

# Napa VI-SPDAT Single Adult Facilitation Guide

April 29, 2025



Prepared by Homebase



**Homebase**

ADVANCING SOLUTIONS TO HOMELESSNESS

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1  </b>	<b>Overview</b>	<b>3</b>
	Understanding The Housing Placement Process	3
	The Coordinated Entry (Ce) Process	3
	What Is The VI-SPDAT?	3
	What Is The VI-SPDAT Facilitation Guide?	4
<b>2  </b>	<b>Administering The VI-SPDAT</b>	<b>5</b>
	Before The Assessment	5
	Throughout The Assessment	8
	After The Assessment	9
	Key Points To Share With Clients	10
	Accuracy Considerations	11
<b>3  </b>	<b>Facilitation Guide</b>	<b>12</b>
	Sample Introduction Script	12
	Administration Questions	13
	<i>Section One: Presenting Needs</i>	16
	<i>Section Two: Housing History And Chronic Homelessness Determination</i>	17
	<i>Section Three: Vulnerabilities And Housing Support Needs</i>	20
<b>4  </b>	<b>Attachments</b>	<b>32</b>
	Score Revision Policy	32

# Overview

## Understanding the Housing Placement Process

The Coordinated Entry System (CES), or Coordinated Entry (CE) for short, is used to prioritize and match households experiencing homelessness to available housing and services for which they are eligible. While Coordinated Entry does not always guarantee housing, nor does it contain all a community's housing opportunities, it is generally the best starting place for a household experiencing homelessness to get connected to help. The Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool, or VI-SPDAT, is used as a tool during the initial triage and assessment phase of Coordinated Entry.

## The Coordinated Entry (CE) Process

### I. ACCESS



- Households will meet with an Access Point, or first point of contact for the homelessness response system to receive an assessment (VI-SPDAT).
- Napa has specific and separate Access Points for single adults, families, and transitional age youth (TAY). Not every place offering homelessness services is an Access Point.

### II. ASSESSMENT



- The VI-SPDAT is conducted as an initial triage for housing.
- While some service providers may have other assessments, the VI-SPDAT is required to be prioritized for housing and service opportunities found through CE.

## III. MATCHING AND REFERRAL



- Once a household gets an assessment, they will be placed on the community queue and referred if an opportunity becomes available that they are eligible for.
- In Napa, this referral process happens through a group case conferencing meeting with Napa service providers.

## What is the VI-SPDAT?

The Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool, or VI-SPDAT, is used as the initial assessment for Napa's Coordinated Entry. The tool is designed to be used by all providers within a community to create consistency for households experiencing homelessness. The VI-SPDAT for Single Adults is used for adults aged 25+ with no minor children in the household. For families and transitional aged youth (TAY), separate VI-SPDAT versions are available.

The VI-SPDAT asks a series of questions about a household's circumstances and experiences, then assigns a score corresponding an estimated level of vulnerability. This helps communities prioritize households based on unique need.

In Napa, the matching and referral process happens through **a group case conferencing meeting with Napa service providers.**



## What is the VI-SPDAT Facilitation Guide?

**T**his VI-SPDAT Facilitation Guide is designed to be used with the VI-SPDAT for Single Adults. It is meant to provide guidance explaining and conducting the VI-SPDAT and help ensure both consistent and accurate results utilizing a trauma informed perspective. This guide includes recommendations for building rapport, creating a safe and welcoming environment, and best practices on specific questions. Questions and information in this guide may include suggested or template language that assessors can use, but it is not required to be read word for word. Assessors are encouraged to adjust the language or provide alternate explanations as they see fit, considering cultural humility or needs of the populations they are serving.



# Administering the VI-SPDAT

## BEFORE THE ASSESSMENT

### 1 | CENTER YOURSELF AND REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL DISTRACTIONS

- Before you start the assessment, **take some time to calm and center yourself**.
- **Participants will be able to feel** if you are anxious, stressed, or in a rush.
- Centering yourself could mean **taking some time to set up the location for the assessment** if you just had a stressful experience or **taking a 3-minute breathing break before** you invite someone into the space to do an assessment.

