



Coordinated Access Guide

Niagara Region
Homelessness Services

November 2022

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO: ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA

DISCLAIMER: This is a living document and at the time of publishing included a capture of current processes. Feedback about this document is encouraged and may be sent to homelessness@niagararegion.ca. This document will continue to be updated as improvements and expansions are made in the Coordinated Access system.

Our priority area of improvement is prioritization and matching by Summer 2023.

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO: ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA³

Contents

Land Acknowledgement	5
Acknowledgements	5
Purpose	6
Housing First	6
Background	7
Coordinated Access in Niagara	7
Housing and Homelessness Action Plan	8
Built for Zero Canada	9
Governance	9
Homelessness Management Information System	10
HIFIS (Homeless Individuals and Families Information System)	10
Privacy and Data Sharing	11
By-Name List	11
System-Level Data	11
Person-Specific Data	13
Access	15
Access Points	16
Consent	17
Intake and Diversion	17
Timely and Accurate Updates	18
Status and Inactivity	18
Triage and Assessment	19
Common Assessment Tool	19
Housing Resources	19
Matching and Referral	21
Filling of Vacancies	21
Dispute Resolution Process	21
Continuous Improvement	23

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO:

ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA⁴

Appendices	24
Appendix A: HIFIS Data Sharing Agreement.....	24
Appendix B: HIFIS User Agreement	42
Appendix C: System Consent Form.....	44
Appendix D: Niagara’s Coordinated Access Housing Resource Inventory.....	48

Land Acknowledgement

As we reflect on the importance of the land on which we work to end homelessness, our provider and sustainer, we look to understand the history of the land. Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. These lands are steeped in the rich history of the First Nations such as the Hatiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Intended to guide the relationship between the First Nations and Europeans, the Two Row Wampum is an important symbol of everlasting equality, peace, and friendship. It remains the foundation upon which Canada was built, and we recognize that this mutually respectful relationship between nations is essential for reconciliation today.

There are many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples from across Turtle Island that live and work in Niagara today. The Regional Municipality of Niagara stands with all Indigenous peoples, past and present, in promoting the wise stewardship of the lands on which we live. We recognize that we must do more to learn about the history and current situation of Indigenous peoples. This will help us better understand our roles and take responsibility towards reconciliation as treaty people, residents, and caretakers.

Acknowledgements

Niagara Region Homelessness Services would like to acknowledge all the service providers in Niagara's homeless-serving system for their commitment to coordination and working together to ensure the best housing outcomes for our neighbors experiencing homelessness. Their willingness and bravery to test, participate, build, and improve Coordinated Access from the ground up does not go unnoticed.

We would like to acknowledge Niagara Region's Built for Zero Home Team; this impressive team of leaders and champions has guided our work and has worked tirelessly to end chronic homelessness in the region.

This Guide would also not be possible without the support, expertise, and generosity of many communities across Canada and our peers in Built for Zero Canada who have been willing to share their learnings and materials.

Purpose

The purpose of Niagara Region's Coordinated Access Guide (the Guide) is to outline the process and management of Coordinated Access in Niagara.

The Guide was drafted by Niagara Region Homelessness Services in consultation with Niagara Region's Home Team and will be updated on an ongoing basis as Coordinated Access is continually improved. Forms and policies located in Appendices are subject to change as directed by Niagara Region Homelessness Services. Current and applicable versions will be provided to community as they become available.

Goals of the Guide include:

- Produce standards for the Coordinated Access System in Niagara Region
- Establish community standards and expectations for Niagara Region's homelessness response
- Outline priorities and processes for homelessness response
- Ensure transparency between service agencies, the community, and individuals and families experiencing homelessness in our community

Coordinated Access is a way for communities to bring consistency to the process by which people experiencing or at risk of homelessness access housing and related services within a geographic area. Core components of a strong Coordinated Access system include:

- a Housing First approach;
- real-time data about the supply of and demand for housing resources; and,
- a streamlined service delivery approach with access points to service, a standardized workflow for triage and assessment, prioritization, and vacancy matching and referral.

Housing First

Housing First is a philosophy that guides our homelessness support system which states that housing is a basic right for all humans. It is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centres on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing and providing additional supports and services as needed. The five core principles of Housing First include:

1. Immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements
2. Consumer choice and self determination
3. Recovery orientation

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO: ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA

4. Individualized and client-driven supports
5. Social and community integration

Background

Coordinated Access in Niagara

The Niagara Region Coordinated Access System is designed to organize community-level responses to homelessness. Individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or a housing crisis are connected to appropriate supports through a no wrong door approach, where trained front-line workers use the skills and the tools needed to collect information that supports prioritization and matching to available housing resources.

The launch of [Niagara's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan](#) (HHAP) in 2014 brought together community partners to develop and improve a no wrong door approach to housing and support services available across the region. When HHAP was updated in 2019, Niagara's Homeless-Serving System focused these efforts on the development of a By-Name List and Coordinated Access to strengthen this approach and further streamline the housing process. Niagara also joined [Built for Zero Canada](#) (BFZ-C) in 2019, a structured movement that supports participating communities to reach quality, real-time data on a By-Name List as a key milestone toward ending homelessness. Niagara's By-Name List is a real-time list of all known people experiencing homelessness across the region. It includes a robust set of data points that support Coordinated Access and prioritization at a household level, and an understanding of homeless inflows and outflows at a system level. Niagara was recognized by BFZ-C in fall 2020 for achieving a By-Name List that meets quality standards.

In June 2020, Niagara championed the use of a COVID-19 isolation space and a housing focused shelter pilot as pathways to housing and as key opportunities to further develop Coordinated Access prioritization and matching procedures. These efforts further informed how the By-Name List is used to support Coordinated Access. For example, standard prioritization criteria were used at the isolation space to protect those most vulnerable of contracting COVID-19, to maximize housing resources in the Home for Good and Housing First Intensive Case Management programs, and to remain resolutely focused on solving chronic homelessness.

The BFZ-C Home Team and several HHAP Working Groups also informed and strengthened what Coordinated Access looks like in Niagara over the past several years. Niagara's Homeless-Serving System is dedicated to improving Coordinated Access policy and procedure on an ongoing basis and will continue to identify areas for

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO: ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA

improvement and growth through various system improvements and the implementation of best practice interventions.

Ending Homelessness in Niagara

Housing and Homelessness Action Plan

Niagara's updated [Housing and Homelessness Action Plan](#) (HHAP) (2019) provides a framework for integrated local planning to address local need for affordable housing and the coordination of homelessness and related support services. The HHAP supports alignment of local actions with Built for Zero Canada (BFZ-C), including creating with partners a common, system-wide measurable aim statement to reach a functional zero end to chronic homelessness and the development and use of co-ordinated access policy and procedures.

Specific actions related to Coordinated Access outlined in the HHAP include:

- Developing a By-Name List and Coordinated Access policy and procedure to connect people who don't have a home to appropriate housing in a more streamlined and coordinated way.
- Maintaining a current list of individuals and families who do not have a home and their housing needs and a current list of available housing solutions for the people who do not have a home.
- Identifying community priority populations and applying consistent criteria to ensure fairness and consistency in the housing process.
- Increasing access to low-barrier housing and supports for those experiencing chronic homelessness, especially for those experiencing developmental disability, mental health issues, and/or addictions (this includes service models such as assertive street outreach, housing-focused shelter, Housing First, Bridge Housing and permanent supportive housing that facilitate sustainable exits from homelessness to housing).
- Exploring opportunities to shift system resources away from emergency homelessness services toward prevention services and housing with supports, in alignment with best practices for homeless serving systems and a Housing First approach.

