

Assessing Housing Needs and Risks: A Screening Questionnaire

HOW TO USE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is for departments of correction, reentry service providers, service intake coordinators, case managers, law enforcement agencies, courts, and others to better assess a person's unique housing needs and risk of homelessness upon arrest or return to the community from jail or prison. Effective use of this questionnaire necessitates close coordination and partnership among corrections, courts, law enforcement, and community-based reentry service providers.

These screening questions are intended to reveal personalized housing needs, histories of homelessness, or risk of homelessness. Adequately assessing these needs and coordinating service delivery among partner organizations closes service gaps, reduces the likelihood of a client falling through the cracks, and allows organizations to catch clients who may have elevated housing risks at an earlier stage of the intake process.

After completing the questionnaire, a client's housing assessment can be linked to their case file. Partner organizations with comprehensive data-sharing agreements can share a nuanced understanding of a client's housing needs. The evolution of a client's housing needs can also be traced over time, as risk for homelessness is reduced and housing stability improves.

Used in conjunction with other housing tools and services, this questionnaire can help corrections, courts, law enforcement, and reentry service providers improve individuals' housing success and other benefits associated with stable housing such as employment, continuity of care, and pro-social connections. Better housing stability creates a foundation for improved reentry success and reduced likelihood of recidivism.

ABOUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is intended to be a simple and easy-to-use starting point for better assessing the housing needs of people upon entering or exiting jail, prison, or supervision. It is intended to provide useful supplemental information that may not be covered elsewhere in the intake or case planning process. Use these questions to guide a productive conversation with a client.

Every person has unique housing needs, and every community has a unique housing landscape. We encourage customization to your unique community and existing intake processes, and we support organizations and professionals making additions and adaptations to better fit their community, available resources, and existing organizational partnerships.

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Housing history/risk of homelessness:

These questions should guide a conversation with a client and be used to assess their housing stability and appropriate program eligibility. If the content of a question is covered elsewhere in the intake or case planning process, skip it. Please note, some questions may be of a sensitive nature, or a client may be reluctant to answer. Responses should always be voluntary and kept confidential. They should never be used to discriminate or deny services to someone.

Can you afford housing? Describe your housing plan post-release.

Yes No

Describe

Where did you live immediately before being arrested, entering a diversion program, or entering jail/prison?

Yes No

Describe

Were you experiencing homelessness before arrest/diversion/entering jail/prison?

Yes No

Describe

At any point in time, have you ever lived: outside, in a car, in a tent, in an overnight shelter, or in someone else's home (i.e., couch-surfing)?

Yes No

Describe

Do you have a spouse/significant other/parent/dependent children/grown children/or other relatives with whom you'd like to live upon release? If so, does that person have stable housing?

Yes No

Describe

Is there anyone or any place you are legally not allowed to reside?

Yes No

Describe

Have you ever lived in public housing?

Yes No

Describe

Have you ever been charged/convicted of: arson, stalking, manufacture/sale of drugs, sex offense, violent crime/assault?

Yes No

Describe

Specialized population status/qualifies for specialized housing services:

These questions should guide a conversation with a client and be used to assess their eligibility for certain specialized housing services. If the content of a question is covered elsewhere in the intake or case planning process, skip it. Other questions are intended to determine if there are any barriers to that person's comfort level or stability when seeking various types of housing arrangements. Please note, some questions may be of a sensitive nature, or an individual may be reluctant to answer. Responses should always be voluntary and kept confidential. They should never be used to discriminate or deny services to someone.

Are you a veteran?

Yes No

Describe

Do you have a physical or mental disability?

Yes No

Describe

Have you been diagnosed with a mental illness, substance use disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), cognitive disability, traumatic brain injury, or HIV/AIDS?

Yes No

Describe

Do you have any dependents such as children or elderly parents?

Yes No

Describe

Do you identify as LGBTQ+? If so, do you feel that this affects the services you can get or the types of places you can go to for help?

Yes No

Describe

Are you a citizen/legal resident?

Yes No

Describe

Are you a member of a federally or state recognized American Indian tribe?

Yes No

Describe

Do you plan to reside in a rural community post-release?

Yes No

Describe

Wraparound services:

These questions should guide a conversation with a client and be used to assess any relevant wraparound needs that may impact their housing stability, or are not otherwise covered in the intake process. If the content of a question is covered elsewhere in the intake or case planning process, skip it. Please note, some questions may be of a sensitive nature, or an individual may be reluctant to answer. Responses should always be voluntary and kept confidential. They should never be used to discriminate or deny services to someone.

Did you work before being arrested/while incarcerated? Describe your employment plan?

Yes No

Describe

Did you go to school before being arrested/while incarcerated (GED course, etc.)? Do you want to pursue additional education?

Yes No

Describe

Do you have children? What is your current child support/custody situation?

Yes No

Describe

Are you enrolled in Medicaid/Medicare/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)/other? What do you do if you get sick or need to see a doctor?

Yes No

Describe

How do you plan to travel to your appointments? To see your case manager? Your parole/probation officer? Do you drive/take the bus/ride-share?

Describe

Do you have a driver's license? What about another form of photo ID?

Yes No

Describe

Have you or your family ever been on SNAP (food stamps)? Or gone to a food pantry? What do you do if you can't afford food?

Yes No

Describe

Are there any other services you've received or want to see a social worker/case worker for? Such as TANF or help with utilities (electricity, gas, heat, etc.)?

Yes No

Describe