### 2 | FIND A SAFE AND CONFIDENTIAL SPACE

- Try to **conduct the assessment in as private, confidential, and comfortable** space.
- In an outreach situation this could mean **going around the corner or down the street**.
- In facilities, this could mean going into **a private room like an office**.

### 3 | INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO TAKE THE ASSESSMENT

- **Ask for permission to conduct the assessment** before starting the process. This gives a sense of agency to the participant.
- Consider **asking participants who they might be more comfortable taking** the assessment with. Participants can sometimes feel **more comfortable talking with someone of a particular identity**. For example, a man who feels like he can be more vulnerable talking with a woman, or a person of color who feels more comfortable talking to another person of color. Note that this won't always mean matching up people to how they identify, it will be dependent on what their associations and experiences are.

## BEFORE THE ASSESSMENT

### 4 | IF THEY HAVE SOMEONE WITH THEM, ASK THE PARTICIPANT PRIVATELY IF THEY WANT TO TAKE THE ASSESSMENT ALONE OR WITH THE OTHER PERSON

- Having a **support person during the assessment can make someone feel safe and answer questions more honestly**, especially when that person is knowledgeable about the participants situation and experiences
- However, you should always **ask the participant privately if they want the support person to be present**. Asking with the support person around may make the participant feel pressured to allow them to stay, even if it is not what they want.
- Be sure to **watch the participant's behavior around the other person**. If they appear anxious, fearful, or behave in a way that makes you suspect that the person with them could be a danger to them (for example, domestic violence) then asking them how they want to take the assessment allows you to get them into a safe, private space where you can conduct the assessment and provide other assistance.

### 5 | BUILD INITIAL RAPPORT

- **Spend some time before the assessment** just checking in and making small talk. Try to find common ground or topics.
- **Showing an effort to get to know someone can help build trust** and rapport which could lead to a more accurate assessment.

### 6 | BE UPFRONT AND TRANSPARENT

- **Tell the participant what the assessment can and can't do**, what types of questions are included, and why these questions are being asked.
- Let people know that the questions may seem private or personal, but **they are meant to get information to address their unique needs**.



## BEFORE THE ASSESSMENT

### 7 | PROVIDE PERSON-CENTERED SERVICE

- **Approach participants with empathy.**
- **Clear your mind of any perceptions you may have about the person** that are not based on your own experiences. If someone else has told you about an experience with that person, it doesn't mean you will have the same experience.
- **Give your undivided attention during the assessment process** and don't rush the participant.
- **Practice active listening by repeating back key information** you're hearing and mirror the language the participant is using.

# Administering the VI-SPDAT

## THROUGHOUT THE ASSESSMENT

### 1 | ADJUST THE QUESTIONS AS NECESSARY

- The **language in the VI-SPDAT does not have to be read word for word.**
- **Assessors are encouraged to explain or provide examples for specific questions** as much as necessary. Examples are included in this Facilitation Guide.

### 2 | SKIP OR REVISIT QUESTIONS AS APPROPRIATE

- **Remind participants that they do not have to answer a question** or that you can revisit it if they seem uncomfortable or triggered.
- You can also **acknowledge with participants that the questions are difficult.**
- A good practice can be to **offer to revisit a question if someone initially seems uncomfortable and checking in again at the end** after you have built someone rapport with the participant.

### 3 | DON'T TAKE THINGS PERSONALLY

- Some **participants may have traumatic experiences associated with the questions** on the VI-SPDAT or when trying to seek help in the past.
- If a participant gets angry or upset, the **response may not be about you but rather a past traumatic experience** that has been triggered by the assessment.
- **Be mindful of who is around you** and how what they represent might trigger someone you're working with. For example, the presence of law enforcement might be triggering to someone.

### 4 | MAKE SPACE FOR CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

- Do your best to be **aware of how different cultures may engage with the assessment.** For example, someone not making eye contact may seem like their anxious or afraid but in other cultures prolonged eye contact can be seen as a sign of disrespect or confrontation.

### 5 | DOCUMENTATION HELPS YOURSELF AND FUTURE SERVICE PROVIDERS

- **Documenting a participant's response helps your agency,** and service providers who help them in the future.



