# By-Name List
# Questions and Answers (Q&A)

# April 2021

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# INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) By-Name List Question & Answer (Q&A) answers the most commonly asked questions about By-Name Lists. This document is included on and complements other information on the By-Name List page of the Built for Zero Canada website. This document will continue to be updated as needed to further clarify information about By-Name Lists.

If you have further questions about By-Name Lists or feedback on this document, please contact info@caeh.ca.

# GENERAL INFORMATION

### 1. What is a By-Name List and a Unique Identifier List?
These two terms mean the same thing and can be used interchangeably.

A By-Name List is a real-time list of all known people experiencing homelessness in a community. It includes a robust set of data points that support:

- Coordinated Access and service prioritization at a household level; and
- an understanding of homelessness inflow and outflow at a system level.

Important Notes:

- People are only added to a By-Name List once they have consented to have their name and other identifying information included on the list.
- Everyone on the By-Name List is provided a unique identifier to help support deduplication of people on the list and confidential sharing of information as needed.
- Identifying information from the By-Name List is only shared with those service workers included on the community's common consent form and only as needed to support people to end their experience of homelessness.

A Unique Identifier List is the term used by Reaching Home. This term highlights that a person's unique identifier can be used instead of their name as needed when using and sharing the list. For further information refer to the Reaching Home Community Homelessness Report Reference Guide (pg. 24).

## 2. What is the purpose and benefit of a By-Name List?

A By-Name List is a tool that has proven essential in supporting communities to end homelessness. Homelessness is constantly changing. You can't solve a problem you can't see and don't understand. Communities can start by building a comprehensive, real-time, By-Name List of all people experiencing homelessness to ensure reliable, real-time, and consistent data from which to inform system improvements and measure progress.

A By-Name List provides real-time actionable data that supports triage to services, system performance evaluation, and advocacy for policy changes and the resources necessary to end homelessness.

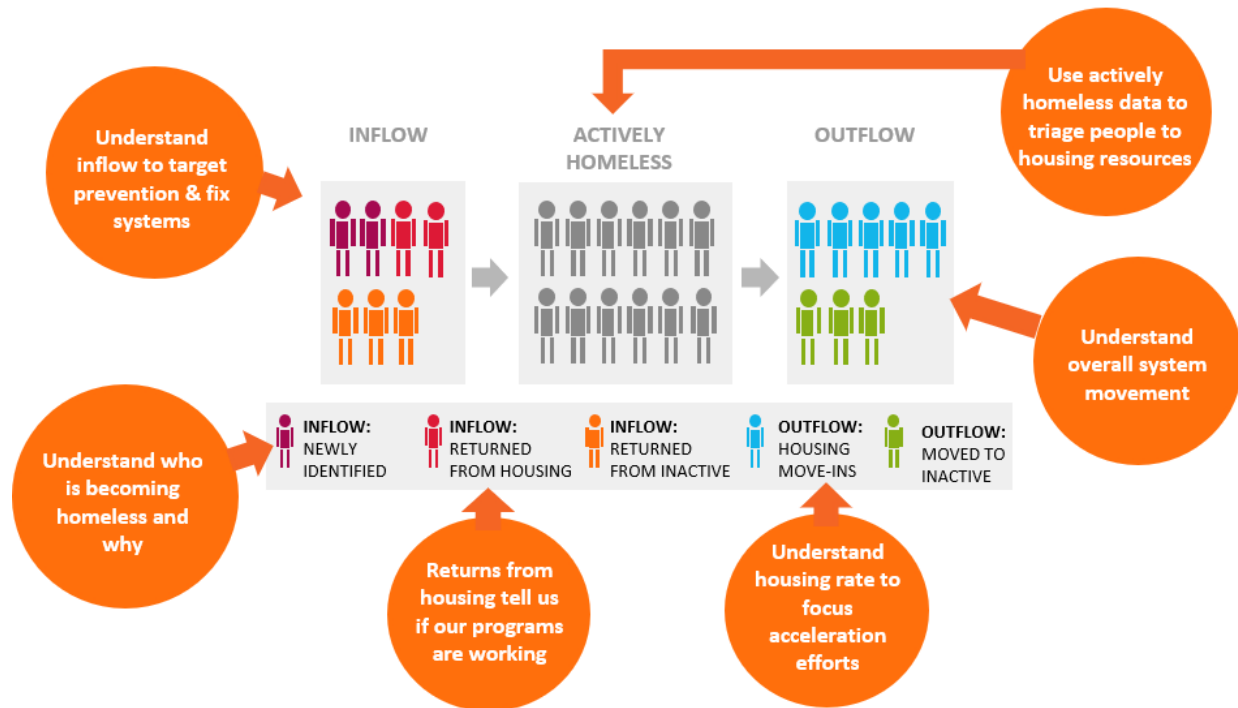A By-Name List provides communities real-time actionable data at two levels:

1) **Household Level:** At a household level, data is collected to know every person experiencing homelessness by name, their housing history, and their service and support needs in order triage and match them to services that will end their experience of homelessness. A By-Name List serves as the centerpiece of a Coordinated Access system that supports prioritization and matching to housing resource options. The process is supported by strong engagement (for consent and assessment), housing navigation (for document readiness and clarifying eligibility and interest in housing support options), and prioritization (for matching to services).

2) **System Level:** Aggregate data at a system level can be used to estimate future rates of homelessness and measure progress towards ending homelessness. This data can also support system performance evaluation, inform system improvements, and assist in setting goals around key indicators (e.g., increasing number of monthly housing move-ins, reducing inflow).

The six key system level data points captured through a By-Name List are outlined in the table and diagram below. This data can be reviewed monthly (or more often) to assess changes in a community's inflow, outflow, and actively homeless numbers. This information supports an understanding of what is contributing to increases and decreases in homelessness and enables communities to adjust local interventions to better plan for ending homelessness.

Watch this short 4 minute CAEH video on By-Name Lists and Functional Zero Chronic Homelessness to further understand the dynamic nature of a By-Name List.

| Data Component | System Level Data Points |
|---|---|
| **Inflow** | 1. Newly identified |
| | 2. Returned from inactive |
| | 3. Returned from housing |
| **Outflow** | 4. Moved to inactive |
| | 5. Move-Ins (moved to housing) |
| **Actively Homeless** | 6. Currently active on By-Name List |

By-Name List data allows you to:

- Have a complete picture of who's experiencing homelessness and where to find them
- House people as quickly as possible based on your local priorities
- Quantify exactly what housing resources are needed to end homelessness for every person in your community
- Deduplicate your aggregate system-level data
- Operate an effective coordinated access system
- Move from a focus on "my clients" and program level outcomes, to a focus on "our clients" and tracking and reporting system-level outcomes
- Monitor your progress relative to the goal of ending homelessness
- Advocate or allocate resources based on real numbers
- Make projections and set meaningful reduction goals
- Have real-time visibility of your community's system functioning to know what is or isn't working and to make improvements
- Get to functional zero AND stay there!

Note also that more and more, funding bodies are requiring communities develop and maintain a By-Name List (e.g., federal Reaching Home, Province of Ontario).

These articles speak further to the benefits of a By-Name List: The Power of Real-Time Data (CAEH, 2018) and Gathering Real-Time Data is the First Step to Ending Homelessness (Community Solutions, 2021).

### 3. Why do you have to collect peoples' names?

- **For practical service purposes:** Identifying every person by name and their unique service needs is essential for knowing they exist, to support service providers to work together to serve them effectively, and to be able to follow-up to offer housing support.
- **To create greater accountability for the problem:** It's easy to ignore what you can't see. Knowing people by-name makes the exact nature of homelessness visible in a community and helps the community remain accountable to ending homelessness for those on the list.
- **To strengthen human rights:** Housing is a [human right](#) and using a By-Name List has been demonstrated as an effective way to support ending homelessness. Not knowing someone by-name de-personalizes them and makes it easier for them to be de-humanized. A By-Name List makes ending homelessness personal and systems accountable to that person.
- Note: A unique identifier can be used alongside or instead of a name as long as the list can be confidently deduplicated and those organizations working with someone who need to review or update a person's information on the list and/or follow-up with support are able to do so.

### 4. What about privacy and confidentiality?

Privacy and confidentiality are of the utmost importance. When we collect sensitive and personal information, we have an obligation to protect the privacy, safety, and dignity of the individuals whose information is collected.

