Homeless Services Department

Guide to Conducting the Coordinated Access for Adults and Families Assessment

What are the Multnomah Services and Screening Tool (MSST) and Housing Preferences and Matching Tool?

The Multnomah Services and Screening Tool (MSST) and the Housing Preferences and Matching Tool are tools created by Multnomah County's continuum of homeless services providers and people with lived experience to help determine the needs of households experiencing homelessness and direct them to appropriate resources. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires communities to use a comprehensive and standardized assessment tool as part of coordinated access. These tools meet that requirement and help us prioritize households with the highest housing barriers and who are most over-represented in our local unhoused community for limited housing resources.

What is the purpose of this guide?

Acknowledging that these tools include questions that will determine whether a household will receive housing through the coordinated access system, this guide provides context and resources for conducting them in a way that is more trauma-informed and responsive to the person you're working. This is a living document—we plan to develop it over time based on lessons learned and the expertise and experiences of those engaging with the tools. With questions, feedback and suggestions, please reach out to coordinated access staff at the Homeless Services Department (adultca@multco.us or familyca@multco.us). For Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) links for providers, visit the HSD website here: https://hsd.us/hmis-links-for-providers/.

Strategies for a trauma-informed approach to these tools

This list of strategies is rooted in the principles of Assertive Engagement and trauma-informed care, and intended to support providers in thinking through how to conduct these assessments. This is an incomplete list—we invite you to help us develop it over time, and appreciate that strategies will vary across organizations and communities.

Throughout the process

- **Act like you have all day** – Be present during the assessment process and work to connect with the participant empathetically. If you act like you have all day, you can often get through the process more quickly and in a way that helps to develop rapport and trust.
- **Find a safe and confidential space** - Conduct the assessment in a private, confidential space (whatever that looks like in the particular work space or environment). Check in with the participant to ask whether they're comfortable completing it in that space, or would rather complete it elsewhere.

- **Check in throughout** – Check in with the participant about how they are doing throughout the process (e.g. ask if they would like a break, water, etc.).

Before the assessment

- **Go over the verbal release form** - Read the script on the first page of the assessment. Answer any questions the participant may have. For a full disclosure of a participant's data rights, visit https://hsd.us/hmis-links-for-providers.
- **Take three minutes** - Spend time (even if it's only 3 minutes) before the assessment just checking in with and listening attentively to the participant.
- **Ask for permission** – Ask for permission to conduct the assessment before starting the process.
- **Be upfront and transparent** - Inform the participant about what the tool is (i.e. used for coordinated access process), what kinds of questions are included, and why these questions are being asked. Give them a heads up that the assessment includes some really personal questions, that they can stop at any time, and that they can skip a question if they don't want to answer it. Walk the person through the Release of Information and explain what will be shared with others and why.
- **Offer translation when needed** - Learn about the resources available at your organization and in the community to provide translation, and provide a translator for the assessment process, if needed. Whenever possible, offer to connect the participant with a provider that speaks their language and can conduct the assessment in a culturally specific manner. The tool is available in Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Vietnamese at https://hsd.us/coordinated-access/.
- **Ensure completing the assessment is the appropriate next step –** Some households may not be eligible or need system resources. For example, the adult coordinates access system mostly includes permanent supportive housing and adults who only need a few months of rental assistance should not be assessed.
- **Begin to offer housing problem solving resources** – As you are talking with the participant, listen for opportunities for housing problem solving. Let them know resources are limited so housing problem solving can help identify other ways to resolve their housing crisis. This can include mediation with family/friends/landlords, unit search assistance, writing reasonable accommodation letters, and more.

During the assessment

- **Offer additional context to the questions** – If a participant is unsure of what you are asking, you can use this guide for additional or clarifying information.
- **Demonstrate non-judgment** - Remind the participant throughout that it's okay to be as open and honest as possible and that you aren't there to judge. Demonstrate non-judgment and empathy through listening, body language, acknowledging the participant as the expert in their own life, etc.
- **Obtain accurate and complete information** – Participants can skip questions but it may affect their overall score, so be clear about the impact of their decision to not answer questions. Do not coach them to answer a certain way in order to get prioritized. Assessors who coach participants in their answers may have revoked access and ability to complete assessments

After the assessment

- **Be upfront and transparent** - Explain what will happen next and be upfront about the fact that there is no guarantee of a housing resource from this process.
- **Ask-Offer-Ask** - Ask the person if they are interested in learning about other coordinated access processes or specific resources they may be eligible for and if they are, use the assessment as an opportunity to provide some of that information.
- **Update over time** – Ask the participant to let you know if there are any significant changes to their situation, or if their contact information changes. Households are eligible for re-assessment after 6 months, or if their situation significantly changes. Please see the Coordinated Access Policies for more information on updating assessments.

