



Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Continuum of Care (CoC) Using the HMIS By-Name List (BNL) Prioritization & Slotting Processes

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1. Overview

The purpose of this document is to outline the processes to be followed when prioritizing and slotting individuals and families for Continuum of Care (CoC) housing resources. The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), locally referred to as *Clarity*, and all by-name list (BNL) data within it will be the primary source of information used to make objective decisions about whom to prioritize and slot for each available housing resource. The processes outlined in this document are to be adhered to by all HMIS Participating Agencies and their respective HMIS End Users (users). This document can be amended at any time with the approval of the HMIS & CoC Lead Agency, the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services (OHS).

The primary goal of these processes is to ensure that emergency shelters can handle the inflow of persons experiencing homelessness and maintain openings to serve those in need. Additionally, efficiency of these prioritization and slotting processes is of utmost importance to ensure that the CoC maintains the permanent housing inventory that it has and mitigate the risk of losing subsidize housing.

2. Identifying Available Housing Resources

Housing resources refers to any Rapid Rehousing (RRH) or Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) bed/unit. All housing providers in the CoC are required to identify available and move-in ready units every Monday via email to Coordinated Entry (CE), locally referred to as Coordinated Intake (CI). This should include all necessary, applicable information about the unit including but not limited to:

- Site/building name
- Address
- Unit number
- Bedroom count
- Subsidy source (e.g., CMHA, CoC, etc.)
- ADA accessibility information
- Eligibility criteria (e.g., chronically homeless, DedicatedPLUS, age restrictions, etc.)

Once reported to CI, the staff member(s) responsible for maintaining this information will retain it on a spreadsheet to keep a running history of units.

3. Prioritization

3.1. Prioritization Criteria

CI will use the following criteria to slot participants for housing resources using the HMIS BNL (listed in priority order):

- 1) Chronically Homeless (CH)
 - a. Disabled **AND**
 - b. Current episode of homelessness totals 365+ days **OR**
 - c. 4 or more episodes of homelessness that total 365+ days in the last 3 years.
- 2) Long-term homeless and disabled
 - a. Does not meet the CH definition but has longest length of time homeless as listed on the HMIS BNL.
- 3) Long-term homeless and no disability
 - a. Does not meet the CH definition but has longest length of time homeless as listed on the HMIS BNL without a disability.
- 4) Short-term homeless and disabled

- a. Does not have relatively long length of time homeless but does have a disabling condition that creates a barrier to housing.
- 5) Short-term homeless and not disabled
- a. Does not have relatively long length of time homeless and does not have a disabling condition.

3.2. Cuyahoga Vulnerability Index (VI)

The above criteria will be used to sort the HMIS BNL when determining who to slot for each of the available housing resources. However, the Cuyahoga VI will be the primary determinant of who ultimately gets selected for the resource.

For example, if there are 100 participants who meeting the CH definition, all 100 will be considered top priority. The VI will be used to select the most vulnerable participant regardless of the length of time homeless. A participant who is CH, has 365 days homeless, and has a VI score of 30 will be slotted over someone who is CH, has 730 days homeless, and has a VI score of 10.

3.3. Participant Choice

Most importantly, participant choice will inform all slotting decisions. Autonomy to select where one would prefer to live is a right. Participants will be asked to select which side of the County (e.g., east, west, south, downtown, etc.) or specific sites they would prefer to be housed in. That preference will be kept on the BNL and ultimately inform CI’s decision to slot the participant for any available units that fit that preference.

For example, if a CH participant has selected that they would prefer to live on the west side of the County, they will be skipped over for any available housing resource that does not fit that choice. This may mean that someone who has less time homeless and/or a lower VI score could be slotted for the available units before that participant based on their choice.

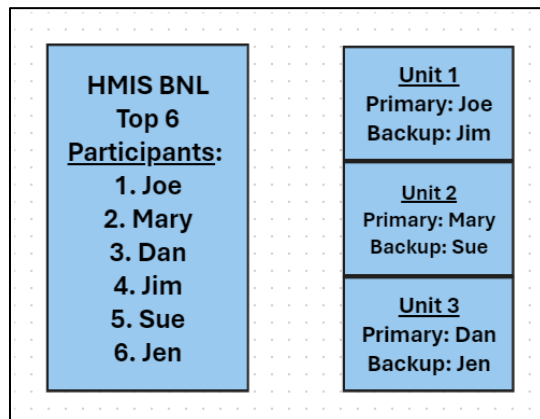
4. Slotting

For a flowchart of the timeline described below, see **Appendix A**.

4.1. Order of Slotting & Notifications

Based on the criteria and information outlined in Section 3, CI will be responsible for selecting and slotting participants for available units. Each available unit will have a primary and backup participant slotted. Case managers will be informed by CI that their participants have been slotted (primary or backup) by the end of each Tuesday of the week.

