned down a housing opportunity? What were the reasons?
- Has the program participant been denied by a housing provider? If so, what were the reasons?
- Is the program participant considered an emergency transfer?

Housing Conference

Please refer to the Housing Conference Norms document in Appendix 5.

During the Housing Conference, VSPs and HSH will identify the households with the highest prioritization scores on the tracking sheet. Based on the available inventory, households will be matched with the housing opportunities that they may be eligible for. Priority will be given to households with the highest assessment score. Where two households have the same assessment score, preference will be given to the household with the earlier assessment date.

Participants who are not matched to a housing opportunity will be referred to Problem Solving.

- **Problem solving conversations:** helps identify real-time solutions to a housing crisis
- **Housing location assistance:** helps households with income but without an immediate housing plan locate a place to rent. Includes shared housing placements to increase exits to housing.
- **Travel and relocation support outside San Francisco:** travel and relocation assistance that results in a housing connection/safe housing plan in another community
- The Human Services Agency leads two additional relocation assistance programs: **Homeward Bound** and **Journey Home**. More information on the [Housing and Problem Solving Assistance](#) can be found here.
- **Reunification, mediation, and conflict resolution:** helps households stay in a current or recent housing situation or new housing situation with mediation support
- **Financial assistance:** Flexible financial resources to cover specific costs that will assist households to obtain or stay in a safe, indoor place outside the HRS
- **Connections to employment services:** referrals are made through a partnership with the San Francisco Office of Employment and Workforce Development
- **Referrals and links to a range of community services:** [San Francisco Gender-Based Violence Resources' website](#) can help connect program participants to community services.

If a program participant experiencing homelessness has participated in Problem Solving and Coordinated Entry at an Access Point and was not prioritized despite their high barriers to housing, high vulnerability, and high chronicity of homelessness, their priority status can be reviewed through the Coordinated Entry Administrative Review process.

Model Housing Conference Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions
 - A means of fostering mutual relationship building, with a sense of shared purpose and community.

- Key System Updates:
 - Review of any updates to the system and any critical system indicators
- Housing Conferencing:
 - Survivor-specific updates.
 - Housing opportunity matchmaking based on their individualized Coordinated Entry for Survivors assessment prioritization score and other relevant household information.
 - Supportive services match-making for high-risk service needs;
 - Proactively coordinating warm hand-offs.
 - Discussing and making decisions about priority, eligibility, enrollment, termination, appeals, and VAWA emergency transfers, if applicable.
- Follow Up Items:
 - General, non-participant specific follow-up, messaging.
 - General, non-participant specific follow-up, messaging, or action items identified during the meeting.
 - Confirmation of the next Housing Conference meeting date, if needed.
 - Participant-specific follow-up will be to complete the [Housing Conference Summary Form](#) in the HOPE system, and, at the point of referral, the Housing Conference Summary Form will be shared with the housing provider to aid in the housing process.
 - This is also a space for closing the meeting with affirmations or celebrating successes, to encourage relationship-building and support amongst all the Housing Conference partners.

Housing Conference Summary Form

The Housing Conference Summary Form should be completed by the program participant's VSP and/or HSH within 48 hours of the Housing Conference. [The Housing Conference Summary Form is available here.](#)

Referrals from Housing Conference to Mainstream Housing Opportunities

Program participants referred from the Housing Conference to mainstream housing opportunities will have the option to have their information de-identified. Program participants have the right to ask HSH not to share information with certain individuals or for certain purposes. HSH will not deny services to any program participant based on that program participant's request to restrict how their data is to be stored or shared.

The referral process should respect the program participant's choice. Program participants should have informed knowledge from the representing VSP to decide what information they provide during all phases of the referral process and can refuse to answer any question. For more information, review the Informed Consent Policy in Appendix 4.

The program participant may choose to have identifiable information in the ONE system. If the program participant consents to have identifiable information in the ONE system, then HSH will make the match in the ONE system and the housing provider will be notified of the referral. The program participant may choose *not* to have identifiable information in the ONE system. If the program participant chooses to remain de-identified, then HSH will notify the VSP that the program participant has been matched to housing and the VSP will connect the program participant to the housing provider. If a program participant accepts an offer of mainstream housing, VSP staff does a warm handoff to the housing provider by sharing the housing provider's contact information with the program participant.

