1. What is the minimum required documentation to be referred to the ICES community queue?

To refer an individual to the ICES community queue, the minimum required documentation to be completed and uploaded into HMIS is documentation of Literal Homelessness, typically in the form of Third Party Verification.

Acceptable examples of third-party verification include:

- Official CES agency Third-Party verification form from the Orange County Coordinated Entry System (preferred)
- HMIS/comparable database record.
- Individual record of stay at an emergency shelter, safe haven, or from a street outreach contact
- Written observation by an outreach or intake worker, including encounter dates (mm/yy) and a description of the individual's living conditions.
- Self-Certification via the Orange County Coordinated Entry System form(up to 3 months), if unable to obtain any of the above.

2. How can I determine if a participant is experiencing chronic homelessness?

According to HUD an individual is considered to be experiencing Chronic Homelessness if they meet either of the following definitions:

- Accrued twelve months of continuous literal homelessness (with no breaks) AND have a documented disabling condition.
- Accrued four episodes of literal homelessness over three years, totaling twelve months, AND have a documented disabling condition.

To be eligible and prioritized on the ICES community queue for housing opportunities that require chronic homelessness as an eligibility criterion (e.g., Permanent Supportive Housing or Vouchers), all documentation of chronic homelessness must be completed and correctly uploaded into HMIS.

3. How do I document chronic homelessness in HMIS?

The following documentation is required for chronic homelessness verification and must be properly uploaded into HMIS:

- **Chronic Homelessness Verification:** The third-party verification form may be used if completed in its entirety and reflects HUD's chronic homelessness definitions.
- **Disabling Condition Verification:** Documentation of a documented disabling condition completed by a licensed clinician.

4. What is an episode versus a break in homelessness?

HUD describes an episode of literal (Category 1) homelessness as "a separate, distinct, and sustained stay on the streets and/or in a homeless emergency shelter." One night or more is considered a distinct stay. A break in homelessness consists of seven nights or more in a place that HUD does not consider a literal homeless destination, which could include:

- Couch surfing (sleeping on a couch for seven nights or more)
- Renting a Room
- Motel stays (paid for by the participant)
- Sober Living (paid for by the participant)
- 90 days or more in an institutional setting and did not enter from a place of literal homelessness.

5. What documents can be uploaded to HMIS as chronic homelessness verification?

Agencies are encouraged to submit:

1) A Third-Party Certification form for each episode of homelessness.
2) A Disabling Condition Verification form

Please reach out to your SPA administrator with questions regarding any specifics or exceptions.

6. What help is available to individuals "At-Risk" of experiencing homelessness?

To access Prevention services through the Individual Coordinated Entry System, complete an ICES Enrollment and Prevention Assessment.

7. Common examples of ICES Documentation for HMIS:

- Chronic Homeless Verification form or letter
- Third-Party Verification form or letter
- Disabling Condition Verification form or other CES-approved disabling condition verification (see pg. 2)
- Self-Certification
- Proof of Residency Documentation (Santa Ana/Anaheim)

All CES forms can be located at the following link *https://ceo.ocgov.com/page/ces-partner-documents-and-resources* or you can reach out to your local SPA Admin.

8. Recommended Documentation to gather and upload into HMIS:

- Identifying documentation (ID, SSC, Birth Certificate, Proof of Income/ Bank Statements)
  - Identifying documentation is not a requirement to be referred to ICES or be matched to a housing opportunity. It is strongly encouraged to work on gathering documentation to not prolong the application process and meet deadline requirements once a participant is matched.

9. Who can complete Disability Verification?

Verification must be provided by a state licensed qualified source that may include medical service providers, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), physicians or treating health care provider as stated in the Social Security Act – 42 U.S.C. Section 423.

- Please ensure form is completely filled out by provider

10. What documents can be submitted as disabling condition verification?
Common examples of acceptable disabling condition verification include:
- County Disabling Condition Verification Form (Please ensure that all three boxes at the top of the page are marked "Yes" by the clinician completing the form for it to be accepted as valid verification of disability for chronic homelessness.)
- SSDI Award Letter
- SSI Award Letter that explicitly states the individual is disabled
- Written verification from a state licensed qualified source that includes: (1) Their license number and contact information, (2) Defines the disability as severe and persistent, and (3) Affects the individual's ability to live independently unless suitable housing conditions are secured.

11. Length of Homelessness (LOH):
ICES Prioritizes individuals based on LOH, ensuring that a participants LOH is supported by third-party verifications provides an equitable system to refer individuals to scarce housing opportunities.
- Example: A participant is reporting a LOH since 12/2024, they must have verification uploaded for 12/24-present month.
- Example: A participant is reporting a LOH since 12/2016, they must have the previous 3 years-present month continuously verified.

The ICES team only verifies Length of Homelessness (LOH) for episodes that occurred within the last three years at the time the documentation is reviewed by the SPA Admin. Any LOH reported outside of this three-year period will be treated as self-reported and will not be verified.

LOH is determined by the date entered in the "Approximate Date this Episode of Homelessness Started" field in the ICES Program Enrollment in the HMIS profile. Ensure that the date reflects the most recent episode of homelessness and is supported by relevant documentation and/or program enrollments in HMIS.

12. Who can complete third party verification and LOH?
- **Option #1.** Third-Party Homeless Verification provided by Access Point agencies or other Homeless Outreach Programs (can be a written statement on letterhead or Agency Third Party form) is always accepted as long as all required information is completed and the form is properly uploaded into HMIS.
- **Option #2.** Third Party Homeless Verification provided by an Intake Worker or other Community Member who is not an Access Point or Homeless Outreach Program Provider (verification from this category requires a written statement of observed homelessness)
  - This would be a drop-in center staff, religious organization with feeding programs, community member, law enforcement, medical provider, and/ or social worker.
  - The letter should include a statement detailing the aspects of the interaction that indicated the participant was experiencing homelessness at the time of the encounter (physical observation of the participant's living situation, the participant explained their living situation, the participant was carrying their belongings with them, the participant seemed stressed about their living situation, etc.)
  - Location of encounters, or known location of where this participant generally stays (cross-streets, city, in their car, etc.).
  - Date of encounter(s): (MM/DD/YYYY) - (MM/DD/YYYY), stating monthly or weekly interactions with this participant.
- **Option #3.** Self-Certification (on form or written statement) which can be used to verify up to 3 months of reported LOH in the last three years

When utilizing options #2 : The Access Point must include a written letter on an agency letterhead describing why in their professional judgment they believe the letters from intake workers or community members are credible in verifying the LOH reported. Lastly, if there are gaps in verification the access point must document all their attempts to obtain LOH verification— including names, titles, dates, and a written statement as to why it has been difficult to obtain documentation for a specific participant.

13. What are the housing options available through CES and what documentation is most often required?
- **Rapid Rehousing (Literal Homelessness documentation):** RRH is permanent housing that provides short-term (up to three months) and medium-term (4-24 months) tenant-based rental assistance and supportive services to households experiencing homelessness. RRH is intended to be temporary assistance.
- **Vouchers (Chronic Homelessness documentation):** Can be tenant-based (housing search required) or project-based (unit linked with voucher) but generally are not paired with long-term or continuous supportive services, such as case management.
- **Permanent Supportive Housing (Chronic Homelessness documentation):** PSH is long term housing assistance through on-going leasing or rental assistance AND on-going supportive services, such as case management.