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# VI-SPDAT for Families Facilitation Guide



**Homebase**

ADVANCING SOLUTIONS TO HOMELESSNESS

*Prepared by Homebase*



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# 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 Families is used for households that include one or more adults with minor children, or one or more adults that includes a pregnant person. For single adults 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.***



# Overview

## What is the VI-SPDAT Facilitation Guide?

This VI-SPDAT Facilitation Guide is designed to be used with the VI-SPDAT for Families. It is meant to provide guidance explaining and conducting the VI-SPDAT to ensure consistent and accurate results through a trauma informed perspective. This guide includes recommendations for building rapport, creating a safe and welcoming environment, and best practices on asking 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.



## Additional Resources



For a visual explanation of Napa’s CES, a Coordinated Entry System Map in both English and Spanish can be found [here](#) under the “Homeless Resources” section. The System Map lists the various access points and which agencies/service providers provide assessments, and for which populations. Additionally, the “City and County of Napa Homeless Services Resource Guide” can also be found [here](#). The Resource Guide contains known agencies and service providers a household experiencing homelessness might find helpful, as well as contact information, and an explanation of general services/offerrings. The Resource Guide can be particularly useful when going through the different sections of the VI-SPDAT to help determine what agencies might be useful referrals.

# 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.**
- Households 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. This could mean going into a private room like an office.
- When asking sensitive questions, **parents may struggle to provide honest answers when children are present.**
  - Use discretion depending on the age of children (e.g. infants will need to always stay close to their parent).
  - If a member of the household is nursing a child, take steps to ensure safety and privacy during breastfeeding, or provide a location where the parent can breastfeed in private.
  - If young children are present, utilize childcare spaces whenever possible. It can also be helpful to schedule the assessment when the parent has childcare, or the child is at school.
  - If childcare is not available, it is helpful to provide toys, books, and activities so children can focus on playing while parents focus on the assessment.
  - If childcare is not available, another option is to schedule an assessment in a space like a public park or playground where the child can play while the parent can answer assessment questions.
  - If older children are present, speak with the parent about the best option.
- **For non-English speakers, use staff or interpreters to conduct the assessment.** While households may often rely on their children for translation, assessors should avoid using a household's child as the interpreter.

## BEFORE THE ASSESSMENT

### 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 households with whom they might be more comfortable speaking**. Households may 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 an individual's personal associations and experiences.

### 4 | IF THE PARTICIPANT HAS ANOTHER ADULT 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. **This also allows you to understand if there is violence in the home.**
- This same process can apply even if there are two adults presenting as the parents in the household.
- If the participant chooses to have the adult with them, or there was no opportunity to speak privately with the participants, **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), you may look for an opportunity to again speak in private.
  - Consider beginning safety planning for the participants by contacting a domestic violence service provider, like NEWS, and calling 911 (if the situation is urgent or the person requires medical care).

## BEFORE THE ASSESSMENT

### 5 | BUILD INITIAL RAPPORT

- **Spend some time before the assessment** 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**. The more forthcoming someone is in answering questions, the more likely they are to get the type of assistance needed

### 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.
- **Try to schedule enough time to complete the assessment** so you don't feel the need to rush. You can also schedule a break between assessments, so you have time to decompress between conversations.
- **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 then check 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 they are anxious or afraid, while 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;** there is no guarantee of housing or services through CE. Participants may feel frustrated when they don't understand the process, especially why some people seem to get resources before others. Being honest and transparent about the process will help participants to continue to be engaged while they wait for a housing placement or resources.

### 2 | UPDATE OVER TIME

- **Ask participants to let you know if their contact info changes,** or if something happens that might change their eligibility.

### 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 and requesting assistance with documents as needed.**

# 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, with the participant's consent, you may incorporate known information from case notes, observations, documentation, and whatever else has been communicated 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 is 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

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## 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. Being as forthcoming as possible will help us to match you to the right resources for you.

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, organizations that you work with, or any other information that might help us get in contact

# Facilitation Guide

## Administration Questions

Complete the administrative questions for each head of household.