The Multnomah Services and Screening Tool (MSST)

The tables below include the Triage and Housing Barriers Assessment portions of the Multnomah Series and Screening Tool (MSST). The first column provides the question and the second column provides important context or details about the intent of the question, as well as applicable follow up resources. Please read the questions as written since the wording went through a rigorous community engagement process with Multnomah County's continuum of homeless services providers and people with lived experience. This information is recorded in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

Triage	
Question	**Notes/Context**
1. If possible, would you prefer to talk in a language other than English? 1a. If yes, what language?	If someone would be best served in another language, please consider 1) using an interpreter, or 2) referring to an agency with trained assessors who speak that language. Email HSD CA staff for a list of those agencies.
1b. Do you need an interpreter?	If yes, consider referring to a culturally specific organization. You can also use a translation service, such as Link, Linguava or IRCO.
2. (Phone Only): Are you in a place where you can feel like you can speak freely and openly?	Ensure the household is in a safe space to talk. Ensure you can hear them and they can hear you.
3. Do you have any immediate physical, medical, or safety needs that need to get addressed right away before we talk about anything else?	Consider pausing on doing the assessment if there are more pressing needs or if the participant does not seem to be in a good state to conduct the tool.
4. What is your full name?	Participants do not have to provide their legal names at time of assessment, but will need to show current legal documentation if they are referred to housing.
5. What are your pronouns?	More than one selection can be made
6. Are you or anyone in your household a survivor of domestic violence?	The term "domestic violence" refers to any pattern of behaviors that creates an unsafe environment for them or other members of their household. This includes (but is not limited

	to) physical, emotional, verbal, psychological, financial, or sexual abuse. This also includes stalking or using threats of harm to control them.
6a. When was the last time someone engaged in any patterns of domestic violence behaviors toward you or someone in your household?	A household can identify any period of time, but please note the domestic violence system typically gives priority to people who are actively fleeing domestic violence or if the incidence(s) are within the last 12 months.
6b. Are you or anyone in your household currently fleeing/trying to escape domestic violence?	This means the household is fleeing or attempting to leave domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous, traumatic, or life-threatening conditions related to the violence against the individual or a family member in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized. "Attempting to flee" is when a household would leave for safety reasons if they had the means to do so. People are "actively fleeing" if their abuser is looking for them, threatening them, etc.
6c. If available, would you be interested in a confidential shelter option or other services?	This is not recorded in HMIS. Contact Call to Safety (503.235.5333) or El Programa Hispano Proyecto UNICA (503.232.4448) for shelter and crisis services.
7. Where did you sleep last night?	Where they slept last night. Use your discretion if they mention that they normally sleep in a different situation. For example, if they stayed with a friend last night because it was a particularly cold night but are usually in an unsheltered homeless situation, you can write "Homeless Situation".
8. How long have you been sleeping there?	This can help with the previous question and determining where they are usually staying and how long they have been staying there.
9. On the night before you started sleeping where you are now, did you stay on the streets or in a shelter?	If they were not in one of the "homeless situations" prior, you should mark "No". Remember, if an agency is paying for their hotel stay (a.k.a a hotel voucher) that counts as "emergency shelter" which is a homeless situation.
10. Are you currently at risk of losing your housing and becoming literally homeless within 14 days?	Examples include having an eviction notice (if on lease) or knowing they will not be able to stay in their current housing after 14 days (family/friend said they need to leave, they have a release date from an institution, etc.). This does not mean they are concerned about their ability to pay their rent next month.
11. Are you seeking shelter/a safe place to sleep tonight?	For adults, help connect them by calling 211. Family providers should complete the HFSOC Shelter Waitlist OR-501 (7960) to add families to the Family Shelter Waitlist.
11a. If shelter is not available (or if not seeking shelter), where do you plan to sleep tonight?	
Household Size and Composition	
Question	**Notes/Context**
12. Including yourself, how many people currently live in your household?	A household is generally defined by the person being assessed. Example, a family of one adult and three children should mark 4.

13. How many children under the age of 18 are in your household?	Example, a family of one adult and three children ages 17, 14, and 4 should mark 3. **Please note:** families should have majority custody or be working on getting majority custody to be eligible for family housing programs. See the FAQ below for more information.
13a. How many of those children are younger than 5 years old?	Example, a family of one adult and three children ages 17, 14, and 4 should mark 1.
14. Are there any children under 18 that are not currently in your household but are likely to join your household in the future? **This includes any children who would live with you if you moved to a different housing situation.**	This question is intended to help identify if there will be other people living with the person if/when they are placed into a housing program. If a household of one adult had two children that will join if they gain housing, they should mark: ● 1 for #16 ● 0 for #17 ● 0 for #17a ● 2 for this question (#18) **Please note**: If it is offered that children plan to visit on the weekends or every other weekend, the answer to this question should be 'no', since we want to focus on what household composition would look like **most of the time.**
15. Is anyone in your household currently pregnant or expecting a new child in the next 9 months?	
16. Including yourself, how many adults in your household are 55 years old or older?	
Follow the directions for proceeding or not proceeding carefully. If a household does not meet basic eligibility they should not complete the MSST assessment and should be offered other resources. For examples of housing and homeless situations and whether you would proceed with the assessment or not, see the FAQ and example scenarios at the end of this document. Reach out to HSD CA staff if you are unsure if a household is eligible.	

