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3. By-Name Lists

This report is intended to allow communities in Ontario who receive HPP funding to use HIFIS data to report out on the By-Name List section of the HPP reporting requirements: section 3.1 to 3.6.1.

Broadly, it reports on the aggregated inflow and outflow to and from your By-Name List (BNL) and breaks down these numbers into the priority population groups.

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What parameters are available for this report?

- ***Start Date***
- ***End Date***
- ***Consent Types*** - multiple-select drop-down field which includes:
    - Explicit,
    - Coordinated Access,
    - Declined - Anonymous,
    - Inherited
    - No Consent - for clients who have expired or withdrawn consent, or communities not using the consent module.
- ***Discharge Module*** - single-select drop-down field which includes 4 options:
    - Reason for Service
    - Referred From
    - Housing History
    - Life Events
- ***Client Pool*** - asks if the report should display a list of clients so that you can verify the data
- ***Current Service Provider*** [hidden] - automatically looks up the current Service Provider you are logged in at when you run the report

Which clients are included in this report?

Clients are included in the report if they:

- Are in the same cluster as you (same cluster as the ***Current Service Provider***)

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- <u>Currently</u> have at least one consent record of the selected ***Consent Types***
- At some point between the ***Start Date*** and ***End Date***, inclusive, both had an active status and a homeless or chronically homeless status at the same time

If a client meets all of the above criteria, they are included in the 3.1 Overall indicator, and are part of what we call the **Client Pool**. Every other calculation in the report only includes some subsection of clients who are part of the **Client Pool**.

Can you explain the *Consent Types* parameter a little bit more?

Sure. Clients are included in the **Client Pool** based on their <u>current</u> consent, not their historical consent; there were just too many variables at play. What if they became homeless but there was no consent in place, were they newly identified when they became homeless, when they first received a service, or when they first consented to be on the BNL? What if an actively homeless and consenting client withdraws their consent, and then becomes inactive - should the move to inactive be counted, or not counted because the client didn't have consent at the time? What if a client only receives services at a drop-in centre while housed, then they disappear and their consent expires, and they come back six months later, provide a new consent, and indicate that they were homeless for the whole time but they're housed now - so the whole homeless period existed while there was no consent in place?

To avoid all of these what ifs and headaches, we are applying a simple rule so it's easy to understand why some clients would be included and some not. Don't like it? Talk to us and we can make a modified version for you.

This sounds like you had to make some simplifications in creating this report and it might not be 100% accurate.

Correct.

What other simplifications might I not like, and why did you make them?

Let's start with the why.

This is a complex report that pulls in a lot of data, and much of that data is stored in ways that require manipulation to make it come out with answers to your data questions. In testing this report, we realize that the run-time of the report is a concern. For communities with large databases - tens or hundreds of thousands of clients - the report needs to comb through a lot of data. First it needs to look at every single client file and figure out if, at any time during an entire year, the client was both homeless and active. Then it takes those

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clients and looks through their history to see if they've been homeless at any time before the reporting range. So even if the report is showing you that, say, 1000 clients were actively homeless last year, the report still needed to look up every single client in your database. Then we need to cross-reference activity status changes with housing status changes, and we additionally throw in calculations that we think give a more accurate result (see [How do you handle gaps in a client's history?](#)). The result is that this is <u>one of</u> the most resource-intensive reports that exists (the federal Community Homelessness Report is up there, as is your prioritization list).

For some communities, the report could be at the maximum of what their server could handle. Maybe their reports timeout after 10 minutes; we wanted to make sure that the report wasn't clocking it at 10 minutes and 1 second. (Note that the actual runtime depends on a lot of factors including how powerful your server is and how big your database is.)

One way that we streamlined things was to have the report <u>perform calculations for each client once and only once</u>.