# Administering the VI-SPDAT

## AFTER THE ASSESSMENT

### 1 | EXPLAIN THE PROCESS

- **Let participants know what will happen next** and that there isn't a guarantee of housing or services through coordinated entry, but that they will be matched up if something becomes available.

### 2 | UPDATE OVER TIME

- **Ask participants to let you know if something happens** that might change their eligibility, if their contact info changes, or if there are updates that you're able to share.

### 3 | GIVE SPACE FOR QUESTIONS AND OFFER INFORMATION

- Ask participants if they have any questions or want to learn anything else about the CE process. **Offering information about specific resources they may be eligible for can also be a way of showing value to a participant** that will make them want to engage with you again.

# Administering the VI-SPDAT

## Key Points to Share with Clients

- 1 ..... **Assessment is the start of the journey.**
- 2 ..... **Being assessed does not guarantee placement into housing, but it is one of the best ways to get connected to housing and services for households experiencing homelessness.**
- 3 ..... **The amount of time someone remains on the community queue will vary depending on how many housing opportunities are available at a given time and the household's eligibility.**
- 4 ..... **Some programs have specific eligibility requirements or are designed to serve specific populations. For example, some programs may require a disability, and others are meant for veterans or those with experiences of domestic violence.**
- 5 ..... **Households can help speed up the housing placement process by helping gather all required documents.**

# Administering the VI-SPDAT

## Accuracy Considerations

### I. YOU ARE ALLOWED TO REMIND PARTICIPANTS OF PAST INFORMATION



- A participant may provide information that you know to be inaccurate. For example, a participant may say they have not been hospitalized, but you know they recently have been.
- You are allowed to remind participants of past information and incorporate known information from case notes, observations, documentation, and whatever else been communicated with consent by professionals into the assessment process.
- Here is an example:
  - The participant mentioned they are facing challenges due to multiple sclerosis (MS) during intake.
  - When administering the VI-SPDAT you might say, “In your intake for the shelter, you mentioned dealing with MS. The next question asks if you have any physical health conditions that you would require assistance with, to access or keep housing. How would you like to answer this question?”

### II. BE TRANSPARENT



- If you are trying to incorporate external information, be transparent and inform the respondent of the information you are planning to include.
- You must give the participant a chance to correct this information as necessary.

### III. THE PARTICIPANT HAS THE FINAL SAY



- If there is a discrepancy between the answer provided by the participant and other information that you have received, you must go with the answer the participant provided during the assessment.

### IV. SCORE REVISION IS AVAILABLE IF NECESSARY



- If you later learn information provided is inaccurate, a person may be eligible for a score revision if there were evidence of a vulnerability that would dramatically impact their VI-SPDAT score.
- For more information, consult the Score Revision Policy later in this guide.

You must give the participant a ***chance to correct information*** as necessary.



# Facilitation Guide

---

## Sample Introduction Script

I'll be asking you a series of questions to better understand your housing situation, needs, and challenges. Each question is designed to help us provide the best support for you. Most questions can be answered with a simple yes, no, or one-word response. Please know that the information you disclose during the assessment will not be used to discriminate against you. You have the right to skip any questions, but the more you can answer openly, the better I'll be able to assist you. I recognize that some questions may be personal and could bring up strong feelings. If at any point you would like to pause, skip a question, or take a break, you are welcome to do so.

Please do your best to answer all questions as honestly and accurately as possible so that we can connect you to the right resources. If we refer you to any services based on the information you provide, program eligibility will still need to be verified.

The information that I collect will be stored in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). If we can identify services that would be a good match for you based on the information you provide, we will try to contact you. It's very important that you provide current contact information. This could include phone numbers, locations you frequent, case managers, or organizations that you work with, or any other information that might help us get in contact with you.

# Facilitation Guide

## Administration Questions

### 1 | FIRST NAME AND LAST NAME

#### WHY WE ASK THIS QUESTION



- A person's name allows service providers to follow-up beyond the initial assessment.
- Asking about names can also help identify if someone had a VI-SPDAT conducted prior, or conducted under a different name.

.....

#### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*Asking someone their preferred name and how to correctly pronounce their name shows respect and creates a safe, inclusive environment to conduct the assessment.*

### 2 | DATE, START TIME, AND END TIME

#### WHY WE ASK THIS QUESTION



- The Date is necessary to know when the VI-SPDAT is completed, and when a new assessment should be conducted a year later. Start Time and End Time are necessary for tracking how long it takes to complete the survey.

## Administration Questions

### 3 | RACE/ETHNICITY, GENDER IDENTITY, LGBTQ2+ IDENTITY

#### WHY WE ASK THIS QUESTION



- Asking for Race/Ethnicity information allows communities to analyze results related to racial equity.
- Asking about Gender Identity allows for households to self-identify gender identity. Asking about LGBTQ2+ Identity also allows households to self-identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Two Spirited.
- Understanding Gender and LGBTQ2+ Identity can also assist with triage, referrals, and safety planning.

.....

#### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*When asking for this information, be aware that not all cultures may understand the United States notions of race, ethnicity, or gender.*

*When asking about Gender Identity and LGBTQ2+ Identity, it is important to remember that Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression are all unique parts of everyone's identity and a person with a perceived or actual LGBTQ+ identity may have unique life experiences. One person's experience may not be the same as another's experience.*

### 4 | SURVEY LOCATION

#### WHY WE ASK THIS QUESTION



- This information is necessary to know which Access Point conducted the assessment.

## Administration Questions

### 5 | PREVIOUS VI-SPDAT COMPLETED

#### WHY WE ASK THIS QUESTION



- This question prompts an assessor to check if a previous VI-SPDAT has been completed. If it has, a new VI-SPDAT should not be completed unless major changes have occurred in the person's life or the previous VI-SPDAT is over a year old.

### 6 | MILITARY SERVICE

#### WHY WE ASK THIS QUESTION



- Asking about military service can help identify if a participant is eligible for specific services, benefits, or other homelessness interventions based on their service.

### 7 | PET(S)

#### WHY WE ASK THIS QUESTION



- Many people experiencing homelessness own pets, and these animals often provide crucial emotional support and companionship. This question also helps to identify if a household has a service or emotional support animal.



# Facilitation Guide

## Section One: Presenting Needs

### 1. Most days can you:

- a. Find a safe place to sleep,
- b. Access a bathroom when you need it,
- c. Access a shower when you need it,
- d. Get food,
- e. Get water or other non-alcoholic beverages to stay hydrated,
- f. Get clothing or access laundry when you need it,
- g. Safely store your stuff.

.....

### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



Provides information on common needs and can inform the type of referrals the assessor could provide immediately.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*When asking this question, it is important to be aware that people may have different understandings of “access” and “safety”.*

*It can be helpful to emphasize that this question asks if the person has access “when they need it.” A person experiencing homelessness may have access to a bathroom, shower, or laundry through services but only when those services are available or open, which is not whenever they need it.*

*If it sounds like some doesn’t understand the question, ask follow-up questions to help them answer honestly and accurately. For example, if a person may have somewhere to store their stuff but it may not be safe, such as a car that doesn’t lock.*

# Facilitation Guide

## Section Two: Housing History and Chronic Homelessness Determination

2. How long has it been since you lived in stable, permanent housing?
3. In the last 3 years, how many times have you been homeless?
4. Thinking about the last 3 years, if you add up all the months you were homeless, what is the total length of time you have experienced homelessness?

.....

### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



These questions provide information on how long a person has been experiencing homelessness, which can help an assessor determine whether the person is experiencing “[chronic homelessness](#)” as defined by HUD. A person is chronically homeless if they:

- Have a disability, and
- Live in a place not meant for human habitation or in an emergency shelter, and
- Have been homeless for at least 12 months, or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months of homelessness and the breaks in homelessness and each break in homelessness was at least 7 consecutive nights.