Coordinated Access to Housing: Housing Barriers Assessment

Housing History/Prior Living Situation

Question	Notes/Context
17. What is the approximate date you became homeless most recently?	This should be the date of their current incident/episode of homelessness. For example, if they were housed until four months ago, list the date they became homeless four months ago.
18 Including right now, how many separate times have you been homeless (on the streets, in cars, or in shelters) in the last three years? Moving between the streets, cars, and shelters counts as one episode. An episode of homelessness ends if you were in temporary or permanent housing for seven or more	This is about someone's episodes of homelessness, or the number of times they have been housed and unhoused. HUD does not establish a minimum number of days that each occasion must total and instead defines the end of an occasion as a break of at least 7 nights where the individual or head of household is *not* residing in street/shelter or is residing in a place meant for human habitation (e.g. with family/friends, etc.). If they have been continuously unhoused in the last 3 years, you work mark "1 time". If they were housed, then in shelter, were housed, and then back to shelter, you would mark "2 times". Remember that

days, or in a facility like jail, a hospital, or rehab for 90 or more days	adult households who have mostly been doubled up or sleeping on someone's couch are not considered literally homeless and should not complete this assessment.
19. What is the total number of months you have been homeless (on the streets, in cars, or in shelters) in the last three years?	This is about their length of homelessness. If they have been homeless for the last year, you would mark "12".
20. In what neighborhood or part of town do you usually stay?	Write as many neighborhoods as appropriate.
21. **This QUESTION IS FOR ADULT-ONLY HOUSEHOLDS (WITH NO MINOR CHILDREN).** Have you or any of your ancestors (including parent, guardian, or grandparent) ever lived in North or Northeast Portland?	This is to help prioritize households for permanent supportive housing projects that fall under the City's Preference Policy and will be filled through Coordinated Access for Adults. People can self-identify having been displaced from N/NE or as having a parent, guardian, or grandparent (alive or deceased) who were displaced.
21a. **If yes to question 20:** Have you applied for housing through the City's North/Northeast Portland Preference Policy?	You can connect participants to the City's Preference Policy by calling 503.823.4147. This is a separate housing process than Coordinated Access. It is not required that you help connect participants, but you may do so. You can find more information on the Preference at portland.gov/phb/nnehousing/preference-policy.
Income	
Question	**Notes/Context**
22. Tell me about your household income. Do you have a steady/ regular source of income?	This should be their gross income (income before taxes). Income includes any cash received, including earned income or cash benefits like social security. It does not include food stamps or other non-cash benefits.
22a. **If yes to 22,** How much do you receive before taxes on a monthly basis?	Multiply this number by 12.
22b. **If no to 22,** Please estimate how much income you usually receive weekly, monthly, or annually:	Multiply this number by 52 if their estimate is weekly, 12 if monthly or write their annual estimate.
23. **Assessor only:** Please refer to the chart below to determine income category.	Visit https://www.portland.gov/phb/income-rent-and-utility-limits for updated Area Median Income (AMI).
Demographic Information	
Question	**Notes/Context**
24. Please provide your date of birth.	This is a HUD Universal Data Element. Enter the full date of birth. If the participant does not want to provide their date of birth, you can collect a partial, select "Client doesn't know" or "Client prefers not to answer" and provide an age range below.
25. What is your age range?	Fill in their age range if they refuse to provide or cannot recall their date of birth.
26. What is your social security number?	This is a HUD Universal Data Element. If the participant does not know or want to provide their social security number, you can collect a partial number, or select "Client doesn't know"

	or "Client prefers not to answer". **Please reassure participants who do not have a social security number that it is not required in order to be served by the coordinated access system.** Some housing projects require eligible immigration status or proof of social security number. Someone without a social security number would not be referred to those projects. We are able to identify additional veteran system resources that may be open to people if they provide their full social security number (see Question # 31).
27. Do you or anyone in your household identify as LGBTQIA2S+?	This question is asking if they or anyone in their household identifies as Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit, and/or other identities other than Heterosexual and Cisgender. See definitions of these terms below.
28. Which of these genders best describes how you identify? (Select all that apply.)	The following are selections in HMIS. These are set by HUD. We recognize these are not inclusive categories. **Woman (Girl, if child):** Client identifies as a woman, or girl in the case of a child under the age of 18. **Man (Boy, if child):** Client identifies as a man, or boy in the case of a child under the age of 18. **Culturally Specific Identity (e.g., Two-Spirit):** Client identifies with an identity that is exclusive to a particular culture. For example, Two-Spirit refers to a Native North American gender identity. **Transgender:** Client identifies with a transgender history, experience, or identity. **Non-Binary:** Client does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. **Questioning:** Clients who may be unsure, may be exploring, or may not relate to or identify with a gender identity at this time. Note that "Client doesn't Know" is different than "Questioning". "Questioning" is about exploring one's gender identity. "Client doesn't Know" should only be selected when a client does not know their gender from the options available. **Different Identity:** Client identifies with another identity that is not listed as a response. A text box is provided for additional detail. **Client doesn't know:** "Client doesn't know" should only be selected when a client does not know their gender from among the responses. "Client doesn't know" should not be used in conjunction with any other response. **Client prefers not to answer:** "Client prefers not to answer" should only be selected when a client chooses not to identify their gender from among the responses. "Client prefers not to answer" should not be used in conjunction with any other response. **Data not collected:** Use this response if the staff does not ask the client to provide their gender. **If Different Identity, please specify:** For all clients that selected "Different Identity", please specify the identity. **Refer to this document for more guidance on Gender Write Ins.**
Notes on asking gender identity (taken from FY 2024 HUD HMIS Data Standards Manual)	