Let's imagine that, in a given reporting period, the client was newly identified in June, then moved to housing in August, then returned to homlessness in September, then moved to inactive in December. The more resource-intensive approach would be to say: In June, was the client a youth? In August, was the client a youth? In September, was the client a youth? In December, was the client a youth? For a client with 4 transitions in the reporting period, the report would need to perform certain calculations - were they a youth, were they in a family, etc. - 4 times. Multiply that by your 1000 or so clients, and the report takes a lot longer to run, which might be the difference between a 5-minute runtime and a 15 minute runtime.

Instead, the report looks at each client once and says things like, was the client a youth at any time during the reporting period? Was the client part of a family at any time during the reporting period? Was the client chronically homeless at any time during the reporting period?

Speaking of chronic homelessness, this is another place that we simplified. We use HIFIS's built-in calculation to determine whether the client is chronically homeless or not. It uses the federal definition of 6 months homeless in 12 months, or 18 months of homelessness in 36 months. The province of Ontario instead uses only the first half of that definition: 6 months homeless in 12 months.

Bypassing the built-in indicators would also introduce a massive load on the server and definitely make the report very slow. For all of the clients in your **Client Pool**, the report would need to look up the previous year worth of data, for every date in the reporting period, to determine if the client was chronically homeless on that day. Despite the fact that the definitions of chronicity don't align (and the fact that there are other known issues

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with the chronically homeless calculation, such as not including unknown gaps), this approach is a big area where relying on the built-in fields makes the report run so much faster.

As a bonus, because we are relying on built-in calculations, there is always the chance that a future software update will improve the accuracy of this data point - or provide communities the option to customize your definition of chronic homelessness - and this report would just pull the new data, with no modifications needed to this report.

Finally, we suggest you read [What about the Provincial Transitions Priority Population? How is that captured and measured?](#)

Okay, back to *Consent Types*. Which should I select when I run the report?

For the purposes of HPP, a client is only added to the BNL once they have provided informed consent to participate in the Coordinated Access system. In HIFIS, this corresponds to the Coordinated Access consent type. So theoretically, you should be selecting only Coordinated Access consent when you run this report, which would get at the intended use of the software.

However, some communities are not using the Coordinated Access consent type at all, due to a number of reasons; instead they just record Explicit consent for all clients. For these communities, you should select Explicit consent when running the report.

Some communities might primarily use the Coordinated Access consent option in HIFIS, but have discovered that they have a data entry issue where some clients who actually consented to everything only have Explicit consent recorded in HIFIS. These communities might wish to select both Explicit and Coordinated Access consent types in the *Consent Types* parameter, as it is a multiple-select field.

If a client has multiple forms of consent, they would show up if you select <u>any</u> type of consent that they have. For example, a client with Coordinated Access consent and Explicit consent would show up if you ran the report selecting only Coordinated Access, and they would also show up if you ran the report selecting only Explicit.

Children in homeless families typically have neither Explicit nor Coordinated Access consent. Instead, they typically have a consent type called Inherited. Rather than making a judgement call when writing this report, we felt it was best left to you, the report runner, to decide whether you'd want children to be included in the report. On one hand, HPP says that you should only report on people who've provided consent, but on the other, they do ask for the total number of individuals. If you want to include children, i.e. those with Inherited consent, select that option as one of your selected *Consent Types*.

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Some communities actually don't use the consent module at all. They have Enforce Consent turned off, and simply record consent outside of HIFIS, with the expectation that the Service Manager could ask anyone who added a client for a paper copy of the consent and have it provided to them. For these communities, you'd select "No Consent" (or really, you could just select all the options). That way, you'd avoid getting a result of 0 clients for the year simply because there are no consent records in HIFIS.

Note that if you select the "No Consent" option that would also include clients who once had consent but have withdrawn it or it has automatically expired. Communities may wish to include these clients in your report anyway, if, for example, your consent automatically expires after one year. You served a client for a period of time last year, they got housed, you stopped seeing them, and then their consent expired and you haven't yet seen them so they haven't signed a new one. <u>Clients are only included in the report based on their current consent</u>.

