Determining Approximate Date of Homelessness
HMIS Learning Center

It is critical to ask follow-up questions when determining the correct start date for a current episode of homelessness. Here are some examples of follow-up questions to help ensure the correct date is entered in HMIS for the Approximate Date of Homelessness.

- Are you entering our program from an Emergency Shelter or from the streets (car, tent, abandoned building, etc.)?
- If yes, when was the last time you were in stable housing, including staying with friends/family or in your own rental?
- How many nights did you stay at (the location of stable housing above)?
- If it was for less than seven days, where did you stay before that?

Please be sure to review HUD's Definition of Homelessness.

Follow-up questions are important! If they state that they are staying with a friend or family, they are not considered to be homeless. Also, be mindful of breaks in homelessness (a period of longer than seven days).

Examples of Client Scenarios

"I have been in my car for two weeks, but two days ago a friend let me stay on their couch."
- The break in homelessness is less than seven days.
- The approximate date of homelessness should be the day they started sleeping in their car (two weeks ago).

"I have been homeless for over a year, I got kicked out of my mother's house last month then stayed with my uncle but tonight I have no place to go so I'm at the shelter."
- The client was not previously considered to be homeless since they were living with family until today.
- The approximate date of homelessness should be today, since living with family is not considered to be homeless.

"I have been living in a motel for the last month."
- If the motel is being paid for by the client, then they are not considered to be homeless. If it's being paid for by a church, another non-profit, or through program funding (such as ESP), then the client is considered to be homeless.
- If you determine that the client is considered to be homeless, the approximate date of homelessness should be the first day that the motel was paid for by the church, non-profit, or program funding.