Record the self-reported gender of each client served. When enrolling a client who already has a record in the HMIS, verify that gender information is complete and accurately reflects how the client identifies, and correct if it does not. Gender identity is a person's internal perception of themselves and may not match the sex they were assigned at birth. This element records one's gender identity and not sex assigned at birth.

HMIS users and data entry staff should apply a Client-Centered Approach to Recognizing Gender Identities in Data Collection. Staff observations should never be used to collect information on gender. Provide all options to every client. Even if staff think they can guess a client's gender, every client must be asked for their self-reported information. If they prefer not to provide it or say they don't know, do not select any response other than "Client doesn't know" or "Client prefers not to answer" on the client's behalf. Gender does not have to match legal documents and clients may not be asked about medical history or other information to try to determine the person's gender. Simply asking, "Which of these genders best describes how you identify?" is appropriate and focuses on the person's own internal knowledge of their gender.

If a client does not understand what a particular gender response means, the descriptions below can be provided. Clients may select as many of the seven responses to 'Gender' as they would like to for their preferred identity, need, or situation. However, a response of "Client doesn't know" should not be used interchangeably with the response option "Questioning." "Questioning" is about exploring one's gender identity. "Client doesn't know" should only be selected when a client does not know their gender from the options available, including "Questioning." "Client doesn't know", "Client prefers not to answer", and "Data not collected" are not valid in conjunction with any other response.
If a client discloses having a culturally specific identity (e.g., Two-Spirit), transgender, nonbinary, questioning, or a different identity, staff should ask if the client prefers to have the HMIS record reflect the client's gender identity. For example, the availability of these options is not intended to indicate that transgender individuals are expected to disclose their status; each response is provided as an option in case an option (or more than one option) is better suited to a client's identity, needs, or situation. For instance, if a client identifies as a transgender man but they do not want their transgender identity recorded in the HMIS, the staff person would select "Man (Boy, if child)" instead of both "Man (Boy, if child)" and "Transgender".

Clients may report different gender identities or present different gender expressions at different projects within the same CoC. This may be because their gender identity has changed or because they experience a different degree of safety at different projects. If staff are working with a client who reports a gender identity that differs from the existing HMIS record, staff should ensure that the client understands and is comfortable with their information being updated across all projects prior to making any changes. Clients decide to which projects they will disclose potentially sensitive information. Project staff should enter the self-reported information as directed by the client.

29. What is your race and ethnicity? (Select all that apply.)	The following are selections in HMIS. These are set by HUD. We recognize these are not inclusive categories. **Refer to this document for more guidance on Race and Ethnicity Write Ins.**

Notes on asking racial and ethnic identity (taken from FY 2024 HUD HMIS Data Standards Manual)

Record the self-identified race(s) and ethnicity, if applicable, of each client served. Help the client select as many race and/or ethnicity options that they identify with. When enrolling a client who already has a record in the HMIS, verify that race and ethnicity information is complete and accurately reflects how the client identifies, and correct if it does not.

HMIS users and data entry staff should apply a Client-Centered Approach to Recognizing Race and Ethnicity Identities in Data Collection. Staff observations should never be used to collect information on race and ethnicity. While interactions between intake staff and individuals seeking services can be brief, there is an important opportunity to meet each person on a human level and with a person-centered approach. Traumatic events including but not limited to experience with law enforcement, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and sex work may influence clients' comfort in answering questions. Stigmas surrounding the criminalization of homelessness, behavioral health concerns, drug use, and cultural sensitivity (i.e., cultural norms of withholding information due to shame and stigma) may also impact a client's willingness to provide demographic information.

Provide all options to every client. Even if staff believes they can guess a client's race and/or ethnicity, every client must be asked for their self-reported information. It is important to ask about all household members' race and ethnicity because it is impossible to tell just based on a person's appearance or name. Furthermore, HMIS may not provide a default answer. No documentation is required to verify a client's response.

This element also includes an open text box field for clients to report any additional race or ethnicity information they wish to share. For example, a person may identify as "Hispanic/Latina/e/o" based on the response options provided, but more specifically identifies as Puerto Rican. Enter this information in the text box field. This information may be used for local purposes in custom reporting or in case management activities and is reported to federal partners utilizing the HMIS CSV export for reporting.