All 75 actions outlined in the HHAP support the vision that every person in Niagara has an affordable, suitable and adequate home to provide the foundation to secure employment, raise a family, and build strong communities. Working to achieve this vision will help reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness, increase the number of people experiencing housing stability, and make progress toward achieving a

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO:⁹

ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA

functional zero end to chronic homelessness and an end to all homelessness in Niagara.

Built for Zero Canada

[Built for Zero Canada \(BFZ-C\)](#) is a national change effort helping a core group of leading communities end chronic and veteran homelessness – a first step to ending all homelessness in Canada. BFZ-C's structured, data-driven approach focuses on creating a sense of urgency, optimizing local homeless-serving systems, accelerating the adoption of proven practices, and driving continuous improvement. A first step in building system capacity to end homelessness is the development of real-time data on a By-Name List. Without one, Niagara would not be able to reliably measure reductions in homelessness or assess whether efforts are making an impact. A By-Name List also tracks a person's movement through the homeless-serving system to housing outcomes and is therefore an essential tool for coordinating access to housing resources. Coordinated Access is a central piece of designing and improving a system that is 'built for zero' or built to support an end to homelessness, and as such, is central to the work of communities participating in BFZ-C. For example, Coordinated Access ensures that local systems get the most out of limited resources, rapidly and effectively preventing and ending the homelessness of their neighbours in the greatest need.

Niagara joined BFZ-C in 2019 and was recognized for achieving a Quality By-Name List in fall 2020. As part of BFZ-C, Niagara's local Built for Zero Home Team sets shared aims to reduce and end homelessness, and more specifically to reach functional zero for chronic and veterans homelessness. The team also collaborates on change efforts and system improvements to meet these aims and captures data on people entering and exiting homelessness month-over-month to measure progress toward them. Monthly data allows the team to collaborate on solutions that capitalize on system strengths, address system gaps, and pivot with appropriate responses to meet community needs.

Governance

Niagara Region Homelessness Services is the Lead for Coordinated Access. The following groups play a role in the governance of Coordinated Access.

- **BFZ-C Coordinated Access Steering Committee**
 - Oversees the planning, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of Coordinated Access
 - Approves the policies and protocols

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO: ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA

10

- **BFZ-C Home Team and HIFIS Working Groups**
 - Advises the CA Steering Committee
 - Develops and informs policies and protocols
- **HHAP Working Groups**
 - Committed to improvement projects that support progress toward the 4 goals outlined in the HHAP
 - Develops policies and protocols based on best practices
- **Coordinated Access Lead and HIFIS Lead/Host**
 - Provide operational and administrative support for Coordinated Access and the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)
- **Housing First and Home for Good Coordinated Access Working Group**
 - Match and accept referrals from the Priority List to open spots in program
 - Case conference, problem solve, and continuously improve process and housing outcomes

Homelessness Management Information System

HIFIS (Homeless Individuals and Families Information System)

Niagara Region has implemented HIFIS (Homeless Individuals & Families Information System) as the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) for Niagara's Homeless-Serving System. HIFIS is a secure, web-based database used by numerous community agencies in Niagara's Homeless-Serving System to manage and share information about individuals and families who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. HIFIS allows for comprehensive data collection and case management, and thereby supports accountability, reporting, evaluation, evidence-based decision-making, and the operation of Coordinated Access.

Niagara Region hosts the HIFIS database and oversees the ongoing implementation and maintenance of HIFIS with input from the BFZ-C Home Team and HIFIS Working Groups. Niagara's By-Name List is generated through a SQL query of HIFIS data. Niagara's By-Name List is further described below.

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO: ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA

Privacy and Data Sharing

All community agencies that use HIFIS sign a Data Sharing Agreement (see Appendix A) outlining protections in storing and sharing client data. All staff that use HIFIS sign a Confidentiality and User Agreement (see Appendix B) outlining the roles and responsibilities in handling client information and use of HIFIS in general.

Niagara has a consent form and process in place that covers the collection and sharing of personal information within Niagara's Homeless-Serving System, including through HIFIS. Niagara's Homeless-Serving System includes community agencies that use HIFIS as well as partners such as veteran-serving organizations. Niagara's Homeless-Serving System Consent to Collect and Share Personal Information (see Appendix C) facilitates Niagara's Coordinated Access system, including operationalizing the By-Name List to support clients to access housing resources. Consent in HIFIS applies for 365 days, after which users are unable to add new entries to a client's profile without obtaining consent anew.

By-Name List

Niagara's By-Name List is a real-time list of all known people experiencing homelessness in Niagara. It includes a robust set of data points that support Coordinated Access and prioritization at a household level, and an understanding of homeless inflows and outflows at a system level. The By-Name List is updated daily from inputs into HIFIS, and system-level homeless inflows and outflows are generated monthly.

System-Level Data

Monthly inflows into homelessness and outflows out of homelessness derived from the By-Name List provide a feedback loop to help Niagara's Homeless-Serving System understand the scope of and changes in local homelessness, to respond in real-time, and to test strategies and interventions and measure their impact on reductions. This information is required to measure reductions in homelessness or changes in the total number of people actively experiencing homelessness in the region, and ultimately progress toward an end to homelessness (i.e. [functional zero](#)).

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO: ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA

Figure 1
HIFIS - Monthly Inflow/Outflow Summary – BFZ

	Counts	Client ID	Client Name	Gender	DOB
20221031 Client Count	493				
Inflow	126				
Inflow to Chronic	39				
New to Homelessness	20				
Return from Housing	9				
Return from Inactivity	58				
Outflow	85				
Data Error	1				
Deceased	3				
Inactivity	53				
Move-In	21				
Move-In Transitional	2				
Outflow from Chronic	5				
20221130 Client Count	534				

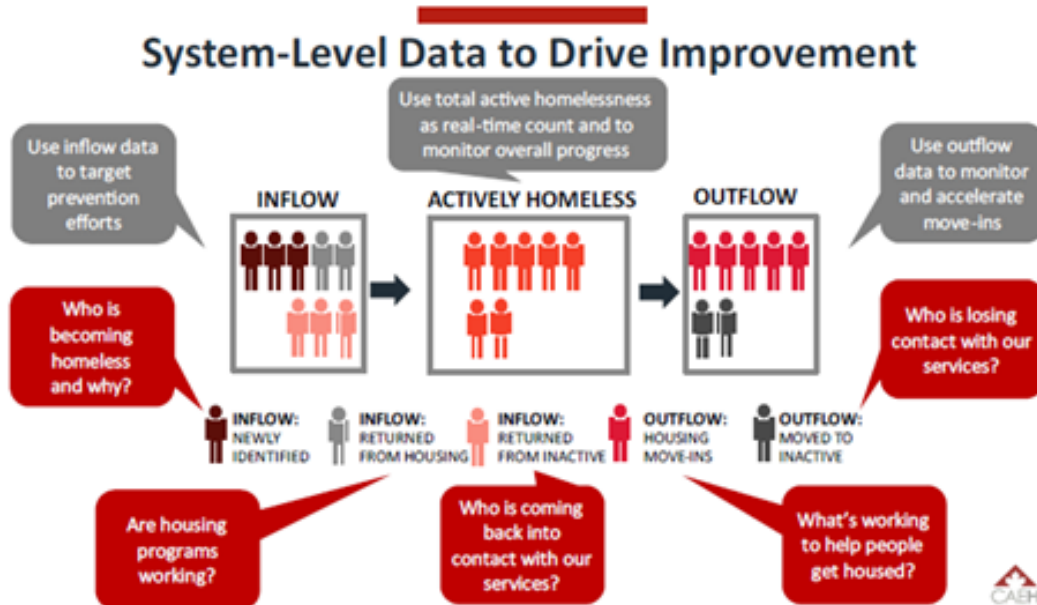
See Figure 1 for an overview of inflows into chronic homelessness and outflows out of chronic homelessness for the month of November 2022 as an example of monthly system-level data available through the By-Name List. The focus of the system-level data in this example is on chronic homelessness as Niagara is aiming to end chronic homelessness as part of Built for Zero Canada. Chronic homelessness refers to individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness AND who meet at least 1 of the following criteria:

- they have a total of at least 6 months (180 days) of homelessness over the past year
- they have recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past 3 years, with a cumulative duration of at least 18 months (546 days)

To review Niagara’s Monthly data visit <https://bfzcanada.ca/>

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO: ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA

13



Person-Specific Data

The By-Name List contains information about people experiencing homelessness that helps providers in Niagara's Homeless-Serving System connect and coordinate access to available and appropriate services, such as key demographic information, current housing state, housing history, and housing needs and preferences. Knowing the people experiencing homelessness in our community by their name makes ending homelessness personal and makes our systems accountable to our neighbours experiencing homelessness.

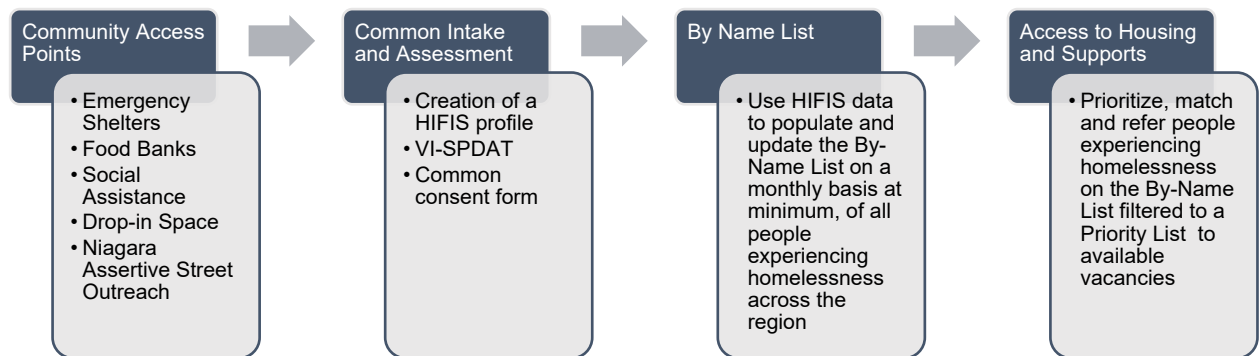
As such, the By-Name List is what Niagara's homeless-serving system uses to operate and support Coordinated Access. People experiencing homelessness who are active on the By-Name List at the time of program vacancies are prioritized, referred, and matched to housing resources in accordance with processes outlined in the following sections. This helps to ensure that limited resources can be targeted to those that need them most.

Everyone on the By-Name List has a unique identifier (generated by HIFIS) to help support confidential sharing of information as needed. Identifying information is only shared with those providers included in Niagara's homeless-serving system, and only as needed to support people to end their experience of homelessness.

Coordinated Access System Overview

Coordinated Access is an emerging approach that helps communities to organize their response to homelessness and improve outcomes with intentional housing and supports allocation. In short, Coordinated Access includes the following components:

- **Community Access Points** – agencies or program staff that have regular contact with people who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Access Points are trained assessors, and will add individuals and families to the By-Name List and support them in resolving their homelessness and finding and securing housing
- **Common Intake/Assessment** – use of the common consent form, HIFIS intake processes, and assessment tool will ensure that processes are the same across the system
- **By-Name List** – a real-time, up-to-date list of all people known to be experiencing homelessness. Contains demographics and information about housing need.
- **Access to Housing and Supports** – agencies have dedicated housing and support resources to service individuals and families on the By-Name List. Vacancies will be filled using the By-Name List based on level of need and locally defined priorities



Access

Community Access Points are responsible for adding or updating information on people experiencing homelessness on the By-Name List, by way of entering data into HIFIS. Access Points populate specific fields in HIFIS, such as the Housing History module, in order to action an add or update to the By-Name List report. Access Points are offered HIFIS training as requested and when HIFIS policies and procedures are updated to support By-Name List and Coordinated Access functions.

Access Points are service providers that have regular contact with people experiencing homelessness and support them in resolving their homelessness and finding secure housing. Trained staff at Access Points use a common assessment tool to determine depth of need, collect information that is required to support prioritization, matching and referral to housing resources, and support connection to housing resources through Coordinated Access.

By adding people experiencing homelessness to the By-Name List, Access Points must agree to keep contact with them and continue to serve them within their mandate. If an Access Point encounters a person they are not equipped to serve or assess, they must make a connection to another Access Point so that person can be added to the By-Name List and connected to housing resources. This connection can be made by assisting the person to locate a more appropriate agency, booking an appointment, or making travel arrangements. Correspondence with an Access Point can be done in-person or virtually.

Access Points allow for a no wrong door approach in that people experiencing homelessness can be prioritized, referred, and matched to housing resources through Coordinated Access regardless of which door they entered or which service they accessed. There are over 30 Access Points throughout the 12 municipalities within Niagara Region; all access points receive the same HIFIS and VI-SPDAT training. Processes are in place to monitor if there is easy and equitable access to Niagara's Coordinated Access system and respond to any emerging issues as appropriate. This includes conducting a comparison of Point in Time Count data to By-Name List data each time enumeration is completed to assess if any sub-populations of people experiencing homelessness are not often being identified through Access Points but are being identified through enumeration activities. Reviewing easy and equitable access to housing and supports through HF/HFG are reviewed as a standing item at monthly meetings, in addition the Coordinated Access Guide and associated policies will be audited every 2 years.

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO:

ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA

Access Points

The following service providers or staff are Access Points in Niagara (updated November 2022):

Emergency Shelter - Nightlight Youth Services (Boys & Girls Club of Niagara)
Emergency Shelter - The Salvation Army, St Catharines Booth Centre
Emergency Shelter - Casa El Norte
Emergency Shelter - The Hope Centre
Emergency Shelter - Matthew House
Emergency Shelter - The RAFT Youth Hostel
Emergency Shelter - Southridge Community Church
Emergency Shelter - YWCA Niagara Region
Seasonal Shelter – St. Catharines, November to April
Seasonal Shelter – Niagara Falls, November to April
Outreach - Niagara Assertive Street Outreach Team (NASO)
Prevention - Community Care St Catharines and Thorold
Prevention - Community Care of West Niagara
Prevention - The Hope Centre
Prevention - Port Cares
Prevention - Project SHARE
Prevention - The RAFT Eternal Routes, Youth Reconnect
Prevention - The RAFT Shelter Diversion
Prevention - Start Me Up Niagara
Housing First - Gateway Residential and Community Support Services
Housing First - Southridge Community Church
Home for Good - Southridge Community Church
Home for Good - Gateway Residential and Community Support Services
Home for Good – YWCA Niagara
Transitional Housing - Nightlight Youth Services (Boys & Girls Club of Niagara)
Prevention - Southridge Community Church Shelter Diversion
Transitional Housing - The Hope Centre
Transitional Housing - Matthew House (Newcomers)
Transitional Housing - Port Cares
Transitional Housing - Bethlehem Housing and Support Services
Transitional Housing - Start Me Up Niagara
Transitional Housing - Youth Resources Niagara (Youth)
Transitional Housing - YWCA Niagara
Ontario Works (OW) Team - Hostels and Homelessness

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO:

ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA

Consent

Access Points only participate in the process to add people to the By-Name List via HIFIS once the client has provided informed consent to have their name and other identifying information recorded and shared with all providers in Niagara's Homeless-Serving System. Niagara's common consent form can be found in Appendix C.