A person may also be chronically homeless if they have been residing in an institutional care facility (e.g. jail, treatment center, hospital) for less than 90 days and met all the above criteria before entering that facility. A person may qualify for different services if they are experiencing “chronic homelessness” as defined by HUD.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*People may have trouble thinking about the past 3 years – time can be difficult to conceptualize for someone who has been experiencing chronic, unsheltered homelessness.*

*You can help by working backwards, for example, “How many times have you been homeless in the last 6 months? How many times before that?”*

*You can also help by asking about certain points in time, “Where did you stay last Christmas?”*

## Section Two: Housing History and Chronic Homelessness Determination

### 5. Do you have any diagnosed, documented, disabling conditions?

.....



#### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

This information is necessary to determine where a person meets HUD's definition of [chronic homelessness](#), as detailed above. This also helps inform eligibility for more comprehensive wraparound services and can help ensure people receive the appropriate level of care.

According to the [CoC Interim Rule](#), a person has a disabling condition if they have:

- Physical, mental, or emotional impairment, or
- Developmental disability, or
- HIV/AIDS.

A physical, mental, or emotional impairment includes impairments caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder or brain injury that:

- Is expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration; and
- Substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently; and

- Could be improved by the provision of more suitable housing conditions.

A developmental disability is a severe, chronic disability that is:

- Attributable to a mental or physical impairment that manifested before age 22; and
- Is likely to continue indefinitely; and
- Results in substantial functional limitations in three or more areas of functioning (e.g. self-care, self-sufficiency); and
- Reflects the individual's need for services, individualized supports, or other forms of assistance that are of individually planned, coordinated, and continue for life or an extended duration.

More information on the definition of disability is available through the [HUD Exchange here](#).

#### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*When asking this question, you may identify a need for medical services to*

*document a disabling condition.*

*A person experiencing homelessness may know they have a disabling condition but not have received medical services to diagnose and document it.*

*People may also be unsure of their diagnosis but have received some kind of treatment. To help them identify their medical conditions, you can ask about the treatment they've received or medications that they take.*

*Some people may readily identify their physically disabling conditions but struggle to identify their mental or emotional conditions. It can be helpful to list off commonly seen conditions, such as depression or anxiety, to help people who may be struggling to provide a complete answer to the question.*

## Section Two: Housing History and Chronic Homelessness Determination

6. Have you ever owned a home or had an apartment lease in your name?
7. Have you ever been evicted?

.....

### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



- This question helps inform housing history. Information about housing history can help identify financial counseling or credit repair services that a person might need.
- This information can also identify potential barriers to future housing, for example an eviction on a person's record.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*Some people may not fully understand what it means to be “evicted”. It is not uncommon to confuse an eviction with receiving a pay or quit notice, a notice to vacate, or just being told to leave a property.*

*It can be helpful to describe specific questions relating to what happens during an eviction, such as if they received a court summons or if they were given a court date, to clarify if they’ve ever been evicted.*

# Facilitation Guide

## Section Three: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

### 8. In the last 6 months, how many times have you:

- a. Gone to the emergency room/department
- b. Taken an ambulance
- c. Been hospitalized as an inpatient
- d. Used a crisis service or hotline like suicide prevention or domestic violence
- e. Talked to police because you witnessed a crime, were the victim of a crime, were the alleged perpetrator of a crime, or because they asked you to move along because of loitering, sleeping in a public place or anything like that
- f. Stayed one or more night in jail, a holding cell or prison

.....

#### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



- This information helps communities understand how people use services and identify frequent users of emergency services, identify potential undiagnosed conditions and needs, and make referrals for mental health assessments to have needs diagnosed and on record.

#### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*Providing a specific dates or timeframes can help participants conceptualize a period of time.*

*For example, “Six months ago it was February” or “Six months ago it was around Valentine’s Day.”*

*Some individuals may feel these questions come across as judgmental or concerned that they may be penalized based on their response. It is important to ensure that you are maintaining good rapport with the person, letting them know they aren’t obligated to share, and that the purpose of the questions is to help them get the most suitable resources possible – not to judge or penalize them.*

## Section Three: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

### 9. Since you have been homeless:

- a. Have you been beaten up or assaulted
- b. Have you threatened to harm yourself or harmed yourself
- c. Have you threatened to beat up or assault someone else
- d. Has anyone threatened you with violence and/or made you feel unsafe
- e. Has anyone tried to control you through violence or threats of violence whether that be a stranger, friend, partner, relative or parent