### 1 | HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

#### WHY WE ASK THIS QUESTION



- Identifying the heads of household allows service providers to follow-up beyond the initial assessment.
- Asking about the heads of household can also help identify if a household had a VI-SPDAT conducted previously.

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#### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*The head of household depends on the unique nature of the family and may be a parent, grandparent or other guardian.*

### 2 | 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 previously, or conducted under a different name.

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#### 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.*

## Administration Questions

### 3 | 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.

### 4 | 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.

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#### 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.*

## Administration Questions

### 5 | SURVEY LOCATION

#### WHY WE ASK THIS QUESTION



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

### 6 | 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.

### 7 | 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.

### 8 | 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: Children Within the Household

1. How many children under the age of 18 are currently with you?

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### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



- Understanding the size of the family is necessary for housing and service planning.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES

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*It is important to remind households that the assessment is a snapshot of the moment. You can emphasize that it's okay if the answer to this question will change over time.*

2. How many children under the age of 18 are not currently with your family, but you have reason to believe they will be joining you when you get housed?

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### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



- Understanding the size of the family is necessary for housing and service planning.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES

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*This question may bring up trauma for a family that has been separated whether by choice or not. It also may create stress if there is an open child welfare case, or other situations. You can emphasize that this question is being asked to ensure any housing option available will fit the family's needs.*

## Section One: Children Within the Household

### 3. Is any member of the family currently pregnant (*if applicable*)?

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#### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



- Understanding the size of the family is necessary for housing and service planning.

#### TIPS AND STRATEGIES

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*Pregnancy can be very stressful, especially with housing instability. You can emphasize that this question is being asked to ensure any housing option available will be suitable for the whole family. If the answer is yes, this may be an opportunity to ask if the family would like any **referrals to prenatal care or services**.*

## Section One: Children Within the Household

4. Please provide a list of children in your household. For each child, you will provide the first name, last name, date of birth, and whether the child is with the family.

.....

### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



Understanding the size of the family and how the size of the family may change is necessary for housing and service planning.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*You can explain that knowing the number of children and their ages can help identify the best housing option for the family.*

*Again, it can be helpful to emphasize that the assessment is a snapshot of a moment in time, and it is okay if this answer is going to change over time.*

*This can be an opportunity to ask if the family would like any information about public school enrollment or afterschool programs.*

# Facilitation Guide

## Section Two: Presenting Needs

### 5. 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.

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#### 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.*

*It can also be helpful to provide additional examples to households. For example, for households with young children, you might ask whether they have access to diapers, wipes, formula, and other things they need for their young children.*

# Facilitation Guide

## Section Three: Housing History and Chronic Homelessness Determination

6. How long has it been since you and your family lived in stable, permanent housing? (Is this in days, months, or years?)
7. In the last 3 years, how many times have you been homeless?
8. If the answer to Question 7 is two or more:
  - a. Thinking about the last 3 years, if you add up all the months you and your family were homeless, what is the total length of time your family has experienced homelessness?

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### 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?” or “Where was the last place you stayed? And before that? And before that?”*

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

## Section Three: Housing History and Chronic Homelessness Determination

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

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#### 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 will 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 should also explore if they have a condition that has not been documented yet. 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.*

*You can also ask if a participant has had to stop working for a period of time or is no longer able to work due to a physical or mental limitation. If so, you can ask follow-up questions to determine if that limitation is a disabling condition.*

*Note that you will ask about other family members in a bit – or skip to question 27 re: physical or mental health concerns that family members may have.*

## Section Three: Housing History and Chronic Homelessness Determination

10. Has your family ever lived in a home that you own or an apartment in your name?
11. Have you and your family ever been evicted?

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### 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



*If a person has a housing history, it may help you identify what settings were most comfortable for them and what strengths the client leveraged to obtain that housing in the past.*

*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:*

- *Have you received a court summons for an eviction?*
- *Were you given a court date?*
- *Did the sheriff come to your home with a court order to remove you from the home?*

*Finally, you may want to emphasize that having an eviction does not work against them in this process/affect their prioritization for coordinated entry.*

# Facilitation Guide

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

**12. In the last 6 months, how many times have you or anyone in your family:**

- 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; and
- 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



*If the participant is not sure about whether these circumstances might apply to them, you can ask things like, have you or any of your family members ever been treated in the emergency room? If they say yes, then you can focus on the time frame.*

*Providing 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 may be concerned that they could 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 Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

### 13. Since your family has been homeless:

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

.....



#### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- This information helps the assessor understand if the participant or any of their family members are at risk of harming themselves or others, as well as if there are threats to the participant or their family members.
- This information can help assessors identify safety precautions that should be taken to help the family 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



*If the participant isn't sure how to answer this question, you can ask whether anyone in their family has felt unsafe while experiencing homelessness. If yes, you can follow-up with them about what made them feel unsafe to help identify if any of these categories apply to them.*

*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 recorded as a threat of violence or making them feel unsafe.*

*Households with children may be concerned about sharing information that could jeopardize the custody of their children or their housing stability with a partner. While you can't guarantee anything, you can remind the participant that sharing their experiences will support finding them the best housing option for their family.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

**14. Does anyone in your family have any legal stuff going on right now that may result in any of the following:**

- a. Being locked up;
- b. Having to pay fines or feeds that you cannot afford;
- c. Impact your family's ability to get housing;
- d. Impact where you and your family could live in your housing, or
- e. Impact your family's ability to stay together?

**15. Has anyone in your family 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, for example:
  - Services that can address barriers to housing, for example, record clearing; or
  - Potential mitigating evidence if a participant's past legal history may come up on a background check or housing application.



### 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.*

*It can be helpful to ask some additional questions to identify if someone is interacting with the legal system. For example:*

- *Are you or anyone in your family going to court for any reason?*
- *Do you or anyone in your family have an appointment with a lawyer?*
- *Have you or anyone in your family had to speak to a police officer or probation officer?*
- *Are you or anyone in your family on probation?*

*Court cases can also impact where a person can live. For example, a custody case may require a household to live in a certain geographic area, while a restraining order may prevent a household from living in a certain geographic area. You could ask, "Do you have any court cases that impact where you are able to live?"*

*Households with children may be concerned about sharing information that could jeopardize the custody of their children or their housing stability with a partner. While you can't guarantee anything, you can remind the participant that sharing their experiences will support finding them the best housing option for their family.*

# Facilitation Guide

## 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.*** The household 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:
  - 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.
  - Any question about immigration status should be voluntary and this should be clearly communicated to the person. Answering questions about immigration status has potential risks and benefits for a person. For example, knowing a person’s status – and the status of their children (such as whether they have birthright citizenship) – may help provide more tailored support, however, it creates a risk that the information they shared could be subject to a subpoena or warrant. .
  - When recording information, focus on impact rather than status. For example, record a person or family member(s) is ineligible for Section 8 or has barriers outside of their control to securing sustainable income.
  - Not everyone has accurate information about their status, so the person may not know their status.
  - Avoid using outdated language like “illegal” and “alien” when speaking with participants and recording information.

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

### 16. Does anyone trick, manipulate, exploit, or force anyone in your family to do things they 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. You can try other ways of framing this question. For example, does someone try to make you or anyone in your family do things that make you uncomfortable? Or does someone try to convince you or anyone in your family to do things you don’t want to do?*

*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, rather seeking to understand if someone is trying to take advantage of them.*

*It can be helpful to clarify who the “family” is and that you are asking about people in the household.*

*This can be an opportunity to circle back to other experiences that a household has described in response to previous questions. For example, if a participant has described a former landlord or an abusive ex-partner who tried to exploit the household. You might ask if they feel the experience they described is also relevant to this question.*

*Households with children may be concerned about sharing information that could jeopardize the custody of their children or their housing stability with a partner. While you can’t guarantee anything, you can remind the participant that sharing their experiences will support finding them the best housing option for their family.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

### 17. Where do you and your family sleep most frequently?

- a. Shelters
- b. Transitional Housing
- c. Couch Surfing
- d. Outdoors
- e. Car
- f. Other

.....

#### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION



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

#### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*Sometimes, members of a family may sleep separately. It can be helpful to inquire if the entire family sleeps together in the same place or if they must sleep apart. For example, parents sleep in a shelter while children sleep with a family member.*

*Households with children may be concerned about sharing information that could jeopardize the custody of their children and may believe that being unhoused with their children may do this. It may be helpful to assure the participant that the experience of being homeless or unhoused in and of itself is not considered abuse or neglect.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

18. Does anyone in your family 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 household’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. You can ask a household what they would consider risky. For example, sleeping in a private place where they could be arrested for trespassing.*

*It can be helpful to provide examples or focus on actions that people may have had to do to survive experiencing homelessness, especially if the provided examples don’t resonate with the participant. For example, many participants will not identify with the given example of sharing needles. But it’s important to not get hung up on examples – that can distract participants from thinking on the broadness of the question and get distracted about specific examples.*

*Households with children may be concerned about sharing information that could jeopardize the custody of their children or their housing stability with a partner. While you can’t guarantee anything, you can remind the participant that sharing their experiences will support finding them the best housing option for their family.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

19. Is there anybody that thinks you or anyone in your family owes them money like a family member, friend, past landlord, business, bookie, dealer, bank, credit card company, utility company, or anyone like that?
20. Do you or anyone in your family get any money from the government, a job, working under the table, day labor, an inheritance or a pension, or anything like that?
21. Do you or anyone in your family 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 household 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 household owes money to PG&E, they might not be able to get utilities set up at new housing.*

*If a person isn't sure about money they owe, it can be helpful to provide examples of debts or consider requesting a free credit report through [annualcreditreport.com](https://annualcreditreport.com).*

*When asking about gambling, it may be helpful to also ask households about playing the lottery or buying scratch-offs. These activities are gambling, though a participant may not immediately realize it.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

**22. Does everyone in your family 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 household could be stably housed.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*You can break the question up and focus first on the types of activities that the family does. For example, going to church or visiting a playground.*

*You might follow-up if the activities sound more like survival rather than for fun. For example, visiting a public park to cleanup in the bathroom versus going to the park so the kids can play.*

*Once you have identified activities, it can be easier for the participant to think about and answer how many times a week the family does them.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

23. Does your family have a collection of belongings that gets 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 household 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



*One way to ask this question is where the family stores their belongings. For example, in a storage unit, with a family member, or carried with them. Once they have shared where they store their belongings, it can be easier to ask whether that storage gets in the way of their ability to access services or housing.*

*There are many ways that belongings can get in a household'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 Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

### 24. 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.*

### 25. Do most of your family and friends have stable housing?



#### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- Households with stably housed friends and family may have accommodation options outside the homelessness response 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 household 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 household will not be forced into an unsafe situation with a family member or friend just because they have stable housing.*

*It’s helpful to keep in mind that this may bring up shame for the person answering the question, so they may not want to be forthcoming, or they may want to project more options than they have.*

*Some participants may get hung up on the word “most”. Another way to frame this question could be, do you know more people who are housed or unhoused? Are any of those who are housed at risk of losing their housing?*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

26. Is anyone in your current household 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.

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

27. Does anyone in your family have any physical or mental health issues or cognitive issues including a brain injury, that might 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



*If a participant has mentioned a disability in response to a prior question, it can be helpful to revisit that information and ask whether they need assistance to access or keep housing due to that disabling condition.*

*If a participant has mentioned a disability in response to a prior question, it can be helpful to revisit that information and ask whether they need assistance to access or keep housing due to that disabling condition.*

*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 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.*

*It may also be helpful to provide examples of assistance that can help households to access and keep housing, for example: completing housing applications, making reasonable accommodation requests, or physically moving personal items into a unit.*

*For households that have children with special needs, it can also be helpful to think about assistance that can help households to retain housing. For example, if a child tends to stomp or make loud noises, then the case manager can think about how to help them avoid noise complaints that would jeopardize housing and explain accommodations to a landlord.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

**28. Does anyone in your family 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, or
- 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 household 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 can be helpful to remind the participant they are in control of the assessment, and the assessor is there to support them through the process. For example, “I’m helping drive the bus, but you choose the stops.”*