If the program participant has consented, the VSP can call or coordinate a virtual meeting between the housing provider and program participant. The VSP will coordinate in a way that is consistent with the program participant's safety plan, if one is in place.

If the program participant has consented to share their information with the housing provider (including by completing a Homelessness Response System Release of Information form), the VSP can send:

- [Housing Conference Summary Form](#)
- Certificate of homelessness (if applicable)
- State ID (if available)
- Social Security Number/Cards (if applicable)
- Birth certificates for minors in the household
- Proof of income (if within the last 90 days)

Never share personally identifiable information about any program participant in a message, unless absolutely necessary *and* consistent with HSH's policies for protecting personally identifiable information. For example, do not use a program participant's name in email correspondence – use their UID# instead.

Never save personally identifiable information about any program participant on any personal devices. For example, do not save a picture of a program participant's documents on a personal cell phone.

If the program participant *does not* consent to share their information with the housing provider, let the program participant know that they are responsible for sharing their information directly with housing provider.

Right of Refusal

Program participant's autonomy and choice are paramount in the process and program participants get to define what safety looks like for them and what safe housing looks like for them. If a program participant is prioritized for a housing opportunity within the Homelessness Response System, the program participant has the right to decline as specified in the [CE Written Standards](#).

5.4. Referrals to Mainstream Programs

Emergency Services

While the primary goal of Coordinated Entry is housing placement through either Problem Solving or by being matched to a housing program, Coordinated Entry may conduct limited prioritization and placement for the Homeless Response System's (HRS) temporary shelter resources. Victim Service Providers may refer survivors of violence to the HRS' temporary shelter resources by referring survivors to mainstream Access Points and by other means specific to that shelter resource.

Additionally, Victim Service Providers who operate a shelter program or service that is funded by HUD will be required to enter program enrollments and exits in their comparable database.

Permanent Housing Interventions and Housing Referral Status

Program participants are matched to mainstream programs, including permanent housing interventions, through the Housing Conference as detailed in Section 5.3 above. Please review Section 5.3 for more information about how program participants are matched with mainstream housing opportunities in the Housing Conference and how referrals are made.

In the mainstream system, data collected through the Coordinated Entry process is used to prioritize persons experiencing homelessness within the CoC's geography and assign them a Housing Referral Status designation as defined previously. Program participant data is initially collected through a Housing Primary Assessment. All agencies are required to provide a Housing Primary Assessment for each program participant. Program participants that are Housing Referral Status are placed on a queue managed in the ONE system (San Francisco's HMIS). In addition, Administrative Review and Case Review outcomes are considered during prioritization. A Housing Referral Status designation is calculated based on the number of housing opportunities expected to become available within a 90-day period. Once a person experiencing homelessness is given this status, the designation will be valid for the duration of their engagement with Coordinated Entry until exited to housing.

When a program participant is matched to an available housing intervention, Access Point staff will contact, inform, and offer the intervention to the program participant who will have the opportunity to accept or decline the referral. Access Point staff will maintain contact with the household until such time as a shelter and/or housing referral is made. Housing Referral Status program participants on the queue are matched to available housing based on the needs of the person experiencing homelessness, provided the program participant meets the eligibility criteria for the housing program and expresses interest in being matched to such a program.

5.5. Referrals to Survivor Specific Housing Programs

Survivor specific housing programs include rapid rehousing programs designed for survivors of violence as well as specific housing allocations for survivors from mainstream programs.

Survivor Specific Housing Program slots can be filled in the two ways described below. HSH determines the number of referrals that will be made. Program participants are matched with Survivor Specific Housing Program slots through the Housing Conference. For more information on the Housing Conference, please review Section 5.3 above.

Coordinated Entry for Survivors Participants

Victim Service Providers refer current program participants who are survivors of violence that are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking. These are program participants who have been assessed using the CE for Survivors Assessment tool. These households must meet eligibility requirements for the program they are being referred to. Victim Service

Providers then outreach to these program participants to offer the housing program and, if the program participant accepts, the Victim Service Provider refers them to the program. If the program participant declines, then the Victim Service Provider is free to refer another program participant to the housing conference.