Then, since we added every other form of consent to this parameter, we figured we may as well add Declined - Anonymous as an option in the parameter, so it didn't feel left out. Also, potentially you could run it once excluding Declined - Anonymous clients, and run it again including Declined - Anonymous clients, and see how different your data is. That could be an indicator of how common it is that clients are declining consent in your community.

How do you determine who is chronic?

The report uses the built-in HIFIS calculations to determine chronicity, with all its potential pitfalls. This means it'll be consistent with other aspects of your software and other reports, too. A client is counted under the **Chronic Priority Population** if they are in the **Client Pool** and, at some point between the *Start Date* and *End Date*, inclusive, both had an active status and a chronically homeless status at the same time.

Can you tell me more about homeless status and chronically homeless status?

HIFIS automatically assigns each client to one of 5 housing statuses at any given time, which are all date-stamped. These statuses are:

1. Housed
2. Homeless
3. Chronically homeless
4. Unknown
5. Transitional

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This is based on a combination of a client's shelter Admissions and their Housing History. If the client has a current shelter Admission, for example, their housing status would be "Homeless." If they're not currently in shelter and they have a Housing History record indicating that they are living "Makeshift/Street," their housing status would be "Homeless." If instead, their Housing History indicates that they are currently in "Rental Housing at Market Rate," they would have the housing status of "Housed." Similarly, transitional housing would result in the "Transitional" status.

Once HIFIS knows enough about a client's prior housing statuses, it automatically calculates when a client meets the federal definitions of chronic homelessness, and the client's housing status becomes "Chronically Homeless" instead of "Homeless." So for example, if they're in shelter for 6 months straight, they would be listed as "Homeless" for 6 months and then their status would switch to "Chronically Homeless."

However, when there is no data for a client's current whereabouts, their housing status is listed as "Unknown." So a client who was "Chronically Homeless" yesterday but today does not return to shelter would be "Unknown" today despite being "Chronically Homeless" yesterday.

How do you handle gaps in a client's history?

That's an excellent question. Theoretically, the reporting guidelines want to know how many clients move from homelessness to housing, or homelessness to inactive, but there is no guidance whatsoever about what is expected when a client moves from homelessness to unknown to inactive, or homelessness to unknown to housing. This is not a challenge that is unique to this report; many communities are wondering how to handle unknown housing status.

This report's solution is to utilize a concept we call the **Grace Period**. When a client is homeless, or chronically homeless, then has a gap of a few days, then returns to the previous status, then we assume that there was no change at all. The client never became "Unknown;" they continued to be homeless throughout the data gap. So if a client moves from "Homeless" to "Unknown" to "Housed," then this is typically counted as a move from homelessness to housing (3.6), so long as the unknown period wasn't extremely long.

So how long is the **Grace Period**? This report borrows the value from your Inactivity Threshold in the cluster settings for the cluster you're currently in. If your Inactivity Threshold is set to 45 days, for example, then any gap between known periods of less than 45 days would be ignored.

Examples, assuming a **Grace Period** of 45 days:

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- A client is in shelter, then disappears for 45 days. Your inactivity policy kicks in and the client becomes inactive. Even though the client's official housing status was "Unknown" when they became inactive, this report counts them as if they were homeless and moved to inactive (3.5).
- A client is in shelter, then disappears for 30 days, then returns to shelter. Nothing is reported, because no transition occurred.
- A client is in an encampment, but they move around and the caseworker fails to record anything in the Housing History for 30 days, then the client moves into housing. Despite the data gap, this report counts the client as if they were homeless and moved to housing (3.6).
- A client is in an encampment, but they move around and the caseworker fails to record anything in the Housing History for 60 days, then the client moves into housing. The data gap exceeds the **Grace Period**, so this is not considered a move to housing from homelessness. We suggest you improve your data entry practices, or if you really want this case included, modify your Inactivity Threshold.

How do you determine who is part of the Indigenous priority population in this report?

