

Permanent Housing Exit Reason Data Collection Guide

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Exit Reason Fields

The standard program exit screen collects exit destination information so we can learn where residents are going, but this does not tell us why they are leaving. Collecting exit reason can help us better understand what supports residents and providers may need to improve housing outcomes and advance equity.

As of October 2026, the exit screen for **permanent housing programs** will include two new prompts:

“Primary Reason for Exit”

A single-select dropdown list of exit reasons. If “Other” is selected, an additional text box is available for explanation.

“Please provide any additional relevant details about the circumstances of this exit”

An optional open-text box for sharing additional information about the circumstances of the exit.

Please refer to the appendix for the list of exit reason options with descriptions and examples.

Policies for Collecting Exit Reason Data

Should exit reason be collected for everyone, including minors?

Exit reason should be collected for all residents exiting permanent housing projects. For households with multiple members, each individual may have their own reason for exiting and the reasons do not need to align across households if household members are leaving for different reasons. For dependent children within family households who are leaving with or due to an adult household member leaving, please select ‘Dependent Minor – Adult Household Member Exited’. If a dependent minor is leaving and all other adult household members are remaining, you may populate whichever exit reason response most closely corresponds to the reason for exiting (e.g. left for housing opportunity if they are moving to be with their other parent).

Who should determine the primary reason for exit?

As with other HMIS data entry, **resident-reported information should be the primary source whenever the resident is available to provide it.** When the resident is not

available, a staff member may report the reason based on available records or known circumstances. Avoid making assumptions about a resident's reason for leaving when the circumstances are unknown. If the resident is not available to provide the exit reason, and there are no records or known circumstances, the most appropriate exit reason is like 'lost contact'.

What if a resident disagrees with what the provider reported?

Residents have access to a **clear and transparent process for requesting correction of their HMIS data**. Clients may submit a written request to the Partner Agency to correct inaccurate information; corrections are added as a new entry rather than replacing the original, preserving a full history. The same written request can also cover a copy of the client's PII, an accounting of who it's been released to, restrictions on future sharing, and a current copy of the Agency's Privacy Statement.

The Agency may deny a request in limited cases (e.g., litigation-related records, third-party information, confidential sources, or safety risk), and will explain any denial in writing. Clients can appeal through the Agency's grievance procedures, and regardless of outcome, may add a statement of disagreement to their file, which is shared alongside the disputed data whenever it's released.

What if there are multiple exit reasons?

While an exit may have multiple contributing factors, programs should select the **primary reason** for exit. We recognize that determining a primary reason will not always be straightforward. Residents and providers should use their best judgment and consider the primary circumstance that *most directly contributed* to the exit. The optional details field can be used to provide additional context when appropriate.

There are three exit destinations- death, hospitalized, and incarcerated- that directly overlap with exit destination response options. These exit reasons should only be selected when they are the true *primary* reason for a resident's departure. For example, if a resident would otherwise still be living in the program were they not incarcerated, incarcerated is the appropriate exit reason. If there was another reason that directly caused their exit and they happened to subsequently be incarcerated, indicate the exit reason that primarily caused them to leave or be removed from the program rather than selecting incarcerated.

What reason should be entered for mobility transfers?

When a resident is relocating to a different permanent housing program via a mobility transfer, the exit reason selected should reflect the **primary reason** that the mobility transfer is occurring. The mobility transfer itself is not the primary reason for exit, rather what led to the mobility transfer is. For example, if the resident requested a mobility transfer because they want to be closer to their job, family, or community, the exit reason would be 'Not satisfied with housing or location'. If the resident requested a mobility transfer because they felt unsafe and wanted to live elsewhere, the exit reason would be 'safety concerns'.

What should and should not be included in the optional additional details field?

Use this optional field to provide **brief context** that helps explain the circumstances of the exit and identify opportunities for program improvement. Meaningful context is encouraged, but take care to avoid unnecessary identifying or sensitive information. In cases involving domestic violence, take extra caution to protect resident privacy and safety. This field is optional.

Do include:

- Relevant context about what contributed to the exit
- Resident preferences, concerns, or changing needs
- Program or service factors that may have contributed to the exit
- Brief context about efforts to support the resident

Do NOT include:

- The resident's new address or exact location
- The specific name or location of a shelter, hospital, treatment facility, or other destination
- Any information that implies immigration or citizenship status
- Unnecessary personally identifying or sensitive information

When in doubt, be general: Include context to understand the exit and identify potential program improvements, while protecting resident privacy. This field is optional.

Step-by-Step Data Entry Guide

Note: Screenshots do not display any actual resident information.

Step 1: Navigate to the programs Exit tab, and select the add icon

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the King County PSH Program interface. The header includes the KC logo, program name, and a date/status indicator. Below the header is a horizontal menu with various tabs: History, Group, Services, Events, Assessments, Notes, Units/Beds, Files, Forms, Assigned Staff, and Exit. The Exit tab is currently selected. Below the menu, there is a section titled 'Program enrollment: Exit' with a sub-header 'Exit Jane Doe from King County PSH Program'. To the right of this section, there is a red-bordered button with a plus icon and the word 'Add' below it.