If the client does not know their race or ethnicity, or prefers not to disclose it, use "Client doesn't know" or "Client prefers not to answer", rather than making an appearance or name-based assumption.

Veteran Screener Questions	
Question	**Notes/Context**
30. Have you ever served one day or more in the U.S. armed services (U.S. Military)? This includes the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or Space Force).	Please note if the participant says yes, but **did not** provide their social security number above, be sure to let the veteran know that providing a full social security number will help determine their eligibility for certain programs and funding.
30a. Has anyone else in your household served one day or more in the U.S. Armed Services (U.S. Military)? This includes the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or Space Force).	
30b. **(Only ask if yes to #30 or 30a)** Were you ever called into active duty as a member of the National Guard or as a Reservist?	

30c. **(Only ask if yes to #30 or 30a)** Are you receiving any type of benefit through the Department of Veteran Affairs?	
Health	
Question	**Notes/Context**
31. Do **you** have disabling conditions or other health conditions that impact your ability to secure housing?	This is for the head of household only. HUD's definition of disabling condition is broader than the one used for other programs like Social Security. Also, while the person will eventually need to have the disability verified, it does not need to be diagnosed at time of assessment. Sometimes people may not identify as having a disabling condition, when they actually do have a condition that would qualify. Examples of disabling conditions include physical disabilities, mental health conditions, vision or hearing impairments, brain injury, learning disabilities, substance use disorders (alcohol/drugs/other substances), HIV, and other health conditions of long-duration). More information on disabling conditions are listed here.
32. Do **any other household members** have disabling conditions or other health conditions that impact your ability to secure housing? It doesn't have to be diagnosed.	Same examples as above. This is to capture if there are other people in the household with disabilities.
33. **For households with minor children:** In total how many health or disabling conditions are present in the entire household that might impact your ability to secure housing?	This is the total number of health or disabling conditions. For example, if the head of household has two and their children have two, then you would select "Four or more".
34. **For households WITHOUT minor children:** Has the impact of a health condition ever led you or anyone in your household to lose housing?	This may include ability to secure or maintain employment, have adequate child care, or any other situation where their disabilities led them to lose their housing.
35. In the last five years, how many times have you or anyone in your household been formally evicted? (e.g., had a sheriff or law enforcement notice taped to front door—anything that might show up in a credit report, court records, or tenant screening databases)	Please read the prompt before this question. This question is not attempting to screen people out. Instead, this is meant to help us understand their housing barriers and needs. If more than one adult was evicted in the last five years, report the number of evictions received by the adult in the household with the highest number of evictions.

36. Would you or anyone in your household have difficulty accessing any of the following documents? (Select all that apply)	Please read the prompt before this question. This question is not attempting to screen people out. Instead, this is meant to help us understand their housing barriers and needs. Remember, people do not need to have a social security number or proof of one in order to be served by system resources.
Legal Challenges	
Question	**Notes/Context**
37. Have you or anyone in your household ever been arrested or spent time in jail or prison?	Please read the prompt before this question. This question is not attempting to screen people out. Instead, this is meant to help us understand their housing barriers and needs. We are able to serve people with criminal histories.
38. **(If yes to #37)** Has being arrested or spending time in jail ever led you or anyone in your household to lose housing?	
Social Support	
Question	**Notes/Context**
39. Do you feel that there is anyone you can count on to help you when you need it? (e.g., family, friends, other communities of support that provide emotional support, occasionally provide financial assistance or a place to stay)?	Research shows people who say "no" to this question have challenges obtaining and maintaining housing.
Contact Information	
Question	**Notes/Context**
How can we contact you to follow up in the future?	Please make sure to gather any and all contacts the household is willing to share. This is the best way you will have to get in touch with them if they are prioritized for services. Please make sure they have your contact information, as well.
Assessor Information and Observations	Please make sure to enter your contact information fully. If you have concerns about someone's ability to self-report accurately, please make a note here.

Housing Problem Solving Questionnaire

This table includes the Housing Problem Solving Questionnaire questions. Assessors are expected to have housing problem solving conversations with all households. This information is recorded in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

Coordinated Entry Event	
Question	**Notes/Context**
1. Did you have a housing problem solving conversation with the participant?	Please make sure you are offering housing problem solving to all households. Many resources can be non-financial (i.e. mediation with family/friends/landlords, unit search assistance, writing reasonable accommodation letters). Please inquire internally for your agency's policies for offering financial client assistance.
Housing Problem Solving	
Question	**Notes/Context**
2. Was the participant housed/re-housed in a safe alternative **as a result of the housing problem solving conversation**?	Answer "yes" if the result of your conversation was the household being placed in temporary or permanent housing and no longer needing coordinated access resources.
3. What was the outcome of the housing problem solving conversation?	Select "Housing crisis temporarily/permanently resolved **without** financial assistance" or "Housing crisis temporarily/permanently resolved **with** financial assistance" if the result of your conversation was the household being placed in temporary or permanent housing and no longer needing coordinated access resources. Select "Housing crisis was NOT resolved (participant's current housing situation remains unsafe or unstable)" if the household was assessed and continues to need housing resources.
4. If participant's housing crisis was resolved with financial assistance, how much was needed? If no HPS-related financial assistance was needed at this time, enter $0. Dollar amount of financial assistance requested: $_____	This can be an estimate and is okay if this is not the final amount provided by your agency. This information will be used to advocate for additional system resources.
5. Notes	

