10 Steps to Create a By-Name List

Below are 10 steps to help guide communities in the creation and use of a By-Name List (BNL). These steps are a guideline and do not have to be taken in this order.

A By-Name List and how it is used in communities can always be improved upon. Many of these steps will require ongoing effort as communities embark on a journey of continuous improvement.

Step 1: Learn About the "What" and "Why" of By-Name Lists (BNL)

A BNL is a real-time, person-specific list of all people known to be experiencing homelessness in your community. It includes a robust set of data points that support Coordinated Access and prioritization at a household level and an understanding of homelessness inflow and outflow at a systems level.

Visit Built for Zero Canada's By-Name List Webpage for all available information on BNLs. Review the BNL Scorecard 3.0 Guide and complete the BNL Scorecard to learn more about the 10 key areas of a quality BNL. The Scorecard can be used as a self-assessment tool to gain a snapshot of local progress, identify areas for improvement, and plan next steps.

Step 2: Form a Local Team and Clarify Scope

Form a local team to lead the development of the BNL. This group should initially include the lead organization that manages homelessness services in the community. Consider the following in the formation of the team and to clarify scope:

- Who will host and manage the BNL?

- What geographical area will the BNL cover?

- Will the BNL initially include everyone experiencing homelessness or start with a smaller sub-group (e.g., chronic population, veterans, youth, etc.)?

- Who will provide the information necessary to populate and update the BNL?

  - Review and populate the Provider Participation Tool to help identify which service providers should add or update the BNL (ex. shelters, outreach, drop-in spaces, or smaller communities may tap into police, ambulance, by-law, health or community centres, and other social services), as well as which service providers should receive referrals off the BNL to housing resources.

  - Service providers may include homelessness response providers (HRP) and/or other service providers (OSP) that connect with people experiencing homelessness as outlined in the Provider Participation Tool.

- What is the community's overall governance structure for making decisions about BNL and Coordinated Access and where does the Local Team fit?

  - Can you use existing groups, or do you need to create new ones? Do you involve everyone at the outset or start with a few key early adopters?

- Clarify key definitions and how they apply across your community (ex. housed, homeless, chronic homelessness, youth, family).

Step 3: Engage with Providers and Build Community Will

Building buy-in is critical for creating a BNL that work best for communities and is an ongoing effort that should be integrated throughout all 10 steps. Consider how to create avenues for feedback and collaboration toward the creation of the community's BNL:

- Identify key stakeholder groups through use of the Provider Participation Tool outlined in Step 2.
- Develop a plan for how to engage with these stakeholders. See this list of resources to support Building the Will.
- Consider how to communicate the 5W's (who, what, when, where, why) of the BNL to people experiencing homelessness, homelessness response service providers, other human-service sectors like justice or healthcare, elected officials or other decision makers, and the public. Sample communications tools are available under Community Examples.

Step 4: Develop your Data Infrastructure and Implement Data Sharing Agreements

Review options and pick a database to manage and hold By-Name List data. Choices include:

- Homelessness Individuals and Family Information System (HIFIS) (Visit the BNL Webpage for information on HIFIS 4). A Coordinated Access Module with an integrated Unique Identifier List (a.k.a. BNL) is available in (HIFIS) release 4.59.0.1.
- CAEH's Sample BNL Workbook in Microsoft Excel. Instructions for use are included in the BNL Workbook Guide.
- A different Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) or database of the community's choosing.

Develop a set of local agreements to manage privacy and data sharing in compliance with municipal, provincial, and federal laws. This includes:

- Data Sharing Agreements between the host of the BNL and participating service providers
- User Agreements for staff who access, add, and update the BNL, outlining their responsibilities
- Safeguards to ensure the data collected is secured from unauthorized access.

Create drafts of these materials and then consult with your local privacy officer. Further information and community examples are available under Privacy, Consent, and Data Sharing.

Step 5: Create a Common Consent Form and Intake Questions

Develop a common consent and intake questions including:

- A common client consent form that is used across all providers. Sample consent forms are available Privacy, Consent, and Data Sharing.
- A set of common questions or mandatory fields in a database to allow for the collection of client data to add to and update the BNL. Include questions that will allow you to follow-up with people and support referrals as well as support prioritizing and matching to available housing resources.

Consider contingency plans for people who do not consent or who do not want to provide answers to all the questions.

Step 6: Develop Key BNL Policies and Protocols

A BNL cannot achieve individual-level or system-level outcomes if it is static; It needs to be updated regularly or in "real-time", which usually means at least monthly. Depending on your community's data infrastructure, providers may submit manual additions and updates on a regular basis or populate fields in a database to facilitate automated additions and updates to the BNL.

Develop, test, and finalize policies and procedures to ensure the BNL is up to date and accurate, including policies and procedures for adding and updating the BNL, for quality assurance of the data, for defining and operationalizing inactivity, and for securely sharing the BNL with participating service providers. Policy and protocol templates can be found under BNL Scorecard 3.0 and Tools.

Step 7: Complete a Registry Event or Build on an Existing List or Client Data

A Registry Event is a great way to kick-start a BNL. A Registry can easily be paired with an enumeration event or be conducted as an outreach blitz. Check out the Registry Week Toolkit that walks through the planning and execution of a local Registry Week, including forms and templates that can be adapted to local needs. If you already have client data in some form, you can work to build on this list.

Step 8: Use the BNL to Coordinate Access to Housing Resources and Support Individual-Level Outcomes

Coordinated Access is a consistent way for people experiencing homelessness to access housing resources available across a community. A BNL is an essential tool for the operation of Coordinated Access. A BNL holds all the information necessary to assess, prioritize, refer, and match people to housing resources as part of a community's Coordinated Access system.

Communities are to use their By-Name List to identify those eligible for housing resources. In the development of Coordinated Access, communities may begin by mapping available housing resources using the Provider Participation Tool and work toward having these housing resources dedicated to those on the BNL. Housing resources include supportive housing or other affordable housing units/spaces such as rent geared to income, affordable market rent, housing allowance or rent subsidies, and case management spaces in housing programs.

Coordinated Access will also require communities to apply locally defined priorities to support offers of housing support resources. Visit Built for Zero Canada's Coordinated Access Webpage for further information on Coordinated Access and prioritization, referrals, and matching. Self-assess the strength of your Coordinated Access system using the CA Scorecard 3.0 and CA Scorecard Guide.

Step 9: Achieve a Quality By-Name List and Continue to Sustain and Improve It

Use the BNL Scorecard 3.0 quarterly as a self-assessment tool to identify areas for improvement and work towards having a quality By-Name List. Once your community has been verified by CAEH as having met a 10/10 on the BNL Scorecard, continue to sustain your gains and make further improvements towards "Advanced Quality".

Step 10: Use the BNL for System-Level Monitoring and Improvement

Once you have a quality BNL, it can be used to measure progress toward functional zero homelessness, set aims toward system improvements, provide an in-depth view of inflow into homelessness and outflow into housing, and inform advocacy efforts. Visit Sample Data Dashboards and this webinar for examples of how communities display and action BNL data.