



Homelessness Terminology Guide

Primavera Foundation believes that language matters and that our choice of words should not stigmatize any population group, including people that are experiencing homelessness.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers the following suggestions when discussing the topic of homelessness:

Instead of this:

- Homeless peoples/the homeless
- Transient populations

Try this:

- People experiencing homelessness
- Persons experiencing unstable housing/housing insecurity/persons who are not securely housed
- Clients/guests who are accessing homeless services

Additionally, the terms “houselessness” and “unhoused” can be used instead of “homelessness” or “homeless,” respectively. A home can connote emotional, familial and cultural feelings, beyond just shelter. So, an individual may lack housing but still have a sense of “home.”

The following list is not exhaustive and will continually be updated as the conversation around homelessness is complex and ever-evolving.



Affordable Housing

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines affordable housing as housing where the occupant is paying 30% or less of the gross income on total housing, including utilities.

Source: U.S. News & World Report <https://realestate.usnews.com/real-estate/articles/what-is-affordable-housing>

Chronic Homelessness

People who are chronically homeless have experienced homelessness for at least one year – or repeatedly – while struggling with a disabling condition such as a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability.

Source: National Alliance to End Homelessness <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/who-experiences-homelessness/chronically-homeless/#:~:text=People%20who%20are%20chronically%20homeless,Updated%20April%202023>

Continuum of Care Program (CoC)

The CoC (Continuum of Care) Program is designed to promote community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness by providing funding for efforts by nonprofit providers and State and local governments and promoting access to and effective utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families.

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/>

Emergency Shelter

An emergency shelter is a facility with the primary purpose of providing temporary shelter for people experiencing homelessness or for those who are at imminent risk of becoming unhoused. These shelters are intended to address the basic health, food, clothing, and personal hygiene needs of individuals or families. At Primavera Foundation, we are able to provide resources for individuals or families that are utilizing our emergency shelters for up to 90 days.

Source: Pallet Shelter <https://palletshelter.com/blog/homelessness-glossary-15-terms-to-know/>

Episodic Homelessness

People who are episodically homeless have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year. These episodes are typically defined as periods when a person is in a shelter or a place not fit for habitation, and after at least 30 days, are back in the shelter. Typically, they are chronically unemployed and may experience medical, mental health, and substance use issues.

Sources: Pallet Shelter <https://palletshelter.com/blog/homelessness-glossary-15-terms-to-know/>
Canadian Observatory on Homelessness <https://www.homelesshub.ca/solutions/prevention/addressing-chronic-homelessness>



Fair Housing

The Fair Housing Act protects people from discrimination when they are renting or buying a home, getting a mortgage, seeking housing assistance, or engaging in other housing-related activities. It prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), familial status, and disability. It is also known as Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968.

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/fair_housing_act_overview#_The_Fair_Housing

Financial Education and Empowerment

Financial education and empowerment services are key tools that participants can utilize to achieve financial literacy. Some of these tools include incentive-based savings plans, credit restoration services, homebuyer education, and homeownership opportunities. Primavera Foundation offers participants an opportunity to achieve long-term financial success through these services.

Source: Primavera Foundation <https://primavera.org/financial-homebuying-skills/>

HMIS (Homeless Management Information System)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), along with other planners and policymakers, use aggregate Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data to better inform homeless policy and decision-making at the federal, state, and local levels. The HEARTH (Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing) Act of 2009 requires that all communities have an HMIS with the capacity to collect unduplicated counts of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hmis/hmis-requirements/>

Homeless

Homeless describes a person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

Housing First

Housing First is a homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. This approach is guided by the belief that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance use issues.

Additionally, Housing First is based on the understanding that client choice is valuable in housing selection and supportive service participation, and that exercising that choice is likely to make a client more successful in remaining housed and improving their life.

Source: National Alliance to End Homelessness <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/housing-first/>



Imminent Risk of Homelessness

An individual or family is considered to be at an imminent risk of homelessness if they satisfy the following criteria:

1. Their residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance;
2. No subsequent residence has been identified; and
3. The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

This includes individuals and families who are within 14 days of losing their housing, including housing they own, rent, are sharing with others, or are living in without paying rent.

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

<https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/coc-esg-virtual-binders/coc-esg-homeless-eligibility/four-categories/category-2/>

Inclusionary Zoning

Inclusionary zoning policies create dedicated affordable housing units by requiring or encouraging developers to include a specific share of below-market units as part of market-rate rental or homeowner developments.

Source: Local Housing Solutions <https://localhousingsolutions.org/housing-policy-library/inclusionary-zoning/>

Market Rate Rent

The market rate rent or fair market rent is the rent that a property is anticipated to earn each month, based on the size of the property, its type, and location. The value is determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Section Eight Housing Choice Voucher Program and other government housing programs, such as the Emergency Solution Grants Program and the Home Investment Partnerships Program, employ fair market rent to calculate a standardized rental rate. These programs offer help to persons who would otherwise be unable to afford a home.