Identifying information should never be added to a By-Name List without a person's consent. People will be asked to share their name and other information for the purpose of understanding their housing needs and preferences and to support referrals and matching to appropriate housing resources. Information from the By-Name List is only shared with identified service providers on a need-to-know basis to support access to housing support options.

Communities must identify policies and protocols for ensuring privacy and confidentiality including:

- Community Data Sharing Agreement (signed between the By-Name List host and community service providers)
- A Client Consent Form (signed with individuals and families)
- A Confidentiality and User Agreement (signed by staff who participate in the By-Name List)
- Safeguards to ensure the data collected is secured from unauthorized access.

For further information and community examples, see the [By-Name List](#) page drop down on Privacy, Consent and Data Sharing.

### 5. What's the point of keeping a By-Name List of all people experiencing homelessness if you can't serve them all? Isn't it unethical?

If you believe in ending homelessness and the [Right to Housing](#), it is unethical and ineffective NOT to know everyone experiencing homelessness by name, to bring this issue to light, and to advocate for the resources necessary to serve them.

It is important to clarify with people that being added to the By-Name List is not necessarily an immediate promise of housing but that it is often the fastest pathway to housing and supports transparent, consistent, and equitable referrals and housing resource matches based on a community's identified priorities.

### 6. Isn't a By-Name List just a giant waiting list?

A By-Name List is a dynamic list capturing the inflow into and outflow from homelessness as well the total number of people who are actively experiencing homelessness at any given time. The community's homelessness response system should be in regular contact with people on the list who are experiencing homelessness and they should be receiving on-going support to help them to access appropriate services and to connect with housing and support.

There may be a wait time for certain housing resources. Offers of housing resources from a By-Name List are coordinated based on a local community's priorities rather than through a chronological (first-come, first-served) approach. Communities create policies and protocols to add, remove, support, and prioritize people on their By-Name List through agency participation, outreach, and case-conferencing to ensure their By-Name List remains dynamic and is not simply a static waitlist.

### 7. Is it necessary to have a By-Name List to end homelessness? Is there another way?

Having real-time information on all known people experiencing homelessness is required to measure reductions in homelessness, when a community has ended homelessness, and if they are able to sustain it. All communities that have [ended homelessness](#) have a By-Name List and can continue to measurably demonstrate, on a month-by-month basis, that they have sustained that end.

A By-Name List puts people experiencing homelessness at the centre of your system. It provides the information and accountability required for communities to move from siloed programs to a coordinated system of care.

### 8. How do communities get started with a By-Name List?

There are a number of ways to kick-start a By-Name List such as conducting a Registry event or outreach blitzes or launching a Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) such as the Homelessness Individual and Family Information System (HIFIS). However, there are several considerations and steps to take when implementing a By-Name List. CAEH has created a three page [10-Steps to Create a By-Name List](#) document to help communities get started. Please refer to the 10 Steps document to further answer this question.

### 9. How long does it typically take communities to develop a By-Name List?

Communities have been known to develop a functioning By-Name List in as little as four to six months, but for most communities it takes a year to 18 months, and for some it takes longer. It all depends on what infrastructure a community already has in place (e.g., governance bodies, data systems, services, level of system coordination), how they decide to approach implementation, and how quickly they move to implement. For example, the process can move more quickly if a community already has an HMIS in place as it may just be a matter of strengthening a few elements and figuring out processes to extract the needed data. If a community does not have a well-developed system or decides to not get started until they fully implement a new HMIS, it can take longer.

Approaches to speed up By-Name List implementation include conducting a Registry event (see the [Registry Week Toolkit](#)) and starting with an Excel database (see the [By-Name List Excel Template](#) and [Guide](#)). It is also important to note that communities are never "done" implementing a By-Name List as they continue to expand their reach and further develop and improve processes, the quality of their data, and how their By-Name List is used over time.

### 10. What are the basic elements of a By-Name List?

CAEH has defined the basic elements of a By-Name List as those identified in the [By-Name List Scorecard](#) and [Scorecard Guide](#). CAEH works with communities to confirm that they have achieved a Quality By-Name List – one that includes all the key elements and is fully functioning such that it allows for use of the data at both an individual level (for Coordinated Access) and a systems level (monthly aggregate inflow, outflow, and total active homelessness data).

