

**Connecticut Supportive Housing Acuity Index
Guidance Manual**

ACUITY INDEX OVERVIEW

The Acuity Index provides a systematic way to assess a person's level of independence and support needs in a variety of areas related to housing stability, income and benefits, health, and access to supportive services/resources. The purpose of the Acuity Index is to help guide the tenant and service staff in the development of service plan goals.

Total scores from the Acuity Index can be used to help identify tenants who are skill-ready to consider other housing options with community-based supports outside of the supportive housing program (i.e. "Moving-On"). Scores can also be used by supervisors to identify tenants with high, medium, and low acuity. This can help supervisors adapt case load size, supervision needs, and evaluate the distribution of work and other employee/agency needs.

The Acuity Index guides service planning by identifying the most pressing needs that a tenant has. The Acuity Index is divided into the following three sections: 1) Housing, Income and Benefits; 2) Health, Supportive Services and Resources; and 3) Parenting and Child Services. The Acuity Index categorizes tenant self-sufficiency and independence on a four-point scale. The scale ranges from 0, representing low self-sufficiency and low independence, to 3, representing the highest level of self-sufficiency and independence. There should be consistency within the agency as to how each element is rated.

Sections of the Acuity Index that are rated 0 or 1 require a service plan goal. These goals can either be "Active" – something that a tenant is currently working on (or will begin working on), or "Deferred" – a goal that is identified as important but the tenant has made the decision to work on at a later time or not at all. Staff should indicate on the Acuity Index whether a goal is "Active" or "Deferred" by checking the appropriate box next to the section that was rated 0 or 1.

Housing	Levels				Tenant Level		Service Plan Goal for Level 0 or 1	
	0	1	2	3	New	Last	Active	Deferred
	Rep Payee/Tenant has not paid rent for last 6 months or has only paid on-time 1-3 times in last 12 months	Rep Payee/Tenant has paid rent on-time 4-6 times in last 12 months	Rep Payee/Tenant has paid rent on-time 7-9 times in last 12 months	Rep Payee/Tenant has paid rent on-time every month for the last 12 months				



If a goal for a section rated 0 or 1 is deferred, a note should be included on the service plan, the Acuity Index, or in the progress note. The note should include a specific reason why a goal is being deferred and describe how staff will continue to engage the tenant to address the area or issue.

In addition to addressing sections rated 0 or 1, some tenants may choose to focus on an area that is rated higher (2 or 3) so that they can continue to work towards full self-sufficiency and increasing independence. If this is the case, staff should assist the tenant in developing goals in these areas as well.

SCORING THE ACUITY INDEX

When rating each section (0, 1, 2, or 3), staff should use information from any and all resources, including tenant self-report. Staff should carefully read *all* options before choosing a score. If staff or the tenant are unable to identify exact percentages to determine a rating, staff should estimate as follows:

- 0 = none of the time
- 1 = less than half of the time
- 2 = most of the time
- 3 = all or almost all of the time

Or

- 0 = Intensive support needed in this area
- 1 = Ongoing support needed in this area
- 2 = Some support needed in this area
- 3 = Little or no support needed in this area

Note about the Acuity Index:

It's important to recognize that Acuity Index scores will fluctuate. A high score in one area may be lower the next time the Acuity Index is rated. This may simply reflect a change in the needs or experiences of the tenant. Filling out the "New" and "Last" columns will show changes in a tenant's needs over time and may present the opportunity to engage in exploratory conversations. In the "New" column, staff will indicate the tenant's new rating. In the "Last" column, staff will indicate how the area was rated the last time the Acuity Index was completed.

Housing	Levels				Tenant Level		Service Plan Goal for Level 0 or 1	
	0	1	2	3	New	Last	Active	Deferred
Rent Payment	Rep Payee/Tenant has not paid rent for last 6 months or has only paid on-time 1-3 times in last 12 months	Rep Payee/Tenant has paid rent on-time 4-6 times in last 12 months	Rep Payee/Tenant has paid rent on-time 7-9 times in last 12 months	Rep Payee/Tenant has paid rent on-time every month for the last 12 months				

There is a space at the end of each section where comments can be added. Staff are encouraged to use this space to explain anything out of the ordinary and any circumstances that may have affected scoring, especially if the scoring has changed from the previous six months.

ACUITY INDEX SECTIONS

Housing

Rent Payment: This section evaluates how often the tenant or a tenant's rep payee or conservator has paid rent on time in the past 12 months. For newly housed people coming from homelessness, level 0 should be chosen since the tenant has not paid rent in the past six months. Any scores requiring explanation should be entered in the comments section.

Utility Bill Payment: The number of times a tenant has paid his or her major utility bills such as electricity and heat on time during the past year is assessed. If utilities are included in the tenant's rent, level 3 should be chosen if rent is being paid on time.

Rent Arrears: In this section, the Acuity Index examines any rent arrears that a tenant might have, along with his or her willingness to participate in a payment plan. If there are no rent arrears, level 3 should be chosen.

Utility Arrears: Similar to rent arrears, this section looks at total utility arrears together with payment plan status. If there are no utility arrears, level 3 should be chosen.

Safe Living Environment: Safe Living Environment looks at how often unsafe or disruptive activities in the tenant's apartment have occurred. Staff should indicate the number of times the police have been called or the landlord notified that unsafe conditions or situations are present.