Accommodations will be made if an individual's information is sensitive, or that sharing certain details could impact safety or the safety of others. Consent can be revoked at any time by any service provider or Access Point at the request of any individual. Refusal to provide consent upon intake does not prevent individuals or families from accessing services.

Personal information will be shared through the By-Name List and through HIFIS with other Service Providers in Niagara's Homeless-Serving System. The By-Name List (BNL) is a real-time list of individuals experiencing homelessness who have received a service from Niagara's Homeless-Serving System in the past 90 days. The BNL is used as part of the Coordinated Access System to match individuals experiencing homelessness with appropriate housing and service options.

Intake and Diversion

Emergency shelters are trained in standard diversion with several locations practicing a more fulsome diversion program. Diversion as a formalized practice within the housing stability system is a relatively new intervention used to prevent the use of emergency shelter by providing individualized supports before families and individuals enter the shelter system. Visit www.homelesshub.com for more information.

Upon intake, Access Points enter or update client information in HIFIS in accordance with HIFIS protocols. The Access Point is responsible for ensuring that a client's information is kept updated. This information includes demographic information, housing history, home community, and information related to document readiness. The Access Point is also responsible for uploading the original signed Consent Form into HIFIS.

At no particular time shall a person be screened out of intake or access due to perceived housing or service barriers related to supports and services, including but not limited to, too little or no income, active or a history of substance use disorder, mental wellness, domestic violence history, resistance to receiving services, the type or extent of disability-related services or supports that are needed, history of evictions or poor credit, lease violations or history of not being a leaseholder, indigenous status, sexual orientation, or criminal record.

As people are added to the By-Name List, they are referred to housing resources as they become available. Access Points continue to support people experiencing

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO:

ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA

18

homelessness who have been added to the By-Name List until more appropriate supports or housing opportunities become available. It is important to continue providing housing and related supports for people who are added to the By-Name List, such as the creation of housing plans that aim to resolve their homelessness.

Timely and Accurate Updates

All participating providers will ensure all client updates are completed in HIFIS at time of intake, this includes at a minimum:

- Client demographics
- Housing History
- Home Community

Having the above criteria complete in HIFIS ensures that an individual will appear on the BNL, the HIFIS lead for each service provider is accountable for ensuring this policy is followed across their team.

Note ongoing quality assurance processes, such as: The HIFIS lead at each agency uses the HIFIS audit feature to monitor the data entries from staff at their agency. The HIFIS administrator conducts monthly data cleans and shares a By-Name List Dashboard once a month at Case Conferencing meetings so that others can help verify the data.

Status and Inactivity

People experiencing homelessness who have a status of “inactive” or “housed” will not show up on Niagara’s By-Name List and are not eligible to be prioritized, referred, or matched to housing resources.

Inactivity is a critical component of maintaining an accurate and actionable By-Name List. To ensure an efficient assessment and referral process, referral sources and destinations must have the ability to contact and connect with households as soon as a housing opportunity is available. Without this policy, Coordinated Access can experience delays in referral procedures due to the time spent searching for people in the community who have not been able to be reached through multiple attempts, often for many months. Due to this loss of contact, it is hard for Niagara’s Homeless-Serving System to determine whether these individuals are still in need of housing. In some situations, these individuals may have self-resolved their housing crisis or have relocated to another area.

If a household has no contact with any Access Points or housing programs for 90 days, the household will have their status changed to inactive. This occurs automatically through HIFIS.

If a household with inactive status makes contact with any Access Point, they will be returned to active status automatically through HIFIS.

Triage and Assessment

Common Assessment Tool

Niagara's Homeless-Serving System has adopted The Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) as the common triage/assessment tool that is used for all population groups experiencing homelessness. See Appendix D

The VI-SPDAT supports triage by providing an assessment of acuity or depth of need, moving the discussion from simply who is eligible for a service intervention to who is eligible and appropriate for different housing resources depending on the program's target population and their depth of need. Individuals complete the same triage tool regardless of the provider, and providers standardize screening across workers and organizations. Front line staff are trained on how to use VI-SPDAT Version 3.0 for Adults, Families Versions 3.0, and Version 2.0 for Youth. Emergency shelters and Niagara Assertive Street Outreach teams complete the VI-SPDAT with clients within 14 days of intake.

Refusal to participate upon intake does not prevent individuals or families from accessing services or being added to the By-Name List via HIFIS. The front-line worker will continue to actively engage with the individual or family to complete the VI-SPDAT and/or will continue to support the individual or family on their housing journey.

Housing Resources

Coordinated Access in Niagara is dependent on dedicated housing and support resources to serve people experiencing homelessness. Niagara's Homeless-Serving System will continue onboarding more providers that dedicate housing resources to Coordinated Access based on gaps and need. People experiencing homelessness on the By-Name List are prioritized, referred, and matched to housing resources that are dedicated to Coordinated Access as they become available. Housing resources include case management spaces, subsidies, or units. See Appendix E or Niagara's Housing Resources Inventory including housing resources dedicated to Coordinated Access, their eligibility criteria, and their total capacity or number of housing resources they provide.

Prioritization

Prioritization is the process and action of deciding the relative importance and urgency of serving a particular household ahead of another based upon transparent and defensible criteria. The purpose of prioritization is to have a clear process that both connects clients with appropriate resources and helps communities to reach their goals. Niagara’s prioritization criteria orders people on the Priority List for housing resources, using information gathered through intake, triage, and assessment. People on the Priority List that meet more of the prioritization criteria are sorted closer to the top of the Priority List and clients that meet fewer criteria are sorted closer to the bottom, if all is equal for individuals on the list the length of homelessness is used as a deciding factor. Factors of priority indicators outside of those listed in this Guide cannot be used.

The Priority List is created by filtering the By-Name List for those eligible for a vacancy and sorting by those who meet priority criteria from most to least. The Priority List and any other sub-lists are drawn from one By-Name List.

Niagara has set key indicators that determine a person or family’s place on the Priority List. Please see indicators below by Program:

<p>Housing First Intensive Case Management Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronically homeless • 55+ years old • physical health issue (per the VI-SPDAT) • Indigenous individuals • youth (18-24 years) • experiencing unsheltered homelessness • VI-SPDAT (4-7)
<p>Home for Good Intensive Case Management Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronically homeless • 55+ years old • physical health issue (per the VI-SPDAT) • Indigenous individuals • youth (18-24 years) • experiencing unsheltered homelessness • VI-SPDAT (8+)

Please note prioritization indicators were amended in 2021 as a response to the pandemic and the work being done through the housing focused shelter pilot. Niagara Region is committed to review and revise prioritization by the end of 2023, engaging with the Homeless-Serving System, Indigenous partners, and Lived Experts.