Different funders have identified certain minimum requirements for a By-Name List as communities get started. For example, the federal Reaching Home program has asked communities to consider the following core elements to confirm whether they have a By-Name List/Unique Identifier List as part of their 2021 [Community Homelessness Report](#):

- Unduplicated information for each individual/household
- Contained in one document/database
- Includes people experiencing homelessness who are active
- Consent given to be on the list

### 11. Is the Social/Affordable Housing Waitlist the same as a By-Name List?

It has often been found that only a small number of people who are actively experiencing homelessness on the By-Name List are included on Social/Affordable Housing waitlists. This can be due to people not registering due to long waits, not having complete the necessary paperwork to be included, or having been removed for not keeping their file active. In addition, Social/Affordable Housing Waitlists often include people who are housed but waiting for more affordable housing and do not include regular monthly updates. Matches are often made just to housing (rather than to housing and a variety of support services) with offers most often based on chronological (first-come, first-served) or modified chronological approaches rather than through By-Name List dynamic prioritization.

## 12. Is an HMIS the same as a By-Name List?

A Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) (such as HIFIS) is a web-based software application that communities use to track how people experiencing homelessness interact with services. An HMIS supports comprehensive data collection, reporting and case management system that assists housing and homelessness response providers across a community with both day-to-day operations and the ability to better serve clients through coordinated service planning.

An HMIS can either hold a By-Name List or data from an HMIS can be incorporated into a By-Name List. Not everyone in an HMIS is necessarily part of the By-Name List (those actively experiencing homelessness). For example, there can be people included in the HMIS database that are receiving supports but have never experienced homelessness (e.g., prevention supports) or are now housed. There can also be people included in an HMIS that are no longer active (e.g., are no longer receiving supports or have moved out of town). It is also possible that not every service in the community participates on the HMIS. By continually consolidating data from HMIS and local partners outside of the homelessness response system, plus constant outreach to individuals that might be disconnected from supportive services, communities have found it possible to identify everyone experiencing homelessness and support them from first contact all the way to achieving permanent stable housing.

In addition, in order for communities to have and use a By-Name List, they must be able to extract the list and key inflow, outflow, and total active homelessness data points from their HMIS on a regular basis.

When HIFIS (or another HMIS) is being used across a community's entire housing stability system, it can support efficiencies in updating and accessing By-Name List information. Work continues at a national level to ensure HIFIS 4 can be used efficiently and effectively for By-Name Lists and Coordinated Access (see information on HIFIS 4 v.59). This blog from OrgCode on "Better By-Name Lists" speaks to the benefits of moving from manual to automated By-Name List processes.

## 13. Where did the idea of a By-Name List come from?

In 2010, Community Solutions launched an initiative to house 100,000 people experiencing chronic homelessness called the 100,000 Homes Campaign. Communities across the country beat this goal — they found permanent homes for more than 105,000 people in just four years.

While communities dramatically increased their housing move-in rate (the number of people they could house a month), they didn't dramatically reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness. Community Solutions learned that in order to end homelessness, communities would need to count down to zero, rather than counting up to increase housing move-ins.

From there, Community Solutions developed the idea of the By-Name List to help communities account for everyone experiencing homelessness locally in partnership with local leaders in the field and federal partners.

In 2017, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) worked with Community Solutions to bring the By-Name List approach to Canada. CAEH has now supported many communities in Canada to reach, confirm and utilize a By-Name List in their efforts to end homelessness.

# PIT COUNTS, REGISTRY WEEKS, & BY-NAME LISTS

**14. In summary, what are the similarities and differences between PiT Counts, Period Prevalence Counts, Registry Weeks and By-Name Lists?**

| | Is it a count? | Is it time-bound? | Does it have identifying information? | Can data be de-duplicated? | At what level is the data actionable? | Based on Regular System Contact? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PiT Count** | Yes[1] | Yes | No | No | System only | No |
| **Period Prevalence Count** | Yes[2] | Yes | No | No | System only | No |
| **Registry Week** | Yes[3] | Yes | Yes | Yes | System & Individual | No |
| **By-Name List** | Yes[4] | No – on-going | Yes | Yes | System & Individual | Yes |

## 15. What is a Registry Week and its relationship to a By-Name List?

A Registry Week kicks off or initiates a local By-Name List. A Registry Week is an event generally held over several days (however it can take place over any timeframe desired by a community e.g., one day up to a week) where information is collected from as many people experiencing homelessness as possible within a defined geographic area. This information includes at minimum people's names and any additional information necessary to follow-up and support them to access housing resources. The result of Registry Week is a static list of names and associated information. A Registry List can become a real-time By-Name List if the community continues to update it over time.