A client is included in the **Indigenous Priority Population** if they are in the **Client Pool** and, in the Client Vitals screen, have one of the following values in the Indigenous Status field:

- First Nations: Off-reserve
- First Nations: On-reserve
- Inuit
- Métis
- Non-Status

If you use custom look-up values, ensure that they roll up to an appropriate category. If the roll-up value is one of the listed options above, they will also be included in this indicator.

For the purposes of this report, what is a youth?

Youth are part of the **Client Pool** and are identified by their date of birth, which is on the Client Vitals screen. If at the **Start Date** or at the **End Date**, the client was 16-25 years of age, they are considered to be part of the **Youth Priority Population**, unless they are also part of a family and not the family head.

Note that a client is considered to be a youth for the entirety of the reporting period. For youth that age into or out of being a youth at some point during the reporting period, all of their transitions will be counted in the

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Youth Priority Population indicator, even if they were not a youth at the time of the transition. (See [What other simplifications might I not like, and why did you make them?](#))

We recognize that some youth may fail to be captured under this population if they were first part of a homeless family then left the family and became an unaccompanied youth, in the same reporting period.

How do you define a household in this report?

A household is established by referencing data for members of the **Client Pool** in the Family module (Client Information > Family). If, at any time from the ***Start Date*** to the ***End Date***, a client is part of a Family, the Group ID field (unique identifier of the Family) is used to uniquely identify the household. Otherwise, they are considered to be a single and the ClientID field is used to uniquely identify the household. (See [What other simplifications might I not like, and why did you make them?](#))

The number of households is the number of unique families, plus the number of unique clients who were not in families.

The report does not look up to see how many people were in a family. HIFIS does not validate household composition, nor does this report. There could be 1-person families; there could be families with 10 partners and 50 children.

What about the Provincial Transitions Priority Population? How is that captured and measured?

That's an excellent question, and is honestly the most difficult part of this whole report. Why? A few reasons.

First, there is no clear place in HIFIS that should always be used in every case to capture the **Provincial Transitions Priority Population**. There are four clear contenders which <u>could</u> be used: Reason for Service, Referred From, Housing History, and Life Events. But, in the absence of guidelines from the government of Ontario, or from a software update that makes the choice easier, communities likely picked the option that was easiest to implement at the time, which would have depended on their current practices.

So, the report cannot know where to look to pull this data, unless you tell it. That's where the ***Discharge Module*** parameter comes in. You tell the report, when you run it, which of those four modules you'd like it to pull data from when calculating who is part of the **Provincial Transitions Priority Population**.

Second, even after you declare what module to use, the report still can't know what values should be counted and which shouldn't. Let's say you're using the Reason for Service field. This field, by default, includes similar

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options, like "Discharge from Correction / Jail." But these existing options ask about <u>any</u> institutions and do not differentiate between provincial, federal, or even municipal institutions. Because of this, we assume that communities would be forced to modify their drop-down menus and add custom values. Once you're adding custom values, it becomes very difficult for a general-purpose report like this to be able to interpret and say which options to count and which ones not to count. (How would we do it? We don't want to use the roll-up value, because that would include discharges from federal and provincial and municipal facilities, since they would all have the same roll-up value. And we can't really parse the text because you might use text that we didn't account for, or use abbreviations, or name specific facilities that we're not aware of.)

So instead, we provide a list of all the values and count the number of people you'd report on, and assume that you are smarter than a computer. You need to look at the available values and decide which one(s) should count towards the **Provincial Transitions Priority Population**, and report only on the relevant values and ignore the rest. However, we *try* to suggest the ones that might be relevant by highlighting them in yellow. We know that this isn't going to be even close to 100% correct, which is why we list all the possible values and let you choose.