Family Shelter Waitlist (Additional Questions)

Only ask these questions of families with minors ("Yes" to Question #14 or #15) who also answered "Yes" to Question #11 "Are you seeking shelter/ a safe place to sleep tonight?" Questions should be answered based on who the family expects to join them in shelter, if prioritized. This information is recorded in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in the MultCo Family Shelter Waitlist (FSWL) (7960) provider.

Housing Preferences and Matching Tool Questionnaire

This table includes the Housing Preferences and Matching Tool Questionnaire. The first column provides the question and the second column provides important context or details about the intent of the question, as well as applicable follow up resources. Households should only be asked these questions if they have completed the MSST, their assessment has been entered in HMIS, and the Homeless Services Department Coordinated Access Staff have contacted you that the household is in the Housing Priority Pool and may continue with this questionnaire. **Do not proceed with this questionnaire unless you have been informed the household is in the Housing Priority Pool.**

Housing Preferences	
Question	**Notes/Context**
1. Have there been any changes in who lives with you since you last completed an assessment?	If their household composition has changed, please make those changes under the "MSST" assessment tab.
2. Where in the Metro region would you prefer to live? (Select all that apply)	Select all that apply. Let them know their responses will dictate which site-based programs we will offer. Please note that households who only want to live outside of Multnomah County may need to apply to coordinated entry through that County and go through that County's process.
3. Is there anywhere you are not willing to live? (Select all that apply)	Select all that apply. Let them know their responses will dictate which site-based programs we will offer.
Share any additional information about where the participant would like to live below:	Let them know their responses will dictate which site-based programs we will offer.
4. Does any adult member of your household have a disabling condition? (Select all that apply)	HUD's definition of disabling condition is broader than the one used for other programs like Social Security. Also, while the person may need to eventually need to have the disability verified (depends on funding source and housing type), it does not need to be diagnosed at time of assessment. Sometimes people may not identify as having a disabling condition, when they actually do have a condition that would qualify. Examples of disabling conditions include physical disabilities, mental health conditions, vision or hearing impairments, brain injury, learning disabilities, substance use disorders (alcohol/drugs/other substances), HIV, and other health conditions of long-duration). More information on disabling conditions are listed here. Please note that the majority of adult system resources are Permanent Supportive Housing, which require the head of household to have a disability.
4a. If yes, does that person have a diagnosis from a licensed and/or medical professional?	If this is not diagnosed, please offer resources for connecting with a professional who can document their disability. If you cannot connect them with a professional, they can self-verify with a locally used form. Please reach out to HSD CA staff for more information.
5. Are you or other household members living with any mobility issues or accessibility needs related to a	Please note any and all accommodations and provide examples.

disability that would be helpful for us to know in matching you with housing options (like elevator needs, service animals, low noise, etc.)?	
If yes, please describe:	
6. Have you or other adults in your household been evicted from housing in the past three years?	Read the prompt and remind them these questions are so we can better serve them. If they have been evicted, begin working with them on reasonable accommodation letters or letters of explanation.
7. Do you or any adults in your household currently owe debts to a landlord or housing authority?	If they have debt, begin working with them on reasonable accommodation letters or letters of explanation, or negotiating debt repayment.
8. Is anyone in your household required to register as a sex offender?	Some coordinated access housing projects will not allow people who are required to register as a sex offender. We ask this so we know to refer them to other housing.
9. Has anyone in your household been convicted of arson or manufacture of methamphetamines?	Some coordinated access housing projects will not allow people who have been convicted of arson or manufacture of methamphetamines. We ask this so we know to refer them to other housing.
10. Would you be willing to accept a housing option/situation where you would need to share a bathroom or kitchen with someone else?	Some coordinated access housing projects have shared bathrooms or kitchens. People who are not open to that style of housing should say no.
11. Do you require housing for pets that are **not** currently certified as service animals?	See if you can help them obtain a reasonable accommodation for their Emotional Support Animal or Service Animal from their medical or mental health provider. Also check in to see if their pets have been vaccinated and licensed with the County as this can help speed up the housing process. Households with service animals can get the license fee waived. See this form.
12. Would you like to be considered for housing with culturally specific services for people living with HIV?	Some coordinated access housing projects are for people living with HIV.
Housing Preference Questions for Households without Minor Children (Including Single Adults)	
Question	**Notes/Context**
13. Are you enrolled or eligible to enroll in Medicaid or the Oregon Health Plan?	Some coordinated access housing projects require people to be enrolled or eligible to enroll in Medicaid or the Oregon Health Plan.
14. Would you prefer to live in sober housing (drug and alcohol-free)?	Some coordinated access housing projects require people to be sober housing (drug and alcohol-free). People who do not want their housing tied to their ability/desire to remain sober, should be referred to other housing types. Providers can always assist them with recovery or harm reduction resources as needed and desired.
15. Would you like to be considered for housing with culturally specific services for people who identify as women?	Some coordinated access housing projects are for people who identify as women.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When can I start conducting assessments?
You can start conducting both adult and family assessments as soon as you have completed the following required trainings:

1. **Coordinated Access Overview & Assessment Training**: an overview of the new Coordinated Access process, MSST, the Housing Matching and Preferences Tool, and housing referral process.
2. **Data Entry**: an overview of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data entry steps
3. (Can be completed after becoming an assessor) **Equity**: an overview on advancing racial equity and dismantling stigma in homeless services
4. (Highly encouraged) **Assertive Engagement Training**: a County training on important skills such as motivational interviewing, trauma informed care, empathy, strength based approaches, and more. If you have already attended AE, you do not need to attend again. Email aeinfo@multco.us if you are not sure if you have attended.

Q: Is there a more comprehensive list of the Coordinated Access participating organizations?
Our most updated partner list is always available at https://hsd.multco.us/coordinated-access/.

Q: Is there a suggested answer when a household asks "how long until I hear from a program?"
You will know if they are in the housing priority pool within 2-3 weeks after their assessment. If they are in the housing priority pool, they will be contacted to notify them and to complete a Housing Preferences and Matching Tool questionnaire. Everyone in the housing priority pool will get a referral to a housing program within 6 months.

How to Perform the Assessment
Q: How long does the assessment take?
The assessment can take 15-30 minutes to complete. Your overall time with the household may be longer depending on your housing problem solving conversation.

Q: What if someone does not consent to the verbal the Release of Information (ROI)?
Try further explaining how their data will be used. For a full disclosure of a participant's data rights, visit https://hsd.us/hmis-links-for-providers. If they still refuse, you can complete the assessment and reach out to Homeless Services Department staff: familyca@multco.us for families and adultca@multco.us for adults. Do not enter the data in HMIS until you have talked with HSD CA staff.

Q: How do I answer the "residence prior to program entry" question?
This question is to help determine the person's homeless status and eligibility for projects. The question is asking where the person is currently residing. You can only select one residence and the answer should reflect the residence status the person typically experiences. For example, the person may be staying with a friend for the night, but they usually sleep in a place not meant for human habitation so you would select "place not meant for human habitation".

Q: Can someone refuse to answer questions?

Yes, but please let them know that skipping questions could affect their overall score and, if prioritized, our ability to match them to the best housing program to meet their needs.

Q: What do I do when a household answers differently than what I may know based on previous encounters or case notes?
We recommend using your previous knowledge of the household to help them better answer the assessment questions. You can say things like "Last time we met you told me X, which sounds like the answer to this question should be 'yes'. Does that sound right to you?" Ultimately, you must adhere to their self-report and you cannot answer questions for them. If you have concerns about someone's ability to accurately self-report, please make a note in the "Assessor Information and Observations" section and/or reach out to the Homeless Services Department Coordinated Access staff. .

Q: What do I tell someone if they ask about next steps?
Let them know that they will hear back within 2-3 weeks if they are in the housing priority pool. They will not get a call if they are not in the housing priority pool, unless you as an assessor want to make the commitment to call everyone back to let them know. They can call back on their own and revisit housing problem solving conversations if they do not make it in the housing priority pool.

Q: Where are translated versions of the tool and how can I get someone connected to an assessor that speaks another language?
The tools are available in English, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, and Chinese Simplified here: https://hsd.us/coordinated-access/. You can inquire internally about your agency's policies to use a translation service, or reach out to HSD CA staff who are working on a list of trained assessors and the languages they speak.

Eligibility

Q: What if a person is a registered sex offender? Does this limit their housing options?
Coordinated Access prioritizes the households with the highest housing barriers and who are over-represented in our local homeless population. Many of the folks we house through Coordinated Access are experiencing significant barriers to housing that we work to mitigate. Some facility-based housing projects cannot accept people with certain criminal offenses, such as a sex offense due to property agreements, but we can refer people in this situation to other projects.

Q: Can I assess someone who is undocumented?
Yes, most of our projects do not require that someone shows proof of citizenship or residency, but some projects require that at least one household member provides a social security number or documentation for eligible immigration status. We would not refer a household to those projects if we know they cannot provide that documentation.

Q: What if a person has a parole/probation officer or other contacts to include?
Please include all relative contact information in the MSST assessment that the participant provides. We have many participants who wish to be contacted through their probation officer or other contacts.

Q: The head of household must have 51% or more custody of the child once they are referred to housing. How is that documented?

The family system will walk you through how this is documented. Some families have gone through legal proceedings and will have court documents establishing custody. Other families prefer to keep these matters out of the court system. The family system has other ways of certifying custody in these situations such as letters from the family.