Mainstream Coordinated Entry

Victim Service Providers refer survivors of violence that are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking and have been designated as Housing Referral Status. Victim Service Providers receive an automated report from the ONE system which identifies eligible households for the program who've gone through the mainstream system. Victim Service Providers then outreach to these households to offer the housing program, and if the household accepts, then the Victim Service Provider refers them to the program. If the household declines, they remain on the queue for another housing opportunity.

All enrollments for Survivor Specific Housing Programs will be documented in the agency's comparable database. Once a referral has been made, it is up to the Housing Provider to enroll the household in their services.

6. Data Management and Quality

Data quality is a term that refers to the reliability and validity of program participant-level data in an agency's comparable database. It is measured by the extent to which data in the system reflects actual information in the real world. With good quality data, a community can accurately tell its story of the individuals and families it serves.

6.1. Roles & Responsibilities

Bitfocus

BitFocus is the software vendor and System Administration partner for the HOPE System, which is the overarching framework that holds each agency's closed comparable database environment.

Bitfocus' access to data is not limited technically, instead, it is limited by their practice and contractual obligations. Bitfocus will provide the following services to assist agencies in correctly entering data into the comparable database(s), and in addressing data quality issues:

- Configure and maintain the system

- Provide end user trainings and workflow documents.
- Work with comparable database agency partner management to identify at least one agency employee as the comparable database Agency Lead.
- Produce data quality reports and information on how to correct any identified data quality issues.
- Provide technical assistance to agencies requesting assistance in identifying what steps need to be taken in order to correct data quality issues.
- Provide other services as contracted with HSH and/or the comparable database agency partner.
- Provide written instructions to their staff and contractors and conduct regular monitoring to ensure Bitfocus staff and contractors refrain from accessing or utilizing Personally Identifying Information and Protected Health Information.
- Bitfocus will investigate any unauthorized access of Personally Identifying Information or Protected Health Information by Bitfocus staff or contractors at the written request of the comparable database partner agency.

Comparable Database Partner Agencies

Agencies will take sole responsibility for entering, verifying, and correcting data entry:

- Agency staff will measure completeness by running Annual Performance Reports (APRs) and other reports, then distribute those reports to staff tasked with improving data completeness.
- It is the responsibility of agency management to ensure staff tasked with correcting data quality issues do so in a timely manner.
- Agencies will make their best efforts to obtain data requested by HUD in their current HMIS Comparable Database Manual. However, agencies will not be penalized for duplicate or missing data, as these circumstances may be due to a program participant's decision related to data sharing.

HSH

HSH is the HMIS lead entity and the Continuum of Care lead entity in San Francisco. As the HMIS Lead, HSH also provides training and technical assistance to the extent permitted by the HMIS Comparable Database Manual. HSH is also the primary grant recipient for Victim Service Providers receiving CoC and other federal homeless assistance grant funding. By leveraging federal funding, HSH can make the HOPE System comparable database software available for all four Victim Service Providers,

who otherwise might not have the resources to configure their own internal systems to HUD data standards.

HSH is the funder of the HOPE System and the holder of the contract with Bitfocus, who is both the vendor and system administrator for the HOPE System. HSH will not have access to the comparable database environments housed within the HOPE System. HSH will obtain information for HUD-reporting purposes by requesting aggregate data reports from Victim Service Providers.

6.2. Reporting

To comply with HUD grant requirements, comparable database partner agencies must provide data reports to HSH that include de-identified aggregate data.

Each comparable database partner agency will work with their HSH program manager to set a schedule for providing these reports to HSH. HSH will then enter this data into HUD's Sage system.

6.3. Comparable Database Updates

Changes made to the comparable database will be made periodically on an as-needed basis to ensure that all software remains compliant and able to meet HUD's data standards.

Changes to comparable databases that are unrelated to HUD data standards updates will be made in collaboration with comparable database partner agencies, either through the Survivor Data Working Group, the Safe Housing Working Group, or another body that includes people with lived experience.

The process for making these changes is as follows:

- Comparable database partner agencies can request changes using the ONE System change request form.
- Bitfocus will make all changes in a testing site.
- Bitfocus will have access to the live site to produce the requested change and will utilize a fake agency and fake client.
- Comparable database partner agencies will test the change with clients in the live site and report back to HSH and Bitfocus whether the change took effect as intended.

