

By-Name List Frequently Asked Questions

Simcoe County

March 2020

Get in touch anytime with the By-Name List Data Manager
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What is a By-Name List?

A By-Name List is an up-to-date list of all people currently experiencing homelessness. The BNL can be used to determine appropriate service referrals, to track the progress of individuals accessing service as they transition out of homelessness, and to track the community's progress towards functional zero of chronic homelessness.

The BNL is used both for information on a personal level and community level. A quality By-Name List contains all the information necessary to effectively move people through a coordinated access system, and to reliably show changes in inflow, outflow and actively homeless to improve services and reduce chronic homelessness.

The most important part of the BNL is that it is up-to-date and can show changes in real time. Updates from direct service providers are the most important step in the BNL process.

Who is supposed to use the BNL right now?

The initial By-Name List process is meant to be used by housing-specific agencies who are funded by the County of Simcoe and have been trained in HIFIS. Service providers who can add clients to the BNL work in those designated Emergency Shelters, Motel Voucher, Transitional Housing, and Housing Support Programs.

We are limiting BNL referrals to this group so that we can work out an efficient process and get used to the BNL, before expanding the process to include all other housing-specific agencies and even non-housing agencies in related service areas including health. In the future more agencies and more types of service providers will be encouraged to contribute to the BNL.

Which clients do I need to add to the BNL?

The BNL includes people who are **currently experiencing homelessness** and **have given consent** to share their information.

People who are at risk for homelessness or have moved out of homelessness can be entered into HIFIS, but will not be on the BNL unless currently homeless.

The BNL is meant to include all people currently experiencing homelessness, so you should add anyone you come into contact with. But if the individual is working with more than one agency, it is best for the agency with the longest-term relationship or most consistent contact to add the person to the BNL and keep their information up to date. You may need to coordinate with other BNL service providers to confirm that they can add the individual to the BNL rather than you, for example if you only see the individual for brief service one time.

Where does client information go? Who has access to individuals' personal information?

The BNL Data Manager maintains the list securely in a private spreadsheet file, and does not share the full BNL.

The weekly Prioritization Table group uses a list with all personal identifying information removed to decide which individuals have the highest priority to be assigned to Housing First case management. After an individual is assigned, their information is given to the HF Case Manager.

All service providers who contribute to the BNL have access to see and share client information in HIFIS when they need to. Information in HIFIS should match the updated client information submitted to the BNL.

Demographic and housing information about individuals is also used to track and report on trends and changes on a community level. The housing service provider community will get updates regularly about our collective progress towards reducing chronic homelessness, and key highlights and changes over time.

What benefit is there for clients to be added to the By-Name list?

The BNL is important for tracking information both on a community level and individual level. It will show us more details about the current situation of people who are experiencing chronic homelessness, and the month-to-month changes in people coming into and moving out of chronic homelessness. We will use this information to build a coordinated access system, advocate for the specific services that are most needed, and track our progress towards functional zero.

The BNL uses the same Common Consent Form and is connected with HIFIS, where service providers can more easily share information so that clients don't need to answer the same questions over and over. Individual information on the BNL will be used to prioritize people for the Housing First case management program, and in the future for other programs and services that meet various levels and types of needs.

A lot of the concrete benefits of a quality By-Name List will come after it is fully-functioning and as we continue to take more steps towards a Coordinated Access System. Right now the benefit of the BNL is more about building up our collective systems.

What if a client refuses to provide consent? How does a client get service if they don't consent to being on the BNL?

If an individual does not consent to their information being shared, they cannot be entered into HIFIS, cannot be added to the BNL, and cannot be referred to the Housing First Program. Serve them as best you can and continue to engage with them to provide consent to be part of the shared service system.

What if a client removes consent after they are already on the BNL?

If an individual withdraws their consent, complete a BNL Update form and check the box to *Remove from BNL - Withdraw Consent*. Submit it to the Sharepoint folder. The By-Name List Data Manager will confirm with you that the individual has been removed from the BNL.