Q: What should we do if the household is not eligible for the assessment?
You can offer housing problem solving conversations and resources, you can assist them in calling 211 to see about other community resources, or you can refer them to internal resources within your agency. Many resources exist outside of the coordinated access system.

After the Assessment

Q: Can I update and make changes to the assessment?
Assessors should update a MSST under the following circumstances: 1) More than six months have passed since the household's last MSST assessment or, 2) the household composition has changed (e.g. a single adult now has additional household members, minor children are no longer a part of the household, etc.). Follow the "Updates to Coordinated Access MSST Assessments" policy in these and other situations.

Q: What if the assessment does not reflect the vulnerability of the participant?
You can add notes to the notes section of the MSST assessment. You can also follow the "Assessment Revision Policy" under the "Updates to Coordinated Access MSST Assessments" policy.

Q: Can we still refer households to Coordinated Access partner organizations for housing? (For example, TPI participates in Coordinated Access, but can I refer a household to TPI separately?)
Do not reach out to agencies directly about openings in their Coordinated Access projects as those projects communicate directly with the HSD about program openings. Not all housing programs are required to take referrals from Coordinated Access, so some agencies are still housing people outside of the Coordinated Access process. For programs outside that are not part of Coordinated Access, such as local rapid rehousing projects for adults, call 211 for availability.

Q: If the household does not make it into the priority housing pool, do we close their entry into the coordinated access provider in HMIS?
No, you can leave the record open until they find housing. You can update their assessment every 6 months or in other certain situations. See the "Updates to Coordinated Access MSST Assessments" policy for more information on updating assessments.

Q: If someone doesn't make it into the housing priority pool initially, could they make it in later?
Potentially yes, but please do not set households up for this expectation. Theoretically someone could get a higher score if re-assessed in 6 months, or we could lower our housing priority pool threshold based on expected housing inventory. Since we cannot predict this, we ask that you tell people that if they are not in the pool within 2-3 weeks after their assessment then they will not be housed through coordinated access.

Q: How do I attend system meetings like case conferencing?
Adult system case conferencing meetings for the adult system are the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month from 9-10:30AM. Please reach out to adultca@multco.us to be added to the calendar invite. Family System case conferencing meetings for the Family System are on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, 1pm-2pm. Please each out to familyca@multco.us if you would like to join this group.

Q: I need HMIS/database access and/or support. Who do I reach out to?
Organizations are responsible for entering all assessments into HMIS at time of assessment or within three business days. This is a critical step to actually getting households who have been assessed onto the queue/prioritized list. If you do not already have access to HMIS and will be doing data entry, please email hmishelp@multco.us.

Example Housing/Homeless Scenarios

The following scenarios are to help assessors understand whether they should proceed with a MSST assessment.

Scenario 1: Noor is currently housed and is paying her own rent. She is worried about being able to make her rent payment next month.
You should not proceed with the assessment because Noor does not meet basic eligibility requirements. She is not experiencing homelessness and is not at risk of experiencing homelessness in the next 14 days. You can refer her to 211 for eviction prevention.

Scenario 2: Gabriel and his partner Eva have two children. They are currently living with Eva's brother. They both recently lost their jobs and are in the process of finding new ones. Eva's brother said they can stay with them while they look for jobs, but they would prefer their own place.
You should not proceed with the assessment. We have limited system resources and they are able to stay with family, so it would be best to not do the assessment. If Gabriel and Eva are no longer able to stay with Eva's brother, they can call back for an assessment.

Scenario 3: Ayana and her partner have an eviction notice. They have been unhoused previously.
You can proceed with an assessment based on this information, but more information would be needed. We want to know more about disabilities and length of time homeless if they need PSH, but they meet basic eligibility requirements to be assessed.

Scenario 4: : Kwame is in a Rapid Rehousing program that is ending soon and he needs more intensive services due to his mental health. He was chronically homeless before entering the program.
You can proceed with an assessment based on this information because this household likely needs and qualifies for PSH. Households in projects that do not take referrals through Coordinated Access (rare in the family system) and who were eligible for PSH prior to entry in RRH can be assessed with the MSST. Households in projects that take referrals through Coordinated Access should complete the transfer process if they qualify for and need PSH.

Scenario 5: Sam is incarcerated and has been for three years. He is going to be released soon and does not have any housing options.
You can proceed with the assessment. Please note that Sam may have limited options through coordinated access if he does not have a disability and needs PSH. He is ineligible for HUD CoC programs because he does not have a history of homelessness in the last three years and HUD does not count time incarcerated as experiencing homelessness. Our locally funded PSH projects have more flexibility. RRH funding in the adult CA system is limited.

Scenario 6: Lisa and her three young children are unhoused. They sometimes stay with family and friends. Sometimes Lisa stays in her car while her children stay with family members.

You can proceed with the assessment since this family is experiencing literal homelessness. You can also have housing problem solving conversations with Lisa about ways she can stay with family and friends while you/your agency support with other resources.