Appendix 1: Glossary of Acronyms

AHAR	Annual Homeless Assessment Report
APR	Annual Performance Report
CES	Coordinated Entry System
CH	Chronically Homeless
CoC	Continuum of Care
CPD	Community Planning and Development (HUD office)
DHS	Department of Human Services
DRP	Direct Referral Program
DV	Domestic Violence
ESG	Emergency Solutions Grants
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
HMIS	Homeless Management Information System
HOPE	Housing Opportunities for Persons Experiencing violence
HOPWA	Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS
HRS	Homelessness Response System
HSH	San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing
HT	Human Trafficking
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development
HUD-VASH	HUD Vouchers through Veterans' Affairs Supportive Housing
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning
LSA	Longitudinal Systems Analysis
ONE System	Online Navigation and Entry System
PII	Personally Identifying Information
PSH	Permanent Supportive Housing

RRH	Rapid Rehousing
SA	Sexual Assault
SMI	Serious Mental Illness or Seriously Mentally Ill
SSVF	Supportive Services for Veterans Families
TAY	Transition Age Youth (18-24 years old)
TH	Transitional Housing
VASH	Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing
VAWA	Violence Against Women Act
VSP	Victim Services Provider

Appendix 2: Definitions

Comparable Database Partner Agency is any victim services provider or HMIS-prohibited agency that uses the comparable database program offered by HSH.

Confidential Information includes any written or spoken information shared in confidence between a service participant and a counselor/advocate in the course of that relationship, which includes any information that might identify the location or identity of someone who has sought services. Confidential communication includes all information received by the service participant and any advice, report, or working paper given or made by the counselor/advocate. Any and all knowledge, advice, records, logs, client and organizational records, or working papers (including electronically maintained records relating to a service participant) are confidential and are not to be shared with a third party. Communications are confidential even if the service participant shares the information with third parties, who are working to further the interest of the service participant, in the presence of the counselor/advocate. Confidential documents received from other agencies (for which a service participant had to execute a written release) are confidential and part of the scope of confidential communications.

Coordinated Entry is a way to organize the Homelessness Response System and a tool for matching people experiencing homelessness to the most appropriate housing resource. Coordinated Entry is the backbone of a highly functional Housing First system, as it helps expedite housing placement and ensures that the most vulnerable people in our community are linked to robust housing interventions.

Coordinated Entry Access Points are the community gateways into San Francisco's Homelessness Response System and serve Adults, Families and Transitional Age Youth (age 18 to 24). Access points are located throughout San Francisco and are operated by local non-profit service providers. At these community Access Points, eligible individuals and families experiencing homelessness are provided with Problem Solving opportunities and solutions, shelter (for youth and families with children), housing opportunities, needs assessments, and other services in San Francisco. For more information, visit [this link](#).

Daily Activities includes activities such as dressing, making appointments, feeding yourself, using the restroom, transportation and getting around, or doing things needed to manage an apartment.

Definitions of Specific Conditions HUD does not define the specific conditions listed in the HMIS data elements. Below are commonly used descriptions and examples of these types of disabilities.

- Physical disability – a physical condition that affects a person's mobility, physical capacity, stamina, or dexterity. This can include brain or spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, respiratory disorders, epilepsy, hearing and visual impairments.
- Development disability – chronic conditions that are due to mental or physical impairments that arise before adulthood, such as Down's Syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, and others
- Chronic health condition – a health condition or disease that is persistent or otherwise long-lasting in its effects, such as diabetes, asthma, COPD, arthritis, chronic kidney disease, heart disease, and others.
- HIV/AIDS – having a diagnosis of having the HIV virus or having AIDS.
- Mental health condition – disorders that affect mood, thinking or behavior, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, anxiety, depression.
- Substance use – a condition in which use of one or more legal or illegal substances leads to a significant impairment or distress

Disabling Condition means that the person has a physical, mental, or emotional impairment that is expected to be of long duration and impedes the person's ability to live independently. There is more information and guidance available from HUD here: <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HMIS-Data-Standards-Manual.pdf>

List of Disabling Conditions the assessment asks if the person has any of a specific list of disabling conditions. The categories of disabling conditions are the same as those asked in the HUD HMIS Universal Data Elements.

List of Acts of Violence The assessment asks if the person has experienced any specific acts of violence. Below are the acts of violence with their definitions.