An example of how slotting primary and backup participants will work assuming all eligibility criteria and participant preferences are met:



4.2. Housing Offer Forms

Case managers are responsible for locating the participant and offering them the housing opportunity. This will be documented with a signed Housing Offer form (**Appendix B**) and starting a Housing Offer Assessment in *Clarity*. The signed Housing Offer form must be uploaded into the FILES section of the participant's HMIS record regardless of if the participant accepts or denies that offer.

4.3. Accepted Housing Offers

If the participant accepts the housing offer, case managers have until the following Friday's PSH Meeting (approximately 10 days after being informed of slotting) to complete a full application and upload it into the FILES section of the participant's HMIS record. If the primarily slotted participant does not have a completed application by that time, the backup becomes the primary and has one additional week to complete a full application. Another backup will be slotted.

4.4. Denied Housing Offers

If the participant denies the housing offer, CI must be notified *immediately*. The participant will maintain their spot on the HMIS BNL with a note that a housing opportunity was denied. The backup for that unit becomes the primary and has the same deadline to complete the Housing Offer form and full application unless that turnaround time is less than 5 business days. The deadline will be extended to 5 business days if that is the case. Another backup will be slotted.

Once a participant denies 3 housing opportunities, they will be dropped to the bottom of the prioritization regardless of their spot on the HMIS BNL. Should the participant remain homeless and active on the BNL, they can be reconsidered for housing opportunities after 6 months. This will be based on the Offer Outcome date on the Housing Offer Assessment in *Clarity*. Should the participant exit homelessness without a CoC housing resource, be inactivated on the BNL, return to homelessness, and reactivated on the BNL, they can be reconsidered for housing opportunities at the time of reactivation.

If a participant is denied the housing opportunity by the housing provider, this does not count toward the 3 housing offer denials. If a case manager does not complete a full application in the allotted timeframe, this does not count toward the 3 housing offer denials. Housing offer denials only count if the participant denies a viable opportunity within their preferences.

5. Housing Applications

Housing applications are to be completed in full and uploaded into the FILES section of the participant's HMIS record. Once uploaded, an email should be sent to the applicable CI staff notifying them to review it. CI will review the application and notify via email the uploading user/case manager if there are updates/issues to be addressed or if the application is completed. CI will complete CMHA preference letters for any participants who are slotted and accept a PSH site that has CMHA subsidized units. CI will also notify via email the housing provider that the application is ready to be pulled from *Clarity*. Some timelines to consider:

- PSH applications must be dated within **120 days** of approval.
- Income documentation such as pay stubs, food stamps, statements of no income must be dated within **30 days** of approval. This is true for any income document where the amount fluctuates.
- Documentation such as homeless letter, disability verification, Social Security award letters, etc. should be dated within **120 days** of approval.
 - o If documents need to be updated, case managers should upload only the documents that are required to be updated rather than the entire application.

To upload the application to the FILES section, select the file category of Housing Documentation and then select the Housing Application option. All application-related files can be uploaded in the same category while identifying documents should be uploaded within the Personal Identification category. Instructions on how to do this are available on the OHS website from the 9/30/2024 HMIS End User Workgroup (<https://hhs.cuyahogacounty.gov/programs/detail/homeless-management-information-system>).

6. RRH to PSH

There are times where participants served through RRH programs are bridged to the long-term subsidies of PSH programs. However, RRH participants are considered permanently housed and will not be active on the HMIS BNL to prioritize them for the PSH units. To account for this, RRH providers and CI are jointly responsible for running Client Rosters in *Clarity* to track participants who may need this bridging and when they become eligible.

Participants in RRH programs are eligible to be considered for housing resources 6 months prior to the end of their assistance period. This is based on the Housing Move In Date entered on the enrollment screens of the RRH programs in *Clarity*. RRH case management providers or the grantees are primarily responsible for tracking this, although CI or other BNL managers can assist, if needed. Participants will maintain their homeless status they had prior to entry into the RRH program. This status determines their position on the HMIS BNL based on the criteria outlined in Section 3 of this document.