## 16. What are the similarities and differences between a Point in Time (PiT) Count and a Registry Week?

A Registry Week shares many of the features of a PiT Count. In both events, staff and volunteers help conduct surveys with people experiencing homelessness which results in an enumeration of the homeless population.  The main difference is that a PiT Count collects non-identifying information over one day, while a Registry Week collects people's names and information over one to multiple days

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[1] Primary purpose is a count in 24-hour period, generally includes a survey to capture additional non-identifying data
[2] Primary purpose is a count over a longer period (e.g., 7 days or more) with a unique identifier, survey as above
[3] The count is secondary to the purpose of gathering by-name information to prioritize and house people
[4] Provides a real-time count of those currently experiencing homelessness who consent to share their information

(within a week).  This difference between anonymous and by-name data impacts what communities can do with the data when the event is over.

The purpose of a PiT Count is to provide a snapshot of people who are experiencing absolute homelessness on the day of the count (e.g., in shelters, transitional shelters and on the street). The primary purpose of a Registry Week is to identify and begin to understand the needs of people experiencing homelessness and to include that information on a single community-wide list so that they can be followed up on to provide services and supports to find and retain housing.

A Registry Week and a PiT count can easily be done at the same time. Both methodologies are flexibly designed so that communities can combine data collection strategies to meet their local needs. A Registry Week may not need to be repeated, if a quality By-Name List[5] is already been maintained; however, if a PiT Count is to be undertaken, it is an excellent time to ensure the By-Name List is complete and up-to-date.

### 17. What are the similarities and differences between a PiT Count and a By-Name List?
Both a PiT Count and a By-Name List provide a count of the number of people experiencing homelessness.  A PiT count provides a snapshot of non-identifying data generally once every year or two, while a By-Name List provides an on-going, deduplicated, real-time count with identifying data.

- **A PiT Count** is an event the community can rally around that provides a one-day snapshot of the population experiencing homelessness. A PiT Count tends to be more research-focused collecting a greater amount of non-identifying data at first contact including numbers, basic demographics, reasons for homelessness, and service use.  This data can be used to measure tends on an annual basis (or less frequently depending on when counts are conducted).
- **A By-Name List** collects real-time identifying information on an on-going basis as people enter and exit the homelessness response system.  The data included on a By-Name List is collected over time, as needed, to provide the right amount of service to people experiencing homelessness at the right time based on progressive engagement. It is also updated in real-time to ensure that the aggregate level data produced by a By-Name List reflects the dynamic nature of the homelessness response system and the people that use it. A By-Name List provides actionable household-level data needed for Coordinated Access to offer housing support and can snapshot and measure trends monthly (or more often as needed) to understand system effectiveness and support real-time system improvements.

An on-going By-Name List complements but cannot fully replace a PiT Count which is a community-wide engagement event that collects more detailed data on everyone experiencing homelessness for that one day. In terms of measuring trends, a PiT Count can provide helpful benchmarks in communities where systematic data on homelessness is limited (communities not currently maintaining a quality By-Name List).

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[5] For further information on what is meant by a quality By-Name List, see Section 4.