- Sexual Assault – any nonconsensual sexual act
- Community Violence – gang or neighborhood violence
- Stalking – following, harassing, and threatening another person
- Dating Violence – violence committed by a current or former romantic partner – can be verbal or emotionally abusive
- Economic Abuse – coercing, deceiving, manipulating, or restricting access to money in ways that cause harm
- Technological Abuse – using technology to harm, control, impersonate, monitor, or intimidate another person
- Legal Abuse – misusing the court system to keep power and control or harm another person

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is affordable housing designed for people experiencing homelessness with chronic illnesses, disabilities, mental health issues, and/or substance use disorders who have experienced long-term or repeated homelessness. PSH provides subsidized housing, and supportive services.

PII or Personally Identifying Information or Personal Information is individually identifying information about an individual and includes information likely to disclose the location of a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. This information can include—

- a. First and last name.
- b. Home or other physical address.
- c. Contact information (including a postal, e-mail, or Internet protocol address or telephone or facsimile number).
- d. Social security number.
- e. Any other information (including date of birth, racial or ethnic background, or religious affiliation) that, in combination with (a) through (d), would serve to identify an individual.

Problem Solving is a strategy that prevents or diverts people from homelessness by helping identify immediate alternate housing arrangements and, if necessary, connecting them with services and short-term financial assistance to help them quickly return to housing. Problem Solving programs can reduce the number of people or families becoming homeless and reduce demand for shelter or other emergency services.

Program Participant is any person, including any adult, youth, child, or family who contacts a comparable database partner agency or receives any services from a comparable database partner agency, whether those services are received by telephone, fax, electronically, or in person and whether those services are sought for themselves or for someone else.

Rapid Rehousing (RRH) is a housing program designed for a wide variety of individuals and families. It provides time limited rental subsidy and case management services for people experiencing homelessness. Households enrolled in the Rapid Rehousing programs are housed in units scattered throughout the private rental market and receive a monthly rental subsidy typically between 12 to 24 months. The goals of Rapid Rehousing are to help people obtain housing quickly, increase self-sufficiency, successfully graduate from the program by taking over 100% of the full amount of rent.

Rapid Rehousing includes housing location, temporary rental assistance, and housing focused case management.

Relational Database is a relational database is a collection of information that structures data into one or more tables (or "relations") of columns and rows, making it easy to understand and gain insights about the relationship between various points of data. For example, a relational database could be used to see the number of clients using a particular service, or those using a service in a particular location. For source information and further detail, visit [this link](#).

Staff includes all paid and unpaid staff, volunteers, counselors, advocates, consultants, board members, student interns, and any other roles that a comparable database partner considers staff.

Temporary Shelter provides temporary places for people to stay while accessing other services and seeking housing solutions. This may include shelters, Navigation Centers, Stabilization Beds, and Transitional Housing.

Survivors of Violence individuals and families who are fleeing or attempting to flee violence (including domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence).

Victim Services Provider is a term used by HUD, identified as “a private nonprofit organization whose primary mission is to provide direct services to [survivors].” See [HUD FAQ ID 2686](#) and [34 USC § 12291\(a\)\(43\)](#).

Additional Definitions of Key Terms in the San Francisco Homeless Response System are available in the [San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing Strategic Framework](#).

Appendix 3: Coordinated Entry for Survivors Safety Planning Protocol

This protocol is intended for use with the San Francisco Coordinated Entry for Survivors Assessment tool if a survivor discloses that they are feeling unsafe in the moment or in the place where they are staying.

Please Note: This Safety Planning Protocol is intended for the purposes of administering a housing assessment and does not supersede Safety planning measures performed within Victim Service Provider agencies and organizations. Keep in mind, safety planning is not one-size fits-all.

There are many types of Safety Plans, including but not limited to:

- preparing a plan for situations that arise during a violent incident
- preparing to leave, after leaving and ways to prevent future retaliation
- during housing navigation with a voucher or subsidy
- safety planning at the person's place of employment, daycare, school, etc.

Safety planning involves how to cope with emotions, tell friends and family about the abuse, take legal action, and more. Each of these situations are associated with different risks and measures. Safety planning is fluid and changes over time as circumstances change.

In safety planning for finding and retaining housing and economic stability, there are approaches a service provider would design to meet the needs of the agency/governance policy; and there are decisions and determinations a survivor would make when building safety planning for their household/family. Safety planning pathways or roadmaps may differ in service provision, then in a survivor's vision. Although important, safety planning also has limitations when considering cultural identities and societal factors.