Matching and Referral

Filling of Vacancies

Distribution Process

1. On the first Monday of each month Homelessness Services provides a Priority List to the following Agencies that deliver the Housing First (HF) or Home for Good (HFG) ICM programs:

- a. Gateway
- b. Southridge
- c. YWCA

2. Programs with vacancies start at the top of the Priority List or short-list and make offers to those who meet priority criteria for the specific vacancy and whose needs and preferences match the vacancy being offered.

a. Program staff with the vacancy filters out those with a VI-SPDAT score of 4-7 from the Priority List if the vacancy is on a HFG caseload or filters out those with 8+ if the vacancy is on a HF caseload. If a VI-SPDAT is not complete, the ICM completes an assessment of housing and support needs (through the VI-SPDAT or without the tool if the client does not consent to complete the VI-SPDAT).

b. Starting from the top of the short-list, the program with the vacancy identifies clients whose needs and preferences or housing plans aligns with the vacancy in order to accept the referral and make an offer to the client. All offers made and accepted referrals are tracked in HIFIS in accordance with HIFIS for Housing Programs document and Housing Placement Job Aid.

3. On the 3rd Friday of each month, program staff return the Priority List to Homelessness Services with comments outlined on progress taken to date with each client.

4. On a weekly basis, the Supervisor/Team Leads of Housing First and Home for Good meet with Homelessness Services to problem-solve matches and referrals and identify system-level barriers and improvements toward optimizing the housing process.

Dispute Resolution Process

Individual choice in housing options is respected by all programs and Intensive Case Management (ICM) teams. An individual's or family's choice in housing options will be respected allowing for the rejection of one or multiple housing offers without repercussions and/or losing their spot on an ICM caseload. Similarly, individuals or

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO:²²

ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA

families who reject a referral to an ICM caseload remain eligible and prioritized on the Priority List for upcoming vacancies.

Referral challenges, concerns and/or disagreements, including when the provider with a vacancy refuses a referral, are dealt with through the following processes.

Complaint Process

Each individual or family supported by Niagara's Homeless-Serving System and matched to housing resources through Coordinated Access has the right to express concerns and complaints at any time, and to have their concern or complaint taken seriously and dealt with in a respectful and accountable manner. ICM programs encourage input, and actively cultivate a climate in which participants are comfortable to raise concerns without fear of reprisal. All complaints are addressed by the Program Manager/Team Leads in a timely manner and documented along with the outcome. As with all participant input, concerns or complaints inform service planning and program evaluations.

The formal complaint process includes:

- Participant and ICM to meet with the aim of resolving any concerns
- If the participant is not satisfied or does not feel safe approaching the ICM, they may connect with the Team Lead
- If the participant is not satisfied with the response from the Team Lead, they are directed to connect with the Program Manager
- If the participant is not satisfied with the response from the Program Manager, they are directed to connect with the Executive Director.

Complaint forms are provided each participant's package that is provided through ICM programs, and the policy is explained to participants upon intake. All complaints will be responded to within 48 hours upon receiving the complaint.

Refusal of a Referral

ICM programs must match and make offers to clients on the Priority List or short-list of people who meet eligibility and priority criteria for the vacancy. If an ICM program refuses to match or offer a vacancy to anyone on the Priority List the individuals name remains on the BNL and is revisited and is brought forward to monthly meetings with leadership to determine next steps.

NIAGARA IS BUILDING FOR ZERO:

ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN NIAGARA

23

Continuous Improvement

Niagara's BFZ-C Home Team will review Coordinated Access policy and procedures on an annual basis at minimum to evaluate how Coordinated Access is operating, identify gaps, and offer ideas for improvement. This Guide will be updated to reflect improvements in Coordinated Access. Current versions will be provided to community partners.

Appendices

Appendix A: HIFIS Data Sharing Agreement

1



HIFIS Data Sharing Agreement (the "Agreement")

THIS HIFIS DATA SHARING AGREEMENT, made in duplicate, is effective as of this March 15, 2021 (the "Effective Date")

between

The Regional Municipality of Niagara
(herein referred to as the Data Owner)

and

XXXXXXXXXX

(herein referred to as the Data User)

DRAFT Do Not Sign

Data Owner Information		
Agency Name: The Regional Municipality of Niagara		
Address: 1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way	Unit/Apt. #:	
City/Town: Thorold	Province: Ontario	
Postal Code: L2V 3Z3		
Main Contact		
Name: Cathy Cousins		
Position: Director, Homelessness Services and Community Engagement		
Phone: 905-984-6900	Extension: 3807	Email: cathy.cousins@niagararegion.ca
Signing Authority		
Name: Cathy Cousins		
Position: Director, Homelessness Services and Community Engagement		
Phone: 905-984-6900	Extension: 3807	Email: cathy.cousins@niagararegion.ca

Data User Information		
Agency Name:		
Address:	Unit/Apt. #:	
City/Town:	Province: Ontario	
Postal Code:		
Main Contact		
Name:		
Position:		
Phone:	Extension:	Email:

Table of Contents

HIFIS Data Sharing Agreement (the "Agreement")	1
1. DEFINITIONS, <i>PURPOSE & AUTHORITY</i>	5
1.1 Definitions	5
1.2 Acknowledgement	6
1.3 Purpose of data sharing between parties	6
1.4 Data Owner	7
1.5 Data User/Data User Employees	7
1.6 Authority	7
2. TERM, TERMINATION AND SUSPENSION	9
2.1 Term of Agreement	9
2.2 Termination of Agreement	9
3. DESCRIPTION OF DATA AND MANNER OF COLLECTION	10
3.1 Description of data	10
3.2 Manner of collection	10
3.3 Alteration of data	10
3.4 Notice Requirement and Consent	10
4. DATA SHARING METHOD AND SECURITY OF DATA	11
4.1 Confidentiality Agreement	11
4.2 Method of Data Sharing between Data Owner and Data User	11
4.3 Responsibilities of Data Users/Data User Employees	11
4.4 Access by Others	12
4.5 Access by Clients	12
5. DATA USAGE	13
5.1 Data Usage by Data User/Data User Employees	13
5.2 Data Usage by Data Owner	13
6. DISPOSITION OF PAPER REGISTRATION FORMS	14
6.1 Paper registration forms	14
7. RESOURCES	15
8. AMENDING PROCEDURES	16
9. LIABILITY AND INDEMNITY	17

4

10. SIGNATURES.....18

DRAFT - Do Not Sign

1. DEFINITIONS, PURPOSE & AUTHORITY

1.1 Definitions

In this Agreement, the following terms will have the following meanings:

Client: Member of the public who utilizes homelessness services and registers as a user of services using the software described in this Agreement.

Data User Employee: An employee of the party named as the Data User in this Agreement, who is employed in a leadership or frontline capacity within Niagara's Homeless-Serving System.

Database: A component of HIFIS which stores data.

Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS): A secure, web-based data collection and case management system that allows multiple service providers in the same community to access real-time data and to increase coordination of services. HIFIS is hosted on a secured server owned by the Region and supports daily operations, data collection and the development of a national portrait on homelessness through aggregated HIFIS export fields. Also referred to in this Agreement as "the software".

MFIPPA: *Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. M. 56, as amended

Niagara's Homeless-Serving System: A group of agencies and programs that work together to deliver coordinated homelessness and housing services in the Region.

Personal Information: Any information about an identifiable individual, as defined in the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. M. 56, as amended. It includes, without limitation, information relating to identity, nationality, age, address, telephone number, e-mail address, date of birth, emergency contact information, primary language, their children's address, nickname, birthdate, postal code, whether they identify as indigenous, primary language, and relationship to other Clients receiving service.

PIPEDA: *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*, (S.C. 2000, c. 5), as amended

Service Providers of Homelessness Services: Agencies and programs that hold a service delivery contract or a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with, and deliver homelessness services in, the Regional Municipality of Niagara (the "Region").

System Manager: The role of the Region's Homelessness Services division in relation to Service Providers of Homelessness Services. The role of System

Manager includes system planning, allocation of funding, overseeing agencies directly operating homelessness services, ensuring provincial and federal funding requirements are fulfilled, data collection and reporting.

1.2 Acknowledgement

The Data User acknowledges that the Data User Employees fall under the Data User's purview and that the Data User is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Data User Employees adhere to the responsibilities outlined in this Agreement and that their conduct is in alignment with the intent of this agreement.

1.3 Purpose of data sharing between parties

The Data Owner is required, as System Manager for Niagara's Homeless-Serving System, to collect and submit program outcome data to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH). Data User Employees have frontline access to Clients participating in programs and act as agents on behalf of the Data Owner to collect this data. This data sharing Agreement is intended to outline how the data gathered by the Data User Employees and stored by HIFIS software will be collected, handled, and accessed by the Data User/Data User Employees, and shared with other Data Users in Niagara's Homeless-Serving System. With the Agreement established, Data Users and Data User Employees will be aware of proper data collection methods and responsibilities for protection of Personal Information, and will have the authority to collect Personal Information from Clients on behalf of the Regional Municipality of Niagara. Any Data User will also be permitted by the Data Owner to access the data collected at the agency or program that the respective Data User operates.

The data to be shared contains the program use data and registration information of Clients accessing homelessness services in Niagara. It is necessary that this data include personal identifiers in order to obtain the required unique counts of Clients, as well as for Client safety and for the purposes of providing coordinated homelessness services and supports. Forgoing the data sharing activity outlined in this Agreement would result in the Data Owner not fulfilling their mandatory reporting obligations to ESDC and/or a Client not being provided with coordinated services. As the data collected contains personal identifiers, the Data Owner is required under section 1(b) of the *MFIPPA* to enter into a data sharing agreement with the Data User pursuant to the responsibilities that the former has to protect the privacy of Clients.

1.4 Data Owner

The Data Owner controls the data and determines how it will be collected, stored, accessed, used, shared, and disclosed. The Data Owner makes all decisions in relation to the data's use. The Data Owner will access the data as a right of ownership, as well as to fulfill necessary tasks related to systems management of Niagara's Homeless-Serving System. As the System Manager for homelessness services in Niagara, the Data Owner will be responsible for pulling the data from HIFIS, for analysis of this data, and for sharing this data with other Data Users. Data will be used by the Data Owner for local homelessness planning, evaluation, and reporting purposes, for example, to Regional Council and Committees of Council, as well as for mandatory reporting, in an aggregated form only, to ESDC and the MMAH. Individual, Client-specific data will be viewed by the Data Owner and shared with other Data Users for the purposes of providing coordinated housing and homelessness services but will never be shared in a report, including to ESDC and the MMAH.

1.5 Data User/Data User Employees

The Data User Employees have frontline access to Clients participating in programs and act as agents on behalf of the Data Owner to collect this data using HIFIS software, and access this data to perform their day-to-day functions. The Data User Employees will be responsible for data input on behalf of the Data Owner and will be trained by the Data Owner to ensure they are familiar with the appropriate practices involving collection, use, and protection of the data, including MFIPPA legislation. Persons will only be considered Data Users/Data User Employees once they have been granted access to the HIFIS system by the Data Owner and provided with a passcode to log them into the software. At all times, Data Users/Data User Employees will protect these passcodes and adhere to the requirements laid forth in this Agreement.

1.6 Authority

The Data Owner holds a license to use HIFIS software from ESDC in return for providing non-identifiable Personal Information related to the Data Owner to ESDC in the form of aggregated export fields.

The Data Owner has the authority to collect, use, share, and disclose Personal Information in accordance with sections 28(2), 31(b), and 32(c) of the *MFIPPA* to fulfill its administrative role as the System Manager for Niagara's Homeless-

Serving System. With this Agreement, the Data User is granted authority to collect, use, and disclose HIFIS Client data with other Data Users as an agent of the Data Owner.

DRAFT - Do Not Sign

2. TERM, TERMINATION AND SUSPENSION

2.1 Term of Agreement

The Agreement is effective from the Effective Date and will remain in force for the duration of time that the Data User holds a service delivery contract or a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Data Owner for the operation of homelessness services, or until terminated in accordance with the Agreement.

2.2 Termination of Agreement

Either party may terminate this Agreement, at any time, for any reason, without liability or cost upon giving at least thirty (30) days prior written notice to the other party.

If, in the opinion of the Data Owner acting reasonably, the Data User or Data User Employee breaches any representation, warranty, covenant, term or condition of this Agreement, the Data Owner may, at any time, take one or more of the following actions:

- (a) provide the Data User with an opportunity to remedy the breach; and,
- (b) terminate this Agreement immediately upon giving notice to the Data user.

Upon termination, the Data User agrees to:

1. Ensure all devices used to access HIFIS are logged out of HIFIS;
2. Make no further attempt to access HIFIS; and,
3. Discontinue any use of data obtained from the HIFIS system, such as data being used for administrative program-related purposes.

The Data Owner may immediately suspend a Data User's access to the HIFIS software if the Data Owner, acting reasonably, considers it necessary to ensure compliance with, or prevent or mitigate a breach of this Agreement.

3. DESCRIPTION OF DATA AND MANNER OF COLLECTION

3.1 Description of data

The data stored in HIFIS, which will be collected by the Data User Employees on behalf of the Data Owner and which this Agreement provides access to for the Data User Employees includes Personal Information of Clients, especially demographic and programmatic information for the purposes of providing coordinated housing and homelessness services.

3.2 Manner of collection

Data will be collected by Data User Employees who are contracted to collect it on behalf of the Data Owner. Pursuant to section 29(1) of the *MFIPPA*, data collected by the Data User Employees will be collected directly from Clients. Data User Employees will be trained by the Data Owner to make every reasonable effort to ensure that Personal Information to be disclosed and entered into HIFIS is accurate, up-to-date and complete. This includes confirming unclear information with the Client prior to entering it into the Database.

3.3 Alteration of data

Data Users/Data User Employees will not alter data unless the data is Personal Information of Clients that has been identified as incorrect, or which the Client has asked the Data User to change. Data Users/Data User Employees will not falsely enter Clients who are not receiving homelessness services. If HIFIS system functionality lapses, Data User Employees will keep Client information during that time and manually enter the data into HIFIS as soon as functionality resumes, preferably the same day or within 48 hours.

3.4 Notice Requirement and Consent

As per *MFIPPA* s. 29(2), Clients whose Personal Information is to be collected will be provided with notice of the Data Owner's authority to collect it, the principal purpose/use of the data being collected, and the contact information of an employee of the Data Owner who can answer Client questions about the data/data use. Consent will be obtained prior to collection of the Client's data by the Data User. Client Personal Information that is obtained without consent will not be entered into HIFIS.

4. DATA SHARING METHOD AND SECURITY OF DATA

4.1 Confidentiality Agreement

All Data User Employees will be asked to sign an *HIFIS User Agreement* if they have already been given a login and password or prior to being provided with a login and password to access HIFIS, starting in December 2020. The data privacy, protection and integrity portion of the confidentiality agreement is binding for the duration of time in which the Data User Employee has access to HIFIS via employment at a program operated by the employer under which they were employed at the time that the Agreement was signed. Signed documents will be stored by the Data User and be available to the Data Owner upon request.

4.2 Method of Data Sharing between Data Owner and Data User

The Data Owner electronically authorizes specific individual or group roles to Data Users, which determine what access to the data each Data User will have. The data shared by the Data Owner with the Data User will be shared electronically via the HIFIS software, which will be used for data input, transfer, storage and retrieval. Data will be accessible to the Data User immediately upon data input, and can be retrieved and edited by the Data User at any time in accordance with section 3.3. Transfer of data is not a one-time occurrence but rather will occur on an ongoing basis as data is entered, used, and shared for the day-to-day function of providers in Niagara's Homeless-Serving System.

4.3 Responsibilities of Data Users/Data User Employees

The Data User will comply with and cause its Employees to comply with this Agreement. The Data User will be responsible for any information or data it or its Employees input into the HIFIS software.

The Data User agrees to establish appropriate and reasonable administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to protect the confidentiality of the data and to prevent unauthorized use or access to it. This means that:

- Data Users/Data User Employees will not share their passcode used to access the HIFIS system.
- The Data User agrees to notify the Data Owner immediately following any and all unauthorized use, including but not limited to any third party

unauthorized access to, use of, theft of, or possession of the data or any device used to access the HIFIS system.

- If a breach occurs, the Data User will determine and disclose to the Data Owner how the breach occurred and what steps will be taken to prevent a breach in the future.

4.4 Access by Others

The Data User will be responsible for access to and use of the HIFIS software by its Data User Employees, including compliance with the HIFIS User Agreement.

The Data Owner will only provide access to those that require it for the purposes of fulfilling the requirements set out by ESDC and in accordance with 1.3. No others will be granted access except when required for legal purposes, such as to comply with a subpoena.

From time to time, the Data Owner may enter into additional Data Sharing Agreements with additional providers in Niagara's Homeless-Serving System. If an additional partner enters into a Data Sharing Agreement with the Data Owner, then the existing Data User acknowledges that data stored in HIFIS will be accessible to all current providers with which there is a Data Sharing Agreement.

4.5 Access by Clients

In accordance with section 36 of *MFIPPA*, individual who wishes to access, review or verify their Personal Information held within the HIFIS Database, or who wishes to know to whom the information has been disclosed, is permitted to do so. If such an inquiry is made by a Client to a Data User, the Data User should provide the contact information contained on the consent form. After contacting the person noted on the consent form, the individual will be connected to the Region's Privacy Office. The Region's Privacy Office will handle the case and respond to the individual within 30 days.

5. DATA USAGE

5.1 Data Usage by Data User/Data User Employees

The Data User/Data User Employees will adhere to the provisions of *MFIPPA* and *PIPEDA* as they relate to the collection, storage, access and reporting of HIFIS data. This Agreement permits the Data Users/Data User Employees to access the data in order to fulfill their role as outlined in 1.4 (data collection, coordinating housing and homelessness services, administrative functions, and when needed in an emergency). The Data User will not use the Personal Information it collects for a purpose other than that for which it was provided. This Agreement represents and warrants further that, except when legally required or except as authorized in writing, such data shall not be disclosed, released, revealed, showed, sold, rented, leased, loaned or otherwise have access granted to the data or products derived from the data covered by this Agreement to any person.

5.2 Data Usage by Data Owner

The Data Owner will adhere to the provisions of *MFIPPA* and *PIPEDA* as they relate to the collection, storage, access, and reporting of HIFIS data. Data will be used by the Data Owner for local homelessness planning, evaluation, and reporting purposes, for example to Regional Council and Committees of Council, as well as for mandatory reporting, in an aggregated form only, to ESDC and the MMAH. Individual, Client-specific data will be viewed by the Data Owner and shared with other Data Users for the purposes of providing coordinated housing and homelessness services. Individual Client data will never be shared in a report, including to ESDC and the MMAH. Examples of how the data will be used include:

- Analysis to determine the number of people actively experiencing homelessness and associated demographic statistics. This data will allow for evidence-informed and transparent decision-making within the planning and evaluation of Niagara's Homeless-Serving System.
- Analysis of the average length of times that people use services before becoming housed or exiting the Homeless-Serving System.

6. DISPOSITION OF PAPER REGISTRATION FORMS

6.1 Paper registration forms

Any paper forms containing personally identifying information are to be securely disposed of once information has been entered into the HIFIS system.

DRAFT - Do Not Sign

7. RESOURCES

Name, contact information, and area(s) of responsibility of those involved in the data administration are provided in the table below.

Current Staff Name	Position	Email	Area(s) of responsibility staff should be contacted for
Cathy Cousins	Director, Niagara Region Homelessness Services and Community Engagement	Cathy.cousins@niagararegion.ca	Legal and urgent situations
Margaret Penca	Manager, Niagara Region Homelessness Services	Margaret.penca@niagararegion.ca	Legal and urgent situations
Kristina Nickel	Program Evaluation and Data Advisor, Niagara Region Homelessness Services	Kristina.nickel@niagararegion.ca	Technical questions about the data sharing Agreement, Data User and Data User Employee responsibilities for data/ access/use/ handling and practices

8. AMENDING PROCEDURES

This Agreement may be amended by the written agreement of the parties herein. The parties undertake to give one another written notice of any changes in legislation, regulations, or policies respecting those parties and programs that are likely to affect this Agreement.

DRAFT - Do Not Sign

9. LIABILITY AND INDEMNITY

9.1 The Data User acknowledges and agrees that neither the Data Owner nor any of its elected officials, directors, officers or employees shall have any liability to the Data User resulting from the Data User's use or misuse of the Data and HIFIS software.

9.2 The Data User shall indemnify and save harmless the Data Owner and any of its elected officials, directors, officers or employees from and against any and all liabilities, damages, costs or expenses awarded against or incurred or suffered by the Data Owner arising out of any action or proceeding commenced or maintained by a person, firm, corporation or other entity in respect of the use of the data by the Data User or any party for whom it is responsible at law.

DRAFT - Do Not Sign

10. SIGNATURES

In witness whereof, the Agencies' authorized representatives as designated agree, upon dated signature, to that which is outlined in this document.

Data Owner

Organization: The Regional Municipality of Niagara

Name: Cathy Cousins

Position: Director, Homelessness Services and Community Engagement

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I/ We have authority to bind the corporation.

Data User

Organization:

Name:

Position:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I/ We have authority to bind the corporation.

Appendix B: HIFIS User Agreement



Once this form is completed, please send to
homelessness@niagararegion.ca

HIFIS USER AGREEMENT

I, the undersigned, am an employee of _____ . I acknowledge that my employer has arranged for me to be granted access to HIFIS – Homeless Individuals and Families Information System. HIFIS is used to collect, share and report on client information, and to assist agencies in focusing services and resources to help individuals experiencing homelessness. Niagara Region is the host of the HIFIS database and the HIFIS data owner in the region.

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the information on confidentiality, privacy, and information sharing that is outlined in the HIFIS User Manual. This information is also outlined in the HIFIS Data Sharing Agreement that is in place between my employer and Niagara Region. The Data Sharing Agreement is in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection Privacy Act (MFIPPA) and the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA).

In recognition of the confidential nature of the information contained in HIFIS, I understand and agree to the following:

1. I will access, view, use, and disclose the personal information in HIFIS only in the normal course of fulfilling my employment duties and only in accordance with the HIFIS User Manual provided to me by Niagara Region.
2. I will not divulge client information to anyone other than the persons who are authorized to receive the information in accordance with the HIFIS User Manual provided to me by Niagara Region.
3. I will take reasonable precautions regarding the protection of client information. This includes the following:
 - a. I will protect my HIFIS username and login password and acknowledge that they are for my use only.
 - b. I will not share my HIFIS login password, and will never log into HIFIS and allow someone else to work under my user account.
 - c. I will log out of HIFIS when not actively working in HIFIS, to ensure that I am not leaving client information unattended.
 - d. I will ensure that all hard copies and/or electronic copies of HIFIS information are kept in a secure location, and properly destroyed/deleted when no longer needed.

- 4. I will not knowingly enter false or misleading client information into HIFIS under any circumstances.
- 5. I will maintain high standards of professional conduct in the capacity of a HIFIS User.
- 6. I agree to take on any privacy training required by Niagara Region and/or my employer.
- 7. I will immediately notify my immediate supervisor if I believe there has been a privacy breach (i.e., personal information of clients getting stolen, lost, or mistakenly disclosed).
- 8. I acknowledge that Niagara Region will regularly audit/monitor access to HIFIS, and that this may include the review of my use of HIFIS.
- 9. I will immediately cease access to HIFIS at Niagara Region's or my employer's request.
- 10. I understand that unauthorized access, use, or disclosure of HIFIS information may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, contract, association or appointment if I do not adhere to and comply with this Confidentiality and User Agreement.

Employee Name (please print) _____

Agency Name: _____

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor Name (please print) _____

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: System Consent Form



Niagara's Homeless-Serving System Consent to Collect and Share Personal Information

I _____ consent to share my personal information within the Homeless-Serving System in Niagara region.

I understand that my personal information may be used:

- To help me and/or my family find and/or keep a home; and
- To inform future service improvements.

I understand that my personal information will be recorded in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) secure database. This database is used by Service Providers within Niagara's Homeless-Serving System to document and share information about me and the services that I receive.

I understand that I can see a list of the Service Providers within Niagara's Homeless-Serving System at www.niagararegion.ca.

I understand that my consent is voluntary, and that failure to provide consent will not limit my access to emergency services like street outreach and emergency shelter, but may limit the ability of Service Providers to work together on my behalf and may limit some housing and service options available to me.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time by written request, but that withdrawal of consent will not be retroactive.

I confirm that I have reviewed the attachment titled ***Important Information about Consent***.

- I have read, or have had read to me, and understand the consent set out above.

Signature (Participant)

Date Signed

Signature (Service Provider)

Date Signed



For clients with dependents under 16 years of age accessing services:

Any consent given (on Page 1) also relates to my dependents. Please list any dependents below:

Name of Dependent	Date of Birth of Dependent

For Declined Consent:

- I have read, or have had read to me, and understand all parts of this consent form and DO NOT give consent.

Print Name
Date
Signature

For Removing Consent:

- By signing below, I understand that I have requested to remove consent.

Print Name
Date
Signature

Notice of Collection:

Personal information is collected under the authority of the Housing Services Act, S.O. 2011, c.6, Schedule 1, and will only be used for the purposes of providing services related to finding and keeping a home within the Niagara region. Questions about this form should be directed to homelessness@niagararegion.ca

Personal Information will be collected pursuant to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990 (MFIPPA). Information is collected under the legal authority of the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Housing Services Act, 2011.

Your personal information will be used to connect you with social services and support. For more information contact the Manager of Homelessness Services, T: 905-984-6900 ext. 3863 or HSCAdmin@niagararegion.ca, Subject Line: Personal Information Request.



Important Information about Consent

What is Niagara’s Homeless-Serving System?

Niagara’s Homeless-Serving System is a group of Service Providers that provide support to people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in our community, and that are collectively working towards ending homelessness in the Niagara region. These Service Providers include but are not limited to the following:

- Prevention programs
- Diversion programs
- Outreach programs
- Emergency Shelters
- Transitional and Supportive Housing programs (these could include but are not limited to Housing First, Home for Good, and Transitional Housing)
- Niagara Region Community Services Department (including Niagara Regional Housing)
- Veterans Affairs

What information do we collect?

Your personal information and details about the services you receive and the outcomes of those services from within Niagara’s Homeless-Serving System will be collected to better connect you to services and supports.

What if there’s some information that I don’t wish to share?

If you feel that some of your information is sensitive, or that sharing certain details could impact your safety or the safety of others, please discuss this with staff right away.

Who will have access to my information?

Niagara Region staff and staff within Niagara’s Homeless-Serving System would have access to your information for the purposes of providing you with services and supports that can help you and/or your family find and keep a home, such as the organizations listed above in the “*What is Niagara’s Homeless-Serving System*” section.

What if I change my mind and don’t want to share my information anymore?

You can remove your consent to share your information at any time by speaking to staff at any Service Provider. You should let them know that you want to stop sharing information about yourself. If you do change your mind and decide to remove consent, your file will still be available to staff, but any new information moving forward will be anonymous.

You can, at any time, sign a new consent agreement with any one of the Service Providers in Niagara’s Homeless-Serving System to share personal information.



What do we do with your personal information?

- Your personal information will be shared through the By-Name List and through HIFIS with other Service Providers in Niagara’s Homeless-Serving System.
- The By-Name List (BNL) is a real-time list of individuals experiencing homelessness who have received a service from Niagara’s Homeless-Serving System in the past 90 days. The BNL is used as part of the Coordinated Access System to match individuals experiencing homelessness with appropriate housing and service options.
- Your personal information will be used and shared by the Service Providers working with you as part of Niagara’s Homeless-Serving System to offer and provide you with services and supports that focus on ending your homelessness, or preventing homelessness.
- To help support the continued investment into homelessness and housing programs, Niagara Region may use and share non-identifying, aggregate data in community and internal reports. The information collected will not indicate who you are or that the information belongs to you.
- Aggregated and non-identifying information may be provided to Niagara Region, the Province of Ontario, the Government of Canada (including to the Ministry of Employment and Social Development) and/or Community Partners to support policy analysis, research and evaluation of existing policies and programs related to homelessness.
- Your name and identifying information may be viewable by Niagara Region staff for the purposes of billing and/or technical support with the BNL and HIFIS database. Information within the BNL and HIFIS database is secure and will not be shared or used for any other purpose than to help secure you with appropriate supports and housing. Information will not be shared without your consent, unless required by law.

Are there times when a Service Provider may have to share my information without my consent?

Yes, staff are required to share personal information if:

- A child 16 years or younger has experienced abuse or harm or may be at-risk of abuse or harm;
- Someone is a threat to themselves or another person;
- We are ordered by law to share your information.

Appendix D: Niagara's Coordinated Access Housing Resource Inventory

General Information					Eligibility Details				
Agency Name	Program Name	Location	Type of Housing Resource	# of Units/Spaces	Type(s) of Households Served	Type(s) of Homelessness Served	Acuity Served	Ages Served	Gender Identities Served
Gateway of Niagara & Southridge Community Church	Housing First	Entire Niagara Region	Independent - Scattered	170	All Household Types	Chronic	Mid	18+	All Genders
Gateway of Niagara & Southridge Community Church	Home for Good	Entire Niagara Region	Independent - Scattered	90	All Household Types	Chronic	High	18+	All Genders
Gateway of Niagara & Southridge Community Church	Home for Good - <u>Repei</u> Place	Port Colborne	Congregate - Central Site	7	All Household Types	Chronic	High	18+	All Genders
YWCA Niagara Region	Home for Good - Oakdale Commons	St. <u>Catharines</u>	Congregate - Central Site	15	All Household Types	Chronic	High	18+	Female