Step 2: Select an accurate Destination, Primary Reason for Exit and additional details as needed (optional)

The screenshot shows a form titled 'Add an exit' with a close button in the top right corner. The form is for 'Jane Doe exit screen'. It contains several fields: 'Program Exit Date *' with a date picker showing '09/09/2026'; 'Destination *' with a dropdown menu showing 'Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bus/train/subway ...)'; 'Primary Reason For Exit *' with a dropdown menu showing 'Does not meet criteria for program'; and a text area for 'Please provide any additional relevant details about the circumstances of this exit' with the placeholder text 'Enter in additional context as needed here.'.

Final Step: Check that the exit destination and exit reason you entered are logically consistent with each other.

Before completing the exit, make sure the selected exit destination and exit reason describe the same situation. If they do not align, review both fields and update the information as needed. For example, an exit destination of Deceased should not be paired with an exit reason of Left for housing opportunity.

If an invalid pairing is entered, a warning will appear prompting you to review and correct the information.

Guidance for the Use of Exit Reason Data

What should exit reason data be used for?

Exit reason data should be used as a **quality improvement tool** to help programs identify patterns, understand barriers to housing stability, consider changes to program practices, and identify what additional supports both residents and providers may benefit from to improve care coordination.

For example, if a program sees a pattern of exits related to:

- **Rules or program requirements:** Review whether rules are necessary, clearly communicated, equitably applied, consistent with funding expectations and any other relevant guidelines such as housing first principles. Consider whether additional flexibility, problem-solving, or support could prevent avoidable exits.
- **Loss of contact or disengagement:** Examine when and how residents are disengaging and whether outreach, relationship-building, or service approaches could be strengthened.
- **Safety concerns or conflict:** Consider whether the program offers 24/7 staffing and or security, secure entry/exit and facilities, and whether residents and staff have timely access to conflict resolution, safety planning, mediation, or other supports.
- **Changing support needs:** Examine whether residents can easily connect to additional physical health, behavioral health, substance use, nursing, or other services as their needs change.
- **Housing mismatch or resident choice:** Consider whether residents have meaningful opportunities to communicate preferences and whether housing placements and services are responsive to those preferences.

The goal is not simply to reduce a particular type of exit. The goal is to understand what is happening not just at the program level but system-wide, and identify opportunities to improve program practices, care coordination, resident experience, and housing stability. Funders, contract monitors, and other system stakeholders can be active partners in this process.

What should exit reason data not be used for?

Exit reason is intended to be used as a program- and system-level quality improvement measure, not as a resident-level characteristic. Exit reason data should never be used to determine whether an individual is eligible for, prioritized for, referred to, or accepted into another housing program or service. It should not be considered an indication of a person's future behavior, eligibility, needs, or suitability for housing or services.

An exit reason describes the circumstances around one program exit at one point in time. As with all data collection in HMIS, it may be influenced by discretion or bias, and is not the full and objective truth about a person.

When exit reason data is used for reporting, analysis, or quality improvement, it should be interpreted in context and, whenever possible, in aggregate rather than as an individual-level flag.

The purpose of collecting this information is to improve programs and reduce avoidable exits, not to create new barriers to housing.

Appendix: Exit Reason Options, Descriptions, and Examples

Voluntary Exit Reasons

Reason for Exit	Description	Example(s)
Disagreement with rules	Resident was unsatisfied with rules (e.g. guest policy, pet policy) and made the decision to exit the program.	John wants to adopt a dog, so he chooses to leave the program
Left for housing opportunity	Resident found another long-term housing opportunity	Jane obtains a Section 8 voucher
Lost contact	Resident left without informing program staff and was unable to be reached	John left his unit without informing staff and was unable to be contacted by phone, email, or by looking for him in his usual locations
Not satisfied with housing or location	Resident was unsatisfied with the type or quality of the housing, or did not like the location, and made the decision to exit the program.	Jane feels that a program with a stricter sobriety policy would be a better fit for her. John has family and community in another part of the county that he feels isolated from.
Safety concerns	Resident felt unsafe in the housing or program environment and made the decision to exit the program.	John is worried about one of his neighbors making threatening statements, so he chooses to leave the program

Involuntary Exit Reasons

Reason for Exit	Description	Example(s)
Criminal activity/violence	Resident was forced to exit the program because of criminal activity or violence that occurred while in the program	Jane physically attacked program staff John was producing meth in his unit

Does not meet criteria for program	Resident no longer meets requirements for the program (e.g. income, disability, family composition)	John obtains employment and starts earning more than 30% AMI Jane gives birth to a child and is no longer eligible for an all-adults building
Non-compliance with rules	Resident was not in compliance with the rules of the program and was forced to exit the program	John repeatedly had overnight visitors in violation of the rules Jane hides a cat in her unit and refuses to find a new home for the cat
Non-payment of rent	Resident did not pay their rent	Jane's lease was terminated because she failed to pay her portion of the rent

Other Exit Reasons

Reason for Exit	Description	Example(s)
Death	Resident passed away	John died while in the program
Hospitalized	Resident was hospitalized	Jane was booked into the hospital for what is expected to be a long stay
Incarcerated	Resident was incarcerated	John was sentenced to 12 months in prison
Dependent Minor – Adult Household Member Exited	The resident is a dependent minor and is leaving because an adult household member is leaving. The adult household member's reason for leaving should be documented on their own exit screen, and not the child's. Do not select this option for adults.	Jane is 13 years old and is leaving with her parent who is moving to another housing option John is 6 years old and his guardian was incarcerated so he was placed in CPS custody
Other (provide detail)		