# BY-NAME LISTS AND COORDINATED ACCESS
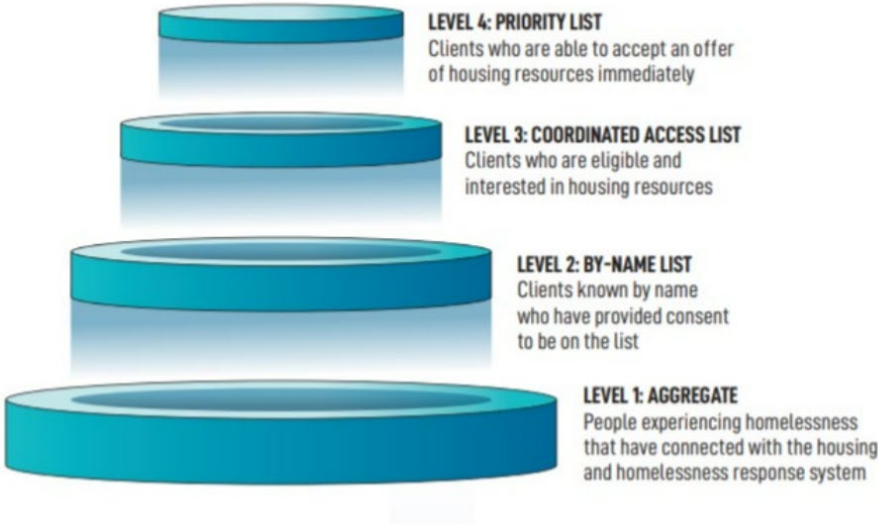
### 18. What is Coordinated Access?

Coordinated Access is a way for communities to bring consistency to the process by which people experiencing or at risk of homelessness access housing and related services within a geographic area. Core components of a strong Coordinated Access system include a Housing First approach; real-time data about the supply of and demand for housing resources; and a streamlined service delivery approach with access points to service, a standardized workflow for triage and assessment; prioritization; and vacancy matching and referral. (Reaching Home Definition).

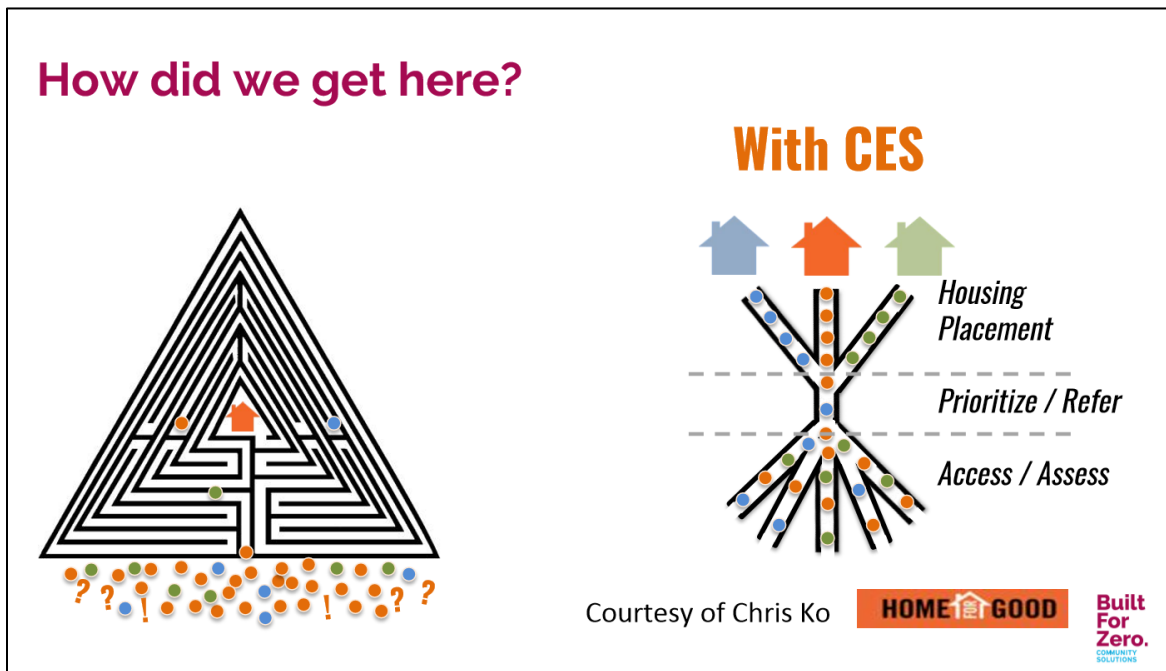Further information about Coordinated Access can be found on the [Coordinated Access](#) page.

### 19. What is the relationship between a By-Name List, Coordinated Access and a Priority (or matching) List?

A By-Name List includes every person known to be experiencing homelessness in a community who has consented to share their information (sometimes referred to as a master list).  The Coordinated Access List is a subset of the By-Name List that includes those that are active, eligible and interested in the housing support resources offered through your communities Coordinated Access system.  A Priority List is a subset of the Coordinated Access List that identifies those who are eligible and immediately available to be prioritized for an offer of an available housing resource.