For example, your data might look something like this:

	Transitioned from Provincial Institution					
	3.1	**3.2**	**3.3**	**3.4**	**3.5**	**3.6**
Correctional Facility	1	1	0	0	1	0
Foster Care	1	0	0	0	1	0
Hospital - Psychiatric	3	1	2	2	3	2
Abandoned Building	15	6	7	1	15	0
Co-op Housing	3	0	3	1	3	1
Couch Surfing	3	1	2	1	3	1
Couch Surfing – Staying with Friends / Family / Acquaintances	10	2	7	0	10	1
Emergency Shelter	9	4	5	1	9	1
Encampment/Campsite	21	14	8	2	21	2
Home Ownership	2	0	1	1	2	0
Hotel / Motel	2	0	0	0	2	0
Housed in Family's House / Apartment	4	2	1	2	4	2

You would be able to see the number of clients in each reporting category (3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6) with each value. You'd decide which values to count; in this example you might want to count Correctional Facility, Foster Care, and Hospital - Psychiatric. Then use the values to report on the **Provincial Transitions Priority Population**, or add up multiple rows if necessary. Note that each client appears in each row one time, but a client could appear in more than one row if they have more than one applicable value.

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An added complication about this priority population is that a client is in this population only if they had a recent transition (within the last 24 hours is the guideline). However, this guideline is still unclear about how it should be counted. What if a client was newly identified last year after a provincial transition, and they remain homeless this year? What if a client became homeless, then spent some time in a provincial institution, then was discharged back into homelessness? What if the client was discharged into homelessness, but wasn't added to the BNL until several months later? What if the client is discharged into a precarious housing situation that isn't permanent housing but isn't quite homelessness, and the situation falls apart a few days later?

Given all of the possible scenarios, and the multitude of ways that communities could be recording things, we felt that a simplification was again necessary: a client is considered to be part of the **Provincial Transitions Priority Population** if they had a record of the applicable ***Discharge Module*** of an appropriate value <u>at any time during the reporting period</u>. Once again, this is not 100% accurate but it does lead to clarity about who is included and who isn't.

Okay, but what *Discharge Module* should I pick when I run the report?

The short version is: wherever you expect your data to be. And if you think it might be in more than one place, you could run the report for multiple ***Discharge Modules*** but keep in mind that clients could be duplicated if you do that.

If you're instead thinking about the future, and saying, hmm, we were winging it last year but this year we want to be more intentional, we recommend using Housing History.

Why? Housing History is a very versatile, multi-purpose module. It's used to track housing transitions, and figure out who is unsheltered, and discover pathways into homelessness, and calculate chronicity. Because these are all very important, it's likely that you're already encouraging your staff to use it robustly (if you're not, you should be). Also storing this information in the Housing History is just doubling down on an already useful, already utilized part of HIFIS that will result in many cascading benefits.

Reason for Service is a logical place to get this data, particularly because the province wants to know about immediate discharges, so asking "why are you here requiring service" gets to that immediacy. And the Reason for Service field is mandatory in every module it appears in. But not every service type includes a Reason for Service field, particularly Case Management and Housing Placements. And the Reason for Service field in Group Activities is applied to all clients within the Group Activity; it's not individualized. And for some reason the Reason for Service field in the Goods & Services module uses a different lookup table from the other Reason for Service fields, so the values may not be consistent. Because of all these reasons, it's not our top recommendation.

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The Referred From field is also pretty logical, if you think about it differently: what institution did you recently come from? But this requires you to have an exhaustive list of nearby institutions, and our report would be unable to know which ones are provincial and which are municipal or federal (that's not a problem though; you could figure it out). A bigger problem is that the Referred From field doesn't appear on all service types either, including - once again - Case Management and Housing Placement, and once again the referral information for Group Activities is applied to all clients who attended. Furthermore, it's not a mandatory field by default, and there are challenges with making it mandatory - notably, what if the client wasn't referred from anywhere?

Finally, the Life Events module is also an okay place to get this information - a stay in an institution is certainly a relevant event in the client's life. But it's less commonly used, and less broadly useful than the Housing History module, so you could end up with less complete data.