7. Weekly Housing Meetings

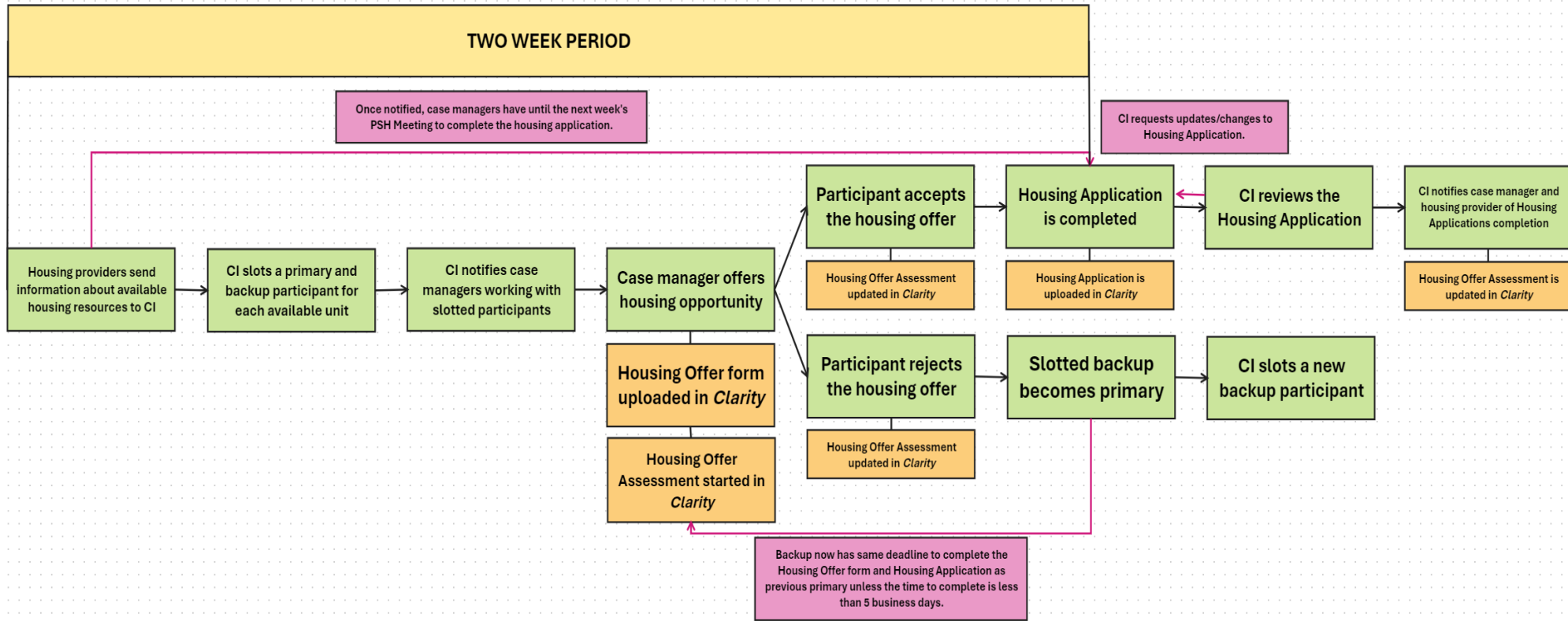
Slotting, prioritization, and identification of the right participants for available housing resources is no longer the primary use of the weekly Housing Meeting held every Friday. The goal is to discuss barriers to completing housing applications for those already selected and gather updates on those identified on the HMIS BNL. This will effectively create a better case conferencing atmosphere for all subpopulations focused on sharing of other community resources with the CoC's primary goal of keeping participants' experiences of homelessness brief and non-recurring.

It is a CoC expectation that all agencies are represented at these Housing Meetings. Attendance will be kept for each meeting to ensure that representatives from all agencies are present each week. Representatives must be active in conversation, advocate for participants in their programs, and, to the best of their ability, have their cameras on within the virtual meeting space. If a usual representative cannot be present for a meeting, agencies have 2 options:

- 1) A proxy must be sent in their place that is prepared with information and updates that may not already be available in *Clarity*.
- 2) The agency can have dated updates on all participants entered on the BNL Assessment in *Clarity* prior to the Friday meeting.

If meetings are consistently missed, participants/proxies are consistently unprepared or not present in conversation, or updates are not consistently added in *Clarity*, agency leadership will be notified by OHS of the lack of engagement and advocacy for their participants.

Appendix A – Slotting Process Flowchart



Appendix B – Housing Offer Form



Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Continuum of Care HOUSING OFFER FORM

Participant's Name: _____

Agency Offering Housing: _____

Staff Name Offering Housing: _____

Type of Housing Offered: _____

Name of PSH Building Offered (if applicable): _____

The Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Continuum of Care (CoC) has a housing opportunity to offer. You have been identified as a possible applicant for this opportunity! Should you accept, the staff member offering you the housing opportunity will explain the program and work with you to complete a housing application and a CMHA portal application (if applicable). Should you decline, you may still be eligible for other housing opportunities in our CoC, but it may take more time to receive those. Should you decline three housing offers, you may be removed from the priority listing for at least 6 months.

- I have been offered housing and **accept** the offer.

I have been offered housing and **decline** the offer.

Please select the reason for declining:

The offered housing is a unit that is not the right size.

The offered housing is not in my preferred area of the County to live.

I already have a housing plan that does not include homeless system resources

Other (be specific): _____

The participant and staff member offering this opportunity must sign this document regardless of acceptance or declination.

Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____