Before conducting a safety plan, understand that lifetime cumulative trauma occurs on a continuum, rather than as isolated incidents. Successful Safety Plans should outline concrete options for responding when safety is threatened or compromised. Safety planning should be tailored to their unique circumstance.

Response to disclosure: "Thank you for sharing this with me, and I want to support your health and safety. If you would like, we can continue the assessment process to help with housing options, or we can talk about safety resources. What would help you feel safe?"

Resources

The following resources are optional and can be offered to survivors as needed and available:

Shelter: If the survivor would feel safer at a shelter, consider the following:

- **DV Shelter:** If your organization operates a DV shelter, refer to your internal protocols for accessing shelter. If your organization does not operate a DV shelter; you can call Woman Inc. with the survivor, to find out which DV shelters are conducting intakes that day: 877-384-3578.
- **Temporary Shelter:** the City of San Francisco has temporary shelter options for Adults, Youth, and Families. Additional information on how to access shelter can be found here: <https://hsh.sfgov.org/services/how-to-get-services/accessing-temporary-shelter/>
- **Urgent Accommodation Vouchers:**
 - The City of San Francisco has a limited number of Urgent Accommodation Vouchers for survivors of violence, call 415-940-2864.
 - Compass Urgent Accommodation Vouchers: <https://www.compass-sf.org/compass-urgent-accommodation-vouchers>

Prevention & Problem Solving: If the survivor would feel safer reuniting with friends, family, in another community, or needs move in assistance, such as security deposit to move out on their own; consider the following:

- **San Francisco Emergency Rental Assistance Program:** provides emergency financial assistance. <https://hsh.sfgov.org/services/how-to-get-services/accessing-prevention/>
- **Housing Problem Solving:** includes interventions to divert or rapidly exit people from homelessness. <https://hsh.sfgov.org/services/the-homelessness-response-system/problem-solving/>

Crisis Lines: Can help the survivor with safety planning and intervention before, during and after a violent incident. You can call with the survivor in the moment and/or provide the survivor with the phone number:

- **Local Lines:**
 - Woman Inc: 24-hour Support Line (877) 384-3578. Resources are provided in English and Spanish to people of all gender identities.

- San Francisco Women Against Rape: 24-hour Crisis Line (415) 647-7273. Resources are provided to people of all gender identities.
- **National Lines/Directories:**
 - National Domestic Violence Hotline:
 - Call (800) 799-SAFE (7233)
 - TTY (800) 787-3224
 - Text “START” to 88788
 - National Human Trafficking Hotline: 888-373-7888
 - National Human Trafficking Hotline Referral Directory: provides services based on the location of the client, and several filter options; such as gender, nationality, age, and type of trafficking.
 - The Global Modern Slavery Directory: is an interactive, searchable map and database of organizations and agencies across the globe that address the issue of modern slavery and human trafficking.
 - Additional Resources: ACF Strategic Planning Fact Sheet for DV Survivor Housing and Supportive Services

Appendix 4: Informed Consent Policy

The CoC and comparable database partner agencies prioritize survivor choice and autonomy in providing assistance to survivors of violence. Survivor autonomy is the belief that survivors possess their own sense of agency and have the right to define their needs and to make their own choices about how to meet those needs.

Comparable database users shall not disclose any personally identifying information or individual information collected in connection with services requested, utilized, or denied through its programs, or reveal any individual program participant information without the informed, time-limited consent of the person about whom information is sought.

Defining Informed Consent:

Informed consent means the program participant understands the related risks and potential benefits of having their information listed in the system and how this may impact their safety plan. Consent should not be assumed. To give informed consent, a program participant must affirmatively state their consent, including signing an informed consent form or documenting verbal consent in the HOPE system.

Informed consent must also be time limited. Authorizations will be valid for 90 days. However, the program participant may also modify or cancel the authorization at any time. Modification or cancellation should be documented in writing either by the program participant or by staff acting at the program participant's direction.

Informed Consent Protocol:

- Staff will advise program participants of the potential benefits and related risks at each stage of this process. To ensure the program participant is fully informed when giving consent, the program participant should be advised:
- What data is being collected,
- Where the data will be collected or stored,
- How long the data will be stored,
- Who will have access to that data,
- The program participant can change or cancel their consent at any time, and
- How to change or cancel their consent.