You may also find this diagram helpful to understanding the nesting relationship and of a By-Name List, from which a community sorts and filters for their Coordinated Access List and then further sorts and filters for their Priority List. From the [Reaching Home Coordinated Access Guide](#) (pg. 15)



**LEVEL 4: PRIORITY LIST**
Clients who are able to accept an offer of housing resources immediately

**LEVEL 3: COORDINATED ACCESS LIST**
Clients who are eligible and interested in housing resources

**LEVEL 2: BY-NAME LIST**
Clients known by name who have provided consent to be on the list

**LEVEL 1: AGGREGATE**
People experiencing homelessness that have connected with the housing and homelessness response system

The diagram below shows that the pathway to housing can feel like a maze without a Coordinated Entry System (CES) (another term for Coordinated Access). Coordinated Access takes the broader group of active, interested and eligible people from the By-Name List and prioritizes and refers them to appropriate housing options within the community.



## 20. Is Coordinated Access the same as a By-Name List?

No. You can have a By-Name List and not use it for Coordinated Access (i.e., simply use the six key aggregate data points and other demographic data at a system level). You can also have Coordinated Access without a By-Name List (as other systems may have in your community). However, in the work of ending homelessness, it is ideal to have a Quality By-Name List that is used for Coordinated Access and Priority Lists so that people can be offered housing support resources without having to tell their story multiple times in an equitable, efficient and transparent manner.

# SECTION 4 - QUALITY BY-NAME LIST

### 21. What is a Quality By-Name List?

A quality By-Name List contains all the information necessary to:

- effectively refer people to, and move people through, a coordinated access system; and
- reliably show inflow, outflow and actively homelessness information required to accurately measure progress to reaching and sustaining functional zero.

The CAEH By-Name List Scorecard (BNL Scorecard) is a self-evaluation tool that helps communities assess their progress toward establishing a quality By-Name List. The minimum quality threshold is measured by a score of 10/10 on BNL Scorecard using qualitative and quantitative data to ensure that communities have covered their full jurisdiction and that all homeless service providers are coordinating their efforts.

The scorecard assesses:

- **Community participation and coverage,** ensuring that a community is capturing all single adults, youth and families experiencing homelessness, including people living without shelter, people living in shelters, people living in transitional housing, people without homes who are provisionally accommodated (e.g., people without homes who have entered hospitals or jails and those staying temporarily with friends or family).
- **Policies and procedures**, ensuring that communities have policies in place to accurately reflect people entering or exiting homelessness and to maintain timely and accurate data.
- **Data infrastructure** to track data points related to system-wide inflow and outflow and ensuring that the by name list has the capacity to track critical population-based statuses in real time, including age, household size, chronic homeless status, and veteran status.

A Quality By-Name List ideally includes all known people experiencing homelessness in your jurisdiction. However, you may start with a By-Name List focusing on a smaller geographic area or a specific population of people experiencing chronic homelessness (such as all those who are experiencing chronic homelessness or veterans or youth, etc.) and with the goal to eventually build to one list accounting for all people experiencing homelessness.

Note that meeting the quality threshold does not mean your list is perfect! Keep challenging yourself to sustain it and improve it.

Please refer to the By-Name List Scorecard and By-Name List Scorecard Guide for further information.

### 22. How is this By-Name List data used?

Once a community has established quality, system-wide data — data they can trust — on the homeless population, this is when the magic happens. They are able to better match housing solutions with individuals, prioritize community resources, *and* track the state of homelessness in the community at large. This allows them to work effectively toward ending it.

On an individual level, By-Name Lists often form the basis for case conferencing meetings, where all the providers within a community meet to coordinate and drive forward with housing solutions for people.

On a systems level, teams use By-Name List information represented in data visualizations to track homelessness across their entire community. Here are two examples:

- In this webinar, CAEH Director of Data Impact and Policy speaks with three communities about how they are using their By-Name List data (see webinar Recording and PDF).
- Here, Co-Director of Built for Zero Beth Sandor shows data from Bakersfield, California, a community that has since ended chronic homelessness.

## 23. Where can I learn more or get assistance with a By-Name List?

Check out the CAEH on-line By-Name List Toolkit.  Reach out to CAEH at info@caeh.ca