In this situation you also need to remove the individual from HIFIS. See simcoe.ca/hifis for more details.

Why do we need to fill out multiple different forms, use HIFIS, and do a VI-SPDAT?

When HIFIS is being fully used across the County and after software changes have been made specifically for the BNL, we will start pulling the By-Name List directly from HIFIS. There will no longer be any need to duplicate entry into HIFIS as well as entry onto the BNL through Sharepoint. This process is temporary while we get familiar with using a BNL and while all service providers get comfortable using HIFIS.

The VI-SPDAT is a common assessment tool that measures an individual's acuity and level of need. Assessment needs to be consistent across different agencies and areas of Simcoe County. VI-SPDATs will continue to be an important part of our future Coordinated Access System. An individual does not need to have completed a VI-SPDAT to be added to the BNL, but does need to have a VI-SPDAT to be prioritized for Housing First case management.

What is the difference between the BNL and HIFIS?

HIFIS is a Homeless Management Information System that can include different types of clients and detailed case notes and history. The BNL is an up-to-date list of clients who are currently homeless, with key personal information and summary information about significant changes over time.

HIFIS may have a lot more detail than the BNL for each individual. HIFIS also includes individuals who are not on the BNL because they are not currently experiencing homelessness.

How do I know if a client is already on the By-Name List?

When you meet with a new client, check if they are already entered into HIFIS and have a Common Consent Form saved in HIFIS. If they are, update their information in HIFIS, and submit a BNL Update Form with any new information to the BNL Sharepoint folder.

If they are not in HIFIS, they are not on the BNL. Enter the client into HIFIS and submit a Common Consent Form and Common Intake Form to the BNL Sharepoint folder.

At the beginning while we are getting the BNL set up, there may be existing clients who were already entered into HIFIS but have not yet been added to the BNL. For your clients who were or are also working with other BNL service providers, contact them or check with the BNL Data Manager

bnl@communityconnection.ca

Do I need to refer to the BNL and Housing First separately?

The referral process for the Regional Housing First Program is now combined with the new BNL process. When you have decided that a client is eligible for and wants to be referred to the Housing First Program for case management, fill out a BNL Update Form with additional details on the last page, and also submit an up-to-date VI-SPDAT summary page. The client needs to already be on the BNL, then be referred to the Housing First Program once you know enough about them to make a referral.

Your regular monthly updates using the BNL Update Form serve to update both the By-Name List and the Prioritization List used for Housing First.

Once someone is on the BNL, how do I change their status and update their information?

Individuals on the BNL need to be updated once per 30 days, to provide information about significant changes or to confirm that the service provider is still actively working with the client. Fill in the BNL Update Form with information that has changed from the Common Intake Form or past updates, and upload it to Sharepoint. If there are no changes you can provide a simple update by email to the BNL Data Manager rather than filling in the Update Form.

It is also important to update individuals sooner than 30 days, if they experience a significant life change. The most important update to submit is when a person has been successfully housed and is no longer homeless.

When you add an individual to the BNL, you will be responsible for keeping them up to date for as long as you are working with that individual. When a client is no longer in touch with you or is working primarily with another agency, that agency will be responsible for updating the client's information. You may need to be in contact with other service providers to coordinate who is the best source of up-to-date information.

How do I explain the BNL properly to my clients so they know they won't receive direct service by being on the list? So they know it's not a waitlist for housing?

Take a look at the suggested [Script](#) for service providers to use with clients. It gives tips on how to explain what the BNL is, where information goes and how it is used.

Keep in mind that the BNL will be used for more over time, as we build a Coordinated Access System in Simcoe County. Right now it is used to track personal information, track community-level changes, and to prioritize people for the Housing First case management program.

Who can I talk to about questions, concerns and suggestions?

Find all the documents and forms you need on the BNL Support Page at builtforzerosimcoecounty.ca/bnl

Get in touch anytime with the By-Name List Data Manager. We want to hear from you!

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