Staff will also provide the program participant with an Informed Consent Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document. This document will advise the program participant of the components of informed consent detailed below.

Components of Informed Consent:

Informed consent includes the following key components:

1. Informed Consent to Privacy Policy:

Before creating a profile in the HOPE system, staff will review their organization's privacy policy with the program participant. All Victim Service Provider agencies (VSP) are required to have a privacy policy. Each VSP will provide a copy of their privacy policy to HSH at least annually. If the VSP makes any changes to their privacy policy, they are required to provide a copy of the new privacy policy to HSH within a reasonable period of time.

Staff will document the program participant's informed consent to the privacy policy on the client profile creation screen in the HOPE system in response to the statement: "I/We have reviewed our agency's privacy practices with the client."

2. Informed Consent to Collect Data for the HOPE System:

Prior to entering any program participant data into the comparable database, staff will review their agency's policies regarding program participant confidentiality and inform program participants that they have the right to opt-out of having their information entered into the comparable database. This decision to opt-in or opt-out cannot be the basis for providing or denying them assistance. If a program participant requests that their information be omitted from the database, they should and would be informed how their decision may limit the services they are able to receive. Explicit consent from the survivor is required for data collection. Informed consent should not be assumed.

Staff will document the program participant's informed consent to collect data on the client profile creation screen in the HOPE system in response to the statement: "I/We have obtained informed consent from the client to store their information in the HOPE system."

3. Informed Consent to Release Information for the Housing Conference:

Informed, time limited consent must be obtained from the program participant to share a program participant's data with HSH and the three VSPs in the Housing Conference. The three VSPs are Asian Women's Shelter (AWS), Riley Center, and Safehouse. The purpose of the Housing Conference is to match program participants with all housing opportunities for which they may be eligible.

By giving informed consent, the program participant authorizes the above parties to share information on a tracking sheet without any Personally Identifiable Information (PII). The tracking sheet will contain only a unique identification number, the program participant's assessment score, and the designation of Adult, Family, or Youth. By giving informed consent, the program participant also allows staff to share personally identifiable information at the Housing Conference with HSH and other VSPs. Personally identifiable information is shared for the purpose of matchmaking the

program participant with housing opportunities. By giving informed consent to release information for the housing conference, the program participant is only consenting for personally identifiable information to be shared in the Housing Conference with the HSH and VSP staff attending and is not consenting to the release of information outside of the Housing Conference.

Staff will document the program participant's informed consent with the Informed Consent Form. The Informed Consent Form is valid for 90 days. After 90 days, staff will contact the program participant for a new Informed Consent Form if necessary. The Informed Consent form is filled out and signed by program participants and VSP staff in the HOPE system.

4. Homelessness Response System Release of Information

If the program participant is a potential match of a housing opportunity, the VSP must obtain a Homelessness Response System Release of Information from the program participant before sending any program participant information to the Housing Provider. The HRS Release of Information will be valid for 90 days.

Staff will advise the program participant of their right to have their information de-identified when shared with a mainstream Housing Provider, which means that an anonymous profile will be created in the ONE system that does not contain the program participant's personally identifiable information. See [Example](#).

To request a de-identified profile the Victim Service Provider would contact the Coordinated Entry for Survivors Program Manager or Access Point Lead as a backup. The request would be made via e-mail and documented in the tracking sheet.

Staff will document the program participant's informed consent with the Homelessness Response System Release of Information which can be signed by electronic signature or by verbal consent. Staff will fill out the informed consent form with participants and upload the Homeless Response System Release of Information into the HOPE system.

5. Human Services Agency Release of Information

Human Services Agency Releases of Information are optional, but highly recommended where VAWA/FVPSA/VOCA-compliant. Such releases allow information to be exchanged between the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and the Human Services Agency to:

- Coordinate economic support and self-sufficiency services for people served both by Human Services Agency and the by Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing;

- Evaluate and improve Human Services Agency housing related programs; and/or
- Comply with mandated reporting requirements; the Human Services Agency may access information regarding my housing status, such as which services I am connected to.