Source: DoorLoop Property Management <https://www.doorloop.com/definitions/market-rent>

Neighborhood Deconcentration

According to a 2001 paper produced for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Policy Development and Research, deconcentration has a few different meanings:

- Creating income diversity within public housing developments that continue to be owned and operated by public housing authorities under the rules of the public housing program.
- Creating income diversity in new or redeveloped housing projects, including former public housing projects redeveloped under the HOPE VI program.
- Encouraging the use of tenant-based housing vouchers for families to locate in neighborhoods that will improve the life opportunities of family members.

Source: *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and research*, Volume 5, Number 2, 2001

<https://www.huduser.gov/periodicals/cityscpe/vol5num2/khadduri.pdf>



Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is permanent housing in which housing assistance (e.g., long-term leasing or rental assistance) and supportive services are provided to assist households with at least one member (adult or child) with a disability in achieving housing stability.

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

[https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/coc-esg-virtual-binders/coc-program-components/permanent-housing/permanent-supportive-housing/#:~:text=Permanent%20Supportive%20Housing%20\(PSH\)%20is,disability%20in%20achieving%20housing%20stability](https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/coc-esg-virtual-binders/coc-program-components/permanent-housing/permanent-supportive-housing/#:~:text=Permanent%20Supportive%20Housing%20(PSH)%20is,disability%20in%20achieving%20housing%20stability)

Point-in-Time Count (PIT)

The Point-in-Time (PIT) Count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January each year. HUD requires that CoCs (Continuums of Care) conduct an annual count of people experiencing homelessness who are sheltered in an emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens on a single night. CoCs also must conduct a count of unsheltered people experiencing homelessness every other year (odd numbered years). Each count is planned, coordinated, and carried out locally.

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/pit-hic/#2024-pit-count-and-hic-guidance-and-training>

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)

Rapid Re-Housing is a housing model designed to provide temporary housing assistance to people experiencing homelessness, moving them quickly out of homelessness and into permanent housing.

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

Rights Restoration

Setting aside or vacating convictions does not clear someone's record, but it can improve their chances when they are able to show potential interviewers or potential employers that they have completed all the terms of their sentence and had a judge officially set it aside. A past conviction does not bar someone from participating in their community, and they can restore their rights to vote, sit on a jury, run for political office and in some cases, get their convictions vacated or reclassified. Primavera Foundation partners with professional and legal experts to offer free workshops several times a year that provide information to individuals with criminal convictions on how to go about eliminating barriers to full-time employment.

Source: Primavera Foundation <https://primavera.org/housing-jobs-rights/>



Safe Havens

According to the most up-to-date version of the Continuum of Care (CoC) program, for the purpose of defining chronically homeless, a safe haven is defined as supportive housing that meets the following requirements:

1. Serves hard to reach homeless persons with severe mental illness who came from the streets and have been unwilling or unable to participate in supportive services;
2. Provides 24-hour residence for eligible persons for an unspecified period;
3. Has an overnight capacity limited to 25 or fewer persons; and
4. Provides low-demand services and referrals for the residents.

Source: National Archives Code of Federal Regulations <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-24/subtitle-B/chapter-V/subchapter-C/part-578>

Section 8 Housing

The Housing Choice Voucher Program, also known as Section 8, is the federal government's major program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market. Since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual, participants are able to find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses and apartments. The participant is free to choose any housing that meets the requirements of the program and is not limited to units located in subsidized housing projects. Housing choice vouchers are administered locally by public housing agencies (PHAs). The PHAs receive federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to administer the voucher program. A family that is issued a housing voucher is responsible for finding a suitable housing unit of the family's choice where the owner agrees to rent under the program. This unit may include the family's present residence. Rental units must meet minimum standards of health and safety, as determined by the PHA. A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the PHA on behalf of the participating family. The family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program. Under certain circumstances, if authorized by the PHA, a family may use its voucher to purchase a modest home.

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
https://www.hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8

Sheltered Homelessness

Sheltered homelessness refers to people who are staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or safe havens.

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress
<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>



Transitional Housing Programs

Transitional housing programs provide people experiencing homelessness a place to stay combined with supportive services for up to 24 months.

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

Unsheltered Homelessness

Unsheltered homelessness refers to people whose primary nighttime location is a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for people (for example, the streets, vehicles, or parks).

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

Workforce Development

Finding work is an important step for anyone trying to move out of or avoid living in poverty. When you hire a worker or work crew through Primavera Works, you're not only getting skilled, dependable help that gets the job done well; you're giving people the chance to get back on their feet and improve their financial future. All of our workers are motivated to work and we provide them with the necessary support and resources to ensure their success. By utilizing our staffing service for your hiring needs, you can fill your open jobs with qualified, eager workers, while helping to support and strengthen our community at the same time.

Source: Primavera Works <https://primaveraworks.org/>