*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 family’s specific needs. For example, a participant may be hesitant to mention that a teenager in their household has been using drugs. But this can be an opportunity to get them connected with services and resources that help.*

*It may also be helpful to provide examples of how alcohol and drug use could negatively impact a household. For example:*

- o *Is it impacting your ability to show up for work?*
- o *Is it impacting your ability to pay bills?*
- o *Is it impacting your ability to take care of your children day-to-day?*

*Households with children may be concerned about sharing information that could jeopardize the custody of their children or their housing stability with a partner. While you can’t guarantee anything, you can remind the participant that sharing their experiences will support finding them the best housing option for their family.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

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

- a. A doctor said someone in your family should be taking but they are not taking;
- b. The medication gets sold instead of being taken;
- c. The medication is used other than how it is prescribed;
- d. The medication is impossible to take, forgotten, or chosen not to take it.

.....



#### 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.

#### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*It can be helpful to ask a participant if they or any of their family members are prescribed or taking any medications. Based on their answer, the assessor can ask follow-up questions about whether they are able to take the medication, and if not, why.*

*If a participant is unsure about medications, it can be helpful to recall any physical or mental conditions that they have told you about during the assessment. You can then ask whether they have been prescribed any medications for that condition.*

*Recognize that there are many reasons a person or family member may not be taking medication, as prescribed, due to homelessness. For example, a medication requires refrigeration but they don't have access to a refrigerator. It may also be difficult to maintain a consistent medication schedule for themselves or their children for many reasons.*

*To avoid sounding judgmental, an assessor can focus on adopting a "curious mindset" by asking about a doctor's instructions. Then, the assessor can ask follow-up questions about their circumstances that may interfere with taking medication rather than saying or implying they have done something wrong by not following a doctor's instructions.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

30. Has your family's homelessness been caused by any recent or past trauma or abuse?

.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

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

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



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

*You can 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.*

*It can also be helpful to remind participants that trauma can be a lot of things including, physical, mental, and environmental. It can be something that was done to them or something that they witnessed. For example, if they had to leave where they were living because of fighting or drug use that was going around them that made them feel unsafe.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

31. Are there any children that have been removed from the family by a child protection service in the last six months?

.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- When identifying housing options and supports for the family, it is helpful to identify other systems that the household may be interacting with.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*This is likely a stressful question for those who have had their children removed. Remind the participant, that if their goal is to reunite with their child, it is helpful to know now to ensure the right housing option is identified.*

*As discussed in the previous question on eviction, it can be helpful to walk a participant through steps of a case to help them answer and to understand where they might be in a process. For example:*

- *Have you spoken to Child Welfare Services or Child Protection Services in the past 6 months? If so, what was the outcome?*
- *Have you had any interaction with a Napa County social worker or with Dependency Investigations, Family Reunification Services, or Family Maintenance Services?*
- *Are you receiving any assistance from any of those Napa County departments or agencies? What type of assistance?*

*This can also be an opportunity to connect households with assistance from Child Welfare Services and provide education on what the agency does.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

32. Do you have any family legal issues like child custody, protection issues, divorce, or anything like that being resolved in court or needing to be resolved in court that would impact your housing or who may live within your housing?

.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- Legal issues can have impacts on the household size, income access, and support needs. It is important that assessors and case managers have this information for housing and service planning.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*It can also be helpful to ask questions about a court process to identify if there is a legal process and then asking about what type of case, for example:*

- *Do you have an appointment with a lawyer, or have you met a lawyer?*
- *Do you have an upcoming court date, or have you appeared in court?*
- *Has a court issued an order about child custody?*
- *Has a court ordered child support?*
- *Has a court issued a restraining order that impacts you or someone in your household?*

*It can also be helpful to ask if there are any court cases that would impact who can live in the household or where the household can live. For example, child custody orders that would prevent the household from living outside of Napa County.*

*Households with children may be concerned about sharing information that could jeopardize the custody of their children or their housing stability with a partner. While you can't guarantee anything, you can remind the participant that sharing their experiences will support finding them the best housing option for their family.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