So how exactly is the Provincial Transitions Priority Population section populated?

Reason for Service: if the client had a service record with the applicable Reason for Service value, that started sometime between ***Start Date*** and ***End Date***, inclusive.

Referred From: if the client had a service record with the applicable Referred From value, that started sometime between ***Start Date*** and ***End Date***, inclusive.

Housing History: if the client had a Housing History record with the applicable Housing Type value, that ended sometime between ***Start Date*** and ***End Date***, inclusive.

Life Events: if the client had a Life Event record with the applicable Life Event Type value, that ended sometime between ***Start Date*** and ***End Date***, inclusive.

When is a client considered to be new (3.2)?

A client in the Client Pool is newly identified on the earliest date that they are both active and homeless, or active and chronically homeless. It's possible that some clients may only be identified after they are already chronically homeless. If this date occurs between ***Start Date*** and ***End Date***, they will be counted under 3.2 on this report.

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When is a client considered to be a return to homelessness from inactive (3.3)?

A client in the **Client Pool** has an Activity status change between ***Start Date*** and ***End Date***, from Inactive to Active, and on the date of the change, the client's current Housing status is either Homeless or Chronically Homelessness (or Unknown but within the **Grace Period**), and the date of the status change is sometime after the date they were newly identified.

When is a client considered to be a return to homelessness from housing (3.4)?

A client in the **Client Pool** has a Housing status change between ***Start Date*** and ***End Date***, from Housed or Transitional (or Unknown but within the **Grace Period**) to Homeless or Chronically Homeless, and on the date of the change, the client's current Activity status is Active, and the date of the status change is sometime after the date they were newly identified.

When is a client considered to become inactive (3.5)?

A client in the **Client Pool** has an Activity status change between ***Start Date*** and ***End Date***, from Active to Inactive or Deceased or Archived, and on the date of the change, the client's current Housing status is either Homeless or Chronically Homelessness (or Unknown but within the **Grace Period**), and the date of the status change is sometime after the date they were newly identified.

When is a client considered to be a move to housing (3.6)?

A client in the **Client Pool** has a Housing status change between ***Start Date*** and ***End Date***, from Homeless or Chronically Homeless (or Unknown but within the **Grace Period**) to Housed or Transitional, and on the date of the change, the client's current Activity status is Active, and the date of the status change is sometime after the date they were newly identified.

Can you explain more about how By-Name Lists in HIFIS?

Absolutely. Refer to [ACRE Consulting's Guide to BNLs in HIFIS](https://www.acreconsulting.ca/guide-to-bnls): https://www.acreconsulting.ca/guide-to-bnls

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I don't like some of the logic you applied in this report.

Not everyone is going to agree with every interpretation in this report, so we're not surprised to hear you say that. We tried here to balance making a versatile report that would have broad applicability across many communities with one that's easy enough to understand where the data is coming from and also with keeping the runtime manageable.

But if the end result isn't satisfactory to you, we're happy to make a version specifically tailored to your community. Please get in touch with us to discuss what you'd like to see done differently!

I found an error.

Oh no, we're sorry to hear that! We tested this report extensively and *believe* that it works properly, but it's always possible we missed something. Please send an email to ali@acreconsulting.ca and inform us what is wrong. We might need to get in touch with some follow-up questions. If there is an error in the report, we'll fix it and provide you with a new version at no additional cost.

However, please note that the issue you see may not actually be the result of an error, just a difference in logical assumptions (see I don't like some of the logic you applied in this report), or the result of your community's data entry practices. By all means reach out and tell us what the issue is, but if it's not actually an error on our part (i.e. the report is working as we intended, just not how you prefer), then we might not consider it something that needs fixing. However, we'r happy to make a version specifically tailored to your community. Please get in touch with us to discuss what you'd like to see done differently!

What about the other components of the HPP reporting requirements?

Check out https://www.acreconsulting.ca/ontario to see what else we have to offer!