Informed Consent Form

Date: _____

I, _____, give the following agency:

- Asian Women's Shelter
- Safe House
- St. Vincent de Paul Riley Center

I give permission to **only** share: Assessment Score, Assessment Date, Household composition (Adult, Family, Youth).

I give permission to share **personally identifiable information** including but not limited to name, income, household size, disability and/or reasonable accommodations, copies of identity documents, demographics and other information related to obtain or securing housing

- Yes- means the agency can share *identifying* information
- No-means only *non-personally identifiable* information will be shared

The purpose of sharing information is to coordinate housing and related supportive services. Information may be shared with the following parties; select one or more of the parties below. Options you do not select will only receive non-personally identifiable information.

- Other Victim Service Providers (Asian Women's Shelter, Safe House, SVDP)
- Department of Homelessness & Supportive Housing
- [Housing and Homeless Service Providers](#)

Information may be shared in the following ways (select one or more options):

- In person
- By e-mail
- By Phone
- Virtually

This permission expires on _____. I understand that this form is valid when I sign it and by signing it, I have given permission for agency staff to share information for its duration. I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time verbally or in writing to the agency I am working with. I understand that if I withdraw my consent, I will be responsible for contacting housing providers for housing opportunities that I am eligible for on my own.

Participant: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Staff: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 5: Housing Conference

Housing Conference: Shared Norms and Roles as Mutual Cooperative Acknowledgments

Centering Survivors

- Proactively addressing gender based violence GBV survivors' safe housing navigational and stability needs, with the understanding of the role of the homeless service response system.
- Shepherding Allyship between victim service providers and homeless service providers as Shared Work, to move forward on the issues and challenges we face at our organizations, our impacted communities, and in our systems of care.

Intersectionality

- Acknowledgment that survivors may be at the margins of structural racism and other health disparities, and safe housing with self-determining supportive services is our overall goal to help address compounding barriers and oppressions survivors face when accessing and maintaining safe housing.
- The impact of racism is pervasive and deeply embedded in our society—affecting where one lives, learns, works, worships and plays and creating inequities in access to a range of social and economic benefits—such as housing, education, wealth, and employment. These conditions—often referred to as [social determinants of health](#).

Intentional Listening and Honesty

- Victim Service Providers VSP who participate in the Housing Conference share the intentionality of listening with empathy during and beyond the Assessment process, to connect participants to housing match-making opportunities that may help to support unique participant needs and goals.
- In addition to scoring for prioritization, we emphasize people to do people-centered work. We help empower survivors to meet their short-term and long-term goals.
- On reaching Agreement and Disagreement: When we disagree, we will engage in genuine dialogue. We believe that direct, non-violent communication can increase mutual understanding, avoid or de-escalate conflict, and enable creative problem-solving.

Cooperative Acknowledgements

- We share the responsibility of protecting the participants' Personally Identifying Information (PII), and use the HOPE System Unique Identification to confidentially communicate survivor-identified housing needs, when necessary, towards an accurate placement process.
- We only share historical data to identify trends and predict potential outcomes with the participant's explicit consent.
- We as collaborators respect and acknowledge different perspectives, backgrounds, ideologies, and aspirations; and encourage a balance of power among attendees to increase each other's capacities, strengths, and assets.
- We're mindful of avoiding acronyms, and explaining if we use acronyms/shorthand.
- VSP promote the development of participant-informed Safety Planning, especially during the stages of potential placement on a housing queue.
- We recognize that although there may be differences in funding streams, and time commitments, our overall goal includes our foundational principles in centered survivors.
- We uphold Language Accessibility and Rights to Reasonable Accommodations to the participants we serve in accordance with the [SF Language Access Ordinance](#) and the [Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#).

Survivor Autonomy and Choice

Survivors are in the driver's seat of the housing process. Survivor autonomy and choice are paramount in the process and survivors get to define what safety looks like for them and what safe housing looks like for them. If a survivor is prioritized for a housing opportunity within the Homelessness Response System, the survivor has the right to decline as specified in the [CE Written Standards](#).

Hopeful Shared Values

Safety & Well-being are paramount in Service Provision. We are purposeful about declaring that staff safety and well-being are as crucial as participant safety and well-being, so that teams can be in a good place to provide good services. To live out that value, we encourage staff to prioritize their own self-care and plan their self-care to pour back into themselves to sustain their work. Staff have permission to ask for help and take a step back as needed.