33. In the last six months, have any of the children experienced abuse or trauma?

.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- This information helps assessors to identify support services that children in the household may need to address traumatic experiences.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*Some participants may struggle with the term “abuse”. It can be helpful to focus on the word, “trauma”, to capture the full range of experiences that may be responsive to this question.*

*It may be helpful to recognize that the experience of homelessness itself may be traumatic, particularly for children.*

*It can be helpful to recall why the family said they have entered homelessness and whether that event was traumatic. If that event was witnessed by the children, then that can be an experience of trauma.*

*As stated above, it can also be helpful to remind participants that trauma can be a lot of things including, physical, mental, and environmental. It can be something that was done to them or something that they witnessed. For example, if there was a lot of fighting or drug use that was going around them that made them feel unsafe.*

*Households with children may be concerned about sharing information that could jeopardize the custody of their children or their housing stability with a partner. While you can’t guarantee anything, you can remind the participant that sharing their experiences will support finding them the best housing option for their family.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

34. **If there are school-aged children: Do your children attend school more often than not each week?**

.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- This information helps assessors identify housing and service planning needs. If children are regularly attending school, it is an indicator that they're having their needs met and may mean a need to prioritize housing located in the child's school district. If the child is not regularly attending school, this may indicate a need for household support, depending on the reasons.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*Another way of framing this question can be focusing on whether the school has raised this as an issue. For example, has the school contacted you about any attendance or tardiness issues?*

*Phrases like “more often than not” can sometimes be difficult to conceptualize. It can help to ask the participant to focus on the previous week or two. How many days have the children missed in the last week? How about the week before that?*

*It is also helpful to use this as an opportunity to identify helpful resources for the household. For example, if the children are struggling to attend school because they need assistance with transportation, have health concerns, etc.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

**35. In the last six months have adults in the family changed because of a new relationship, a separation, incarceration, military deployment, or anything like that?**  
.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- This information helps assessors to understand the stability and consistency of who is in the household.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES

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*It is not uncommon for families to cohabitate together. So it can be helpful to frame this as asking about who they have been living with and how that has changed rather than why the household makeup might have changed.*

**36. Do you anticipate any other adults or children coming to live with your family in the first six months after you and your family get housed?**  
.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- This information helps assessors to understand the stability and consistency of who is in the household.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES

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*When asking this question, it can be helpful to remember whether anyone in the family is pregnant and/or the participant mentioned any pending court cases or legal issues that might impact who is in the household, for example child custody cases.*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

**37. Does your family have two or more planned activities each week such as outings to the park, going to the library, visiting other family, watching a family movie or anything like that?**

.....



### 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 household could be stably housed.

**38. Does your family have a support network for when you need help with your children or other things that come up?**

.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- This information helps the assessors to understand if the household has a support network, which can also identify connections/resources for housing and service planning.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*Many households have support networks that are not located nearby. To help identify whether there is a nearby support network, it can be helpful to ask questions about what would happen if you needed assistance with a sudden emergency, such as:*

- *What happens if your car breaks down, is there someone you can call?*
- *What about if your kids are sick, what would happen?*
- *If you have one person who is available to help with emergencies like childcare, what happens if that person is not available?*
- *Is that person readily available and close by?*

## Section Four: Vulnerabilities and Housing Support Needs

**39. If there are children 12 and younger as well as 13 and over: In your household, do the older kids spend two or more hours on a typical day helping their younger siblings with things like getting ready for school, homework, dinner, bathing them, or anything like that?**

.....



### WHY WE ARE ASKING THIS QUESTION

- This information helps the assessor to identify areas where additional supports are needed to meet the needs of children in the household.

### TIPS AND STRATEGIES



*This question can feel like it is awkwardly worded. If the assessor knows the ages of the children in the household, it can be helpful to simply and ask, “Do your older kids help out with the younger kids?” It can be helpful to offer examples, such as:*

- *If a parent needs to do something, do they need the help or support of the older kids with the younger kids?*
- *If so, how often does that happen?*
- *If a parent needs to take a shower, does an older child assist with watching the younger kids? If a younger kid needs something while the parent is in the shower, does the older kid do that? For example, a diaper change?*
- *Does an older child “babysit” or take care of the younger child(ren) when you are away? If so, how often?*