When a client leaves a project, the HMIS end user will select a destination type. This field is required for all clients and it reflects where a client will stay after exiting a project. A project's client engagement rate is based on the options selected for a client's destination. For example, if a client's destination in unknown, it will negatively impact the client engagement rate for that project.

Client Engagement Rate

A project's client engagement rate is based on the case worker's knowledge of where the client will be staying after he or she exits the project. If one of the following options is selected as the destination, it will negatively impact the client engagement rate for that project.

- Other (HUD)
- No exit interview completed (HUD)
- Client doesn't know (HUD)
- Client refused (HUD)
- Data not collected (HUD)

Below are some tips to help a project improve a project's client engagement rate.

- Run the Discharge Destination Data Quality Report. It shows the total number of clients discharged, total "null" responses, and total "other" responses. It also shows a client audit tab that displays the exit destination response for each client. Use this report to help you identify any data quality errors.

- Educate staff on discharge procedures. Review the discharge destination options using the Exit Destination Guidance document. Instruct staff on what HUD considers to be a positive housing destination. Provide guidance on client engagement and the importance of having a known destination for the client.

- During the client intake interview, stress the importance of communication with the case worker. Determine expectations and frequency of contact with the client.

- Obtain as much contact information from the client as possible. Get names and numbers of friends and family. If the client does disappear from your project, you can call or text the contacts to ask about the client's destination. Make sure to clarify that you are asking about where the client went directly upon leaving the project.

- Create an in-house exit form that includes exit destination options for clients (you can translate options from the HUD HMIS Data Standards destination options). Please note that the standard HMIS exit assessment forms are located on the HMIS Learning Center website. These forms can be used as a basis if you are creating an in-house form for clients to complete.

- Review the exit form with the client. The case worker should also ask the client to state where the client would go if he or she should leave the project.

- Place this exit form at key locations in the facility where clients can easily access them if needed. Ask the clients to complete an exit form if they are leaving the project.

- If you don't have the client's destination, do not create a fictitious destination for the client. Be as accurate as possible.

Discharge Destination

The following guidance on destination is taken directly from the HUD HMIS Data Standards Manual. Please refer to this document when training HMIS end users on exiting clients from projects. Selecting the correct destination for clients is critical when measuring a project's outcomes.

The destination rationale is to identify where a client will stay just after exiting a project for purposes of tracking and outcome measurement. You should record in the HMIS where the client is expected to stay after they complete or stop participating in project activities.

- For residential projects that expect a client to move out upon exit, record where the client is expected to move immediately after leaving.

- For projects where a client is not expected to relocate upon exit, such as Homelessness Prevention, Rapid Re-Housing, Transition in Place, or Supportive Services Only projects, record where the client is expected to stay after they complete or stop participation in project activities. This may be the same place that they were staying prior to starting in the project. Select the destination response category that most closely matches where the client will be staying after exiting the project.

- If a client moves into rental housing with a subsidy, select the response that includes the type of housing subsidy. A housing subsidy may be tenant, project, or sponsor-based and provides ongoing assistance to reduce rent burden. This includes housing subsidies provided through HUD-funded subsidies (such as public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, or Section 8) or other housing subsidies (such as state rental assistance vouchers).

- If a client moves in with family or friends, select the response that includes the expected tenure of the destination (permanent or temporary). There is no specific timeframe used to differentiate between these two options. Rather, the determination should be made based on whether the situation reflects family reunification or whether the family member or friend has placed any limitation that indicates the stay is intended to be temporary (e.g. a specific time limit).

- "Other" should be used only as a last resort if the client's destination truly cannot be even loosely described by any of the available options. Any such response will not count in any HMIS-based reporting as a positive outcome.

- Note that the client's destination is about where they are staying, not necessarily about why they are staying there. So the choice of the destination in HMIS should reflect the client's living situation, not any particular reason why the client is staying there.

- Clients that are exiting to school or the military may have housing provided for them. If the client is moving into a dorm or army-supplied housing, 'Rental by client, with other ongoing housing subsidy' can be selected, consistent with the notion that these units are not owned by the client, have conditions of tenancy, and have a value ascribed to them.

- If the client is moving into housing with a relative during schooling, 'Living with family, permanent tenure' can be selected, consistent with the notion that the client may stay with the family member for as long as needed to complete school.

- Mass shelters that track bed nights using the night by night method may have high rates of missing destination data when the client is exited. Often, in this model, a client is exited after a period of time of not coming into the shelter, at which point the opportunity to ask clients where they are going is lost. HUD and other federal partners strongly encourage shelters, even large-scale shelters, to consider themselves to be a part of the community's system working to end homelessness. Any steps these projects can take to establish relationships with clients, focus on moving clients into more permanent housing situations, or collaborate with service projects that do so, will improve a system's functioning, data quality, and client outcomes.