Lease (include all leases if tenant moved): This section examines the total length of time a tenant has continuously held a lease. This should include leases with all landlords if the tenant has made a positive

move to another apartment. Staff should also use their judgment when considering how to rate a tenant who continually breaks his or her lease with landlords, even if landlords agree. In these instances, staff should look at the circumstances to see if this pattern reflects circumstances or behaviors that may impact housing stability and consistently apply to all tenants served by the agency.

Income and Benefits

Stable/Consistent Source of Cash Income: This section evaluates the tenant's level of cash income including the length of time he or she has been receiving it. It includes income from employment and self-employment.

Benefits: The receipt of benefits for which a person is eligible is the focus of this section. If a tenant does not qualify for benefits or is receiving everything that he or she is entitled to, staff should choose level 3. Benefits in this section refer to cash benefits such as SSI, SSDI, and SAGA.

Employment: The employment section measures the length of time employed and, for those not employed, the level of motivation to become employed. Level 3 should be selected for those who cannot work due to disability.

Debt: This section looks at the level of outstanding debt held by a tenant, as well his or her ability to meet debt payment obligations.

Health

Mental Health Care Use: For tenants who have an identified mental health care need, this section looks at how often he or she accesses services. The type of service will vary according to the specific needs of the tenant. For individuals who have no identified need for services or those who are very well connected to services, staff should choose level 3 and provide an explanation in the comments box.

Primary/Specialty Health Care Use: This section evaluates how a tenant uses primary health care resources and the level to which he or she follows standard guidelines for treatment of chronic conditions (if applicable) and preventive health care.

Medication Adherence: For tenants who are taking medications, this section examines whether a tenant takes his or her medication as prescribed. This section relies on tenant self-reporting and includes all medications a tenant should be taking including those prescribed for chronic health conditions. For individuals who have no prescribed medications, staff should choose level 3.

Harm Reduction (such as substance use, gambling, risky sexual behaviors, etc.): This section evaluates harmful behaviors and whether the tenant has adopted behaviors that will lessen their risk. For tenants that engage in behaviors that put them at risk of harm, staff are asked to indicate to what level the tenant is taking steps to reduce the risks and harm associated with specific behaviors. If the tenant does not engage in harmful behaviors, staff should choose level 3.

Supportive Services and Resources

Connection to Community Supports: This section evaluates the level of community supports a tenant has outside of the supportive housing program. It also looks at the motivation of the tenant in accessing additional supports.

Crisis Intervention: This section evaluates the number of crises a tenant has experienced in the past 12 months and his or her willingness to work with staff and/or other providers in addressing the crisis. The agency should identify what types of occurrences constitute a crisis and apply this definition across all tenants.

Life Skills: The life skills section evaluates how independently a tenant can conduct standard activities of daily living such as preparing meals, maintaining hygiene, obtaining food and medications, etc.

Legal: This section examines any outstanding legal issues or obligations that a tenant might have and includes an evaluation of the level of compliance with any criminal justice supervision requirements. For individuals that have no legal issues or obligations, staff should choose level 3.

Mobility & Transportation: In the title of this sub-section, ‘mobility’ refers to a tenant’s opportunity and access to transportation. It does not refer to physical mobility (i.e. whether the tenant is ambulatory). Evaluation includes whether there are resources for public transportation, private transportation, transportation via the service provider, and if the tenant owns or has access to a vehicle.

Parenting and Child Services

Childcare: This section looks at the level of childcare needs and the accessibility of childcare, subsidized or unsubsidized, for children in the household.

Children’s Education: The education section evaluates whether children who are school-aged and required to be enrolled, are enrolled in school, and identifies their level of attendance and participation.

Parenting: This section assesses the adequacy of parenting skills based on the tenant’s ability to care for and address the needs of their children.

Child Welfare Involvement: For families who are involved with the child welfare system, this section examines the level of involvement with child welfare services and identifies the level of participation in services. If the tenant has no history of child welfare involvement or if involvement with the child welfare system occurred more than two years ago, staff should choose level 3.

Children with Special Needs: The special needs section examines the level of connection to and participation in support services for children in the household who have been identified as having special medical, educational or other unique service needs. If no children in the household have been identified as having special needs, staff should choose level 3.

Note about the Parenting and Child Services section:

The family section of the Acuity Index is intended for use with family providers and for tenants in other programs who have children living with them. This section of the Acuity Index can also be used if a tenant often provides care for a child in his or her home, but this is not mandatory. For individuals that do not have children, staff should choose level 3 for each section, as this represents “no need” for service goals or support services in this area.

INTERPRETING THE ACUITY INDEX

The final page of the Acuity Index includes information on how to interpret total scores from each section to evaluate a tenant’s readiness for other housing options with community supports. The table below

identifies the maximum and minimum scores for each area assessed by the Acuity Index, as well as the ideal range for each area.

Area	Maximum Level	Minimum Level	Ideal Range
Housing	18	12	16-18
Income and Benefits; Health; and Supportive Services and Resources	39	26	35-39
Parenting and Child Services	15	10	13-15

If total scores for all areas fall within the ideal range, other housing options with community supports should be considered as a short term goal. If total scores for all areas are at or above the minimum level but do not fall within the ideal range, other housing options with community-based supports should be considered as a long term goal. If one or more areas have total scores that are below the minimum level, the tenant should remain in supportive housing.