

Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) Homelessness Definitions

Source: <https://policy-manual.mes.dhcs.ca.gov/behavioral-health-services-act-county-policy-manual/LIVE/9-appendix>

Experiencing Homelessness

1. An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:
 - a. An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
 - b. An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals); or
 - c. An individual who is exiting an institution and was considered homeless immediately prior to entering the institution or becomes homeless during the institutional stay, regardless of the length of stay.
2. An individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:
 - a. The primary nighttime residence will be lost within 30 days of the date of application for homeless assistance;
 - b. No subsequent residence has been identified; and
 - c. The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks, e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, needed to obtain other permanent housing.
3. Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:
 - a. Are defined as homeless under section 387(3) of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (34 U.S.C. 11279(3)), section 637(11) of the Head Start Act (42

U.S.C. 9832(11)), section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12473(6)), section 330(h) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b(h)(5)(A)), section 3(l) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012(l)), section 17(b)(15) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786(b)(15)), or section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2));

- b. Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing at any time during the 60 days immediately preceding the date of application for homeless assistance;
 - c. Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the 60-day period immediately preceding the date of applying for homeless assistance; and
 - d. Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse (including neglect), the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or two or more barriers to employment, which include the lack of a high school degree or General Education Development (GED), illiteracy, low English proficiency, a history of incarceration or detention for criminal activity, and a history of unstable employment.
4. Any individual or family who:
- a. Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member, including a child, that has either taken place within the individual's or family's primary nighttime residence or has made the individual or family afraid to return to their primary nighttime residence;
 - b. Has no other residence; and
 - c. Lacks the resources or support networks, e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, to obtain other permanent housing.

At-Risk of Homelessness

1. An individual or family who:
 - a. Does not have sufficient resources or support networks, e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter or another place described in paragraph (1) of the “Homeless” definition in this section; and
 - b. Meets one of the following conditions:
 - i. Has moved because of economic reasons two or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for homelessness prevention assistance;
 - ii. Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship;
 - iii. Has been notified in writing that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 30 days after the date of application for assistance;
 - iv. Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost of the hotel or motel stay is not paid by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals;
 - v. Lives in a single-room occupancy or efficiency apartment unit in which there reside more than two persons or lives in a larger housing unit in which there reside more than 1.5 people per room, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau;
 - vi. Is exiting a publicly funded institution, or system of care (such as a health-care facility, a mental health facility, foster care or other youth facility, or correction program or institution); or
 - vii. Otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness, as identified in the recipient's approved consolidated plan.
 - c. A child or youth who does not qualify as “homeless” under this section, but qualifies as “homeless” under section 387(3) of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (34 U.S.C. 11279(3)), section 637(11) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9832(11)), section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12473(6)), section 330(h)(5)(A) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b(h)(5)(A)), section 3(l) of the Food and Nutrition Act of

2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012(l)), or section 17(b)(15) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786(b)(15)); or

- d. A child or youth who does not qualify as “homeless” under this section, but qualifies as “homeless” under section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2)), and the parent(s) or guardian(s) of that child or youth if living with her or him.

Chronically Homeless

1. A homeless individual with a disability as defined in section 401, subdivision (10) of the McKinney-Vento Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11360(10)), who:
 - a. Lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter, and
 - b. Has been homeless as defined in [7.C.4.1.1 Experiencing Homelessness and At Risk of Homelessness](#) on any number of occasions in the last 3 years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months; or
2. An individual who is exiting an institution and met all of the criteria in paragraph (1) immediately prior to entering the institution regardless of the length of stay; or
3. A family with an adult head of household (or, if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraph (1) or (2), including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.