.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- This information helps the assessor understand if the participant is at risk of harming themselves or others, as well as if there are threats to the participant.
- This information can help assessors identify safety precautions that should be taken to help the person become and remain stably housed. For example, identifying additional needs due to trauma or identifying unsafe areas of the community where the person should not be housed due to past or current threats of violence.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*When asking about assault, a person experiencing homelessness may not be clear on what constitutes an “assault”.*

*For the purposes of this question, being assaulted refers to physical assault. If a person has experienced verbal assault, that would be scored as a threat of violence or making them feel unsafe.*

## Section Three: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

- 10. Do you have any legal stuff going on right now that may result in any of the following:**
- Being locked up
  - Having to pay fines or feeds that you cannot afford
  - Impact your ability to get housing
  - Impact where you could live in your housing
- 11. Have you ever been convicted of a crime that makes it difficult to access or maintain housing?**

.....

### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



- This information can identify housing barriers and housing support needs.
- A person's criminal legal history may be a barrier to accessing housing if local housing providers conduct background checks when reviewing housing applications. A person's criminal legal history may also make them ineligible for certain programs.
- It is also an opportunity to identify a person's housing needs, such as record expungement or re-tiering.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*When asking about legal issues, a person may not think of all the legal matters that could potentially result in them being locked up. If they are unsure, you can offer examples like unpaid child support, traffic tickets, infractions, or citations. While these may seem like small legal matters, they can have big consequences that can prevent someone from becoming or remaining stably housed.*

*Specific criminal convictions can also bar a person from HUD housing: manufacturing methamphetamine on federally assisted property and lifetime sex offender registration.*



## IMMIGRATION STATUS CONSIDERATIONS



- When asking about legal issues, an assessor may want to ask about a person's immigration status. For a variety of reasons, a person may be hesitant to talk about their immigration status.
- ***People are not required to share their immigration status to receive services.*** People should take the lead on what experiences they want to discuss, how they want to discuss them, and when they want to discuss them.
- If a person volunteers information about their immigration status, some important things to keep in mind are:
  - o Sensitive information recorded in case files, HMIS, and email can be vulnerable to subpoena or warrant. To protect vulnerable people, it is considered a best practice not to ask about immigration status or record it.
  - o Any question about immigration status should be voluntary and that should be clearly communicated to the person. Answering questions about immigration status has potential risks and benefits for a person. For example, there is a benefit of more tailored support but a risk that the information they shared is subject to a subpoena or warrant.
  - o When recording information, focus on impact rather than status. For example, recording that a person is ineligible for Section 8 or has barriers outside of their control to securing sustainable income.
  - o Not everyone has accurate information about their status, so the person may not know their status.

## Section Three: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

**12. Does anyone trick, manipulate, exploit, or force you to do things you do not want to do?**

.....

### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



- This information can help the assessor to understand if the participant is at risk of exploitation and the impacts of the participant's ability to access and maintain housing.
- As a triage, this can assist with offering supports, safety planning, and referral. For example, it can prompt a person to share experiences of financial exploitation, which would indicate that the person may need a referral for credit repair services.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*Words like “trick” or “manipulate” can be triggering for people and put them on the defense.*

*It can be helpful to focus on the purpose of the question and make it clear that you are not accusing a person of being easily fooled or gullible, just seeking to understand if someone is trying to take advantage of them.*

**13. Where do you sleep most frequently?**

.....

### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



- This information helps the assessor to understand the participant's experience of homelessness and to better address immediate needs, particularly related to safety and risk.

## Section Three: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

14. Do you ever do things that may be considered to be risky or harmful like run drugs, share a needle, do sex work, or anything like that?

.....

### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



- This information helps the assessor to understand the participant’s vulnerabilities.
- It also helps the assessor to identify opportunities for referrals for specialized harm reduction services and initiate harm reduction discussions.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*Words like “risky” can be subjective. Each person may have a different understanding of what “risky” behavior is.*

*It can be helpful to provide examples or focus on actions that people may have had to do to survive experiencing homelessness.*

## Section Two: Housing History and Chronic Homelessness Determination

15. Is there anybody that thinks you owe them money like a family member, friend, past landlord, business, bookie, dealer, bank, credit card company, utility company, or anyone like that?
16. Do you get any money from the government, a job, working under the table, day labor, an inheritance or a pension, or anything like that?
17. Do you ever gamble with money you cannot afford to lose or have debts associated with gambling?

.....

### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



- These questions help us understand money management issues and can also be helpful for service planning related to financial security and financial future.
- Information about money owed can help identify financial counseling or credit repair services that a person might need.
- This information can also identify potential barriers to housing if a person owes money to a past landlord or a utility provider.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*When asking about debt, it can be helpful to focus on how debt might be a barrier to housing. For example, if a person owes money to PG&E, they might not be able to get utilities set up at new housing.*

## Section Three: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

- 18. Do you have planned activities, other than activities for survival, at least four days per week that make you feel happy and fulfilled?**

.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- This question informs strengths-based case management and reveals whether there are meaningful daily activities, aside from activities related to homelessness management or survival, which has a direct relationship with wellness for most people and can directly impact housing stability.
- This also indicates a potential support network and locations where the person could be stably housed.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*It can be helpful to provide examples, such as going to church, spending time with a friend, or attending Alcoholic Anonymous meetings.*

- 19. Do you have a collection of belongings that get in the way with your ability to access services or housing?**

.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- Collecting and/or hoarding behavior can have a direct impact on service access and planning housing supports.
- Lack of available storage in a community for belongings, even when there is not collecting or hoarding behavior can impact service access.
- A person may also have a storage unit, which is potentially a source of debt and could indicate a need for credit repair services.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*There are many ways that belongings can get in a person's way of accessing services or housing.*

*They may not be able to go to appointments because they're afraid to leave their belongings behind. Or they may not be able to move into housing because there isn't space to take their belongings with them.*

## Section Three: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

**20. Would you say that your current homelessness was caused by any of the following:**

- a. A relationship that broke down
- b. An unhealthy or abusive relationship
- c. Because family or friends caused you to lose your housing

.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- This question helps the assessor to understand social relationships and networks that may have contributed to homelessness.
- This question also helps screen for domestic and intimate partner violence.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*The “relationship” in this question isn’t limited to a romantic relationship. It can be helpful to clarify to the person you are speaking with that a broken, unhealthy, or abusive relationship can include a friend or family member.*

**21. Do most of your family and friends have stable housing?**

.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- People with stably housed friends and family may have accommodation options outside the homelessness service delivery system.
- This question also gives insight into the household’s personal relationships and networks that may contribute to community integration and housing stability once housed.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*A person may have family and friends with stable housing, but they may not have a good relationship with them.*

*It can be helpful to make clear that a person will not be forced into an unsafe situation with a family member or friend just because they have stable housing.*

## Section Three: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

### 22. Are you 60 years of age or older?

.....



#### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- People who are 60 years old or older are more vulnerable than their younger counterparts.
- Increasing age often coincides with increased health complications, reduced mobility, and more challenges accessing basic needs.
- Vulnerabilities associated with age can make it harder for older adults to recover from a housing crisis.

### 23. Do you have any physical or mental health issues or other disabilities such that you would require assistance to access or keep housing?

.....



#### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- Within Fair Housing expectations, it is okay to ask if people have physical or mental health issues or disabilities.
- But it is not legally okay to know about and prioritize based upon specific aspects of these issues.

#### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*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.*

*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.*



## Section Three: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

### 24. Are you currently pregnant?

.....



#### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- Pregnancy increases medical vulnerability and knowing this information can help inform service planning and referrals.

### 25. Do you use alcohol or drugs in a way that:

- a. Impacts your life in a negative way most days
- b. Makes it hard to access housing
- c. Would require assistance to maintain housing

.....



#### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- The information helps the assessor to understand the impacts substance use may have on a participant and supports that may be needed for harm reduction and housing stability.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*This question can make people uncomfortable or feel judged.*

*It is important to remind people that drug or alcohol use doesn't disqualify someone from receiving services.*

*This information is also not going to be used against them – it is important information to help find the most appropriate services for the person's specific needs.*

## Section Three: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

### 26. Are there any medications that for whatever reason:

- a. A doctor said you should be taking but you are not taking
- b. You sell instead of taking
- c. You use in a way other than how it is prescribed
- d. You find impossible to take, forget to take or choose not to take

.....



#### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- Medication management can be helpful for improving housing stability and can be indicative of specific vulnerabilities related to health and wellness.

### 27. Has your homelessness been caused by any recent or past trauma or abuse?

.....



#### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- Abuse and trauma frequently impact a person's experience of homelessness.
- This information helps identify a participant's needs for trauma-specific supports and services.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*It can be helpful to have a conversation about what circumstances lead the person to experience homelessness, then follow-up with the question.*

*A strategy is to provide an opportunity for a person to share their story about why they are currently unhoused and then follow-up with this question or asking whether they consider the experience they described to be traumatic.*

# Attachments

## Score Revision Policy

### ELIGIBILITY FOR SCORE REVISION

While self-report by the client remains the primary way information is captured on the VI-SPDAT, providers can now include known information about the client from case notes, observations, documentation, and what has been communicated with consent by professionals to complete the VI-SPDAT. Therefore, clients will only be eligible for score revision in extremely narrow circumstances.

Score revision should only be used when:

- A provider discovers evidence of a client vulnerability related to a scored VI-SPDAT factor that was not accessible or able to be incorporated into the VI-SPDAT questionnaire at the time of the original assessment; and
- Incorporating this evidence of vulnerability into the VI-SPDAT questionnaire would significantly impact the client's VI-SPDAT score and therefore prioritization for housing through coordinated entry.

If a provider has documentation or information that conflicts with a client's self-report while the provider is completing the VI-SPDAT, then the provider can change the score in real time if the client does not object.

Providers must carefully consider whether the score revision process would result in an impactful prioritization change for their client. For example, changing 1 point on the VI-SPDAT so a client's score goes from 3 to 4 will not have a significant impact on their chances of getting housing through coordinated entry. A score change from a 7 to a 13 may have a significant impact on their chances of getting referred for housing and the type of housing intervention they are eligible for. Providers should use the following chart, summarizing Napa's standards for referral through coordinated entry, to help guide their decision-making.

Housing Intervention Referred To	VI-SPDAT Score
Diversion	0-4
Rapid Re-housing (RRH)	5-9 & 10-13 (as bridge housing to PSH if appropriate)
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)	10 +

## PROCESS FOR SCORE REVISION

If a client is eligible, as described above, the score revision tool can be completed. The score revision tool must include an attachment containing third-party documentation. Staff must comply with all applicable privacy regulations in obtaining third-party documentation<sup>1</sup>.

Providers must email the tool plus supporting documentation HomelessServices@countyofnapa.org to in an encrypted (password protected) file. Napa County staff will then call for a meeting of the Score Revision Committee. Committee meetings will be open to providers to present the score revision information.

At the Score Revision Committee meeting, the staff member or supervisor requesting the score revision will present relevant information and documentation. Score Revision Committee members will then review this information and decide whether a score change is appropriate by majority vote of those present.

## CRITERIA FOR VI-SPDAT RE-ASSESSMENT

Providers shall reassess clients using the community-approved assessment tool when the client's prior assessment is:

- Out of date (older than one year)
- When the client provides new previously undocumented information that impacts their level of vulnerability; or
- Whenever participants experience major changes in health or life circumstances.

Examples of major life changes include:

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| • Change in family composition      | • Incident or experience of trauma                 |
| • Significant change in income      | • Increased risk of harm                           |
| • New or newly disclosed disability | • Participation in treatment or community programs |
| • Incarceration or hospitalization  |  |

---

<sup>1</sup> Examples of third-party documentation:

- HMIS record
- Letter from another outreach or case worker, other than the staff member requesting the score change
  - o Should include statement that verifies that based on their direct work with client, staff has information, observations, and/or facts that indicate acuity is not accurately depicted on the first assessment and that the current VI-SPDAT score is:
    - ☐ Drastically different than what documented history reflects and
    - ☐ Self-report appears to be seriously impacting appropriate housing intervention level
  - o Documentation from an institution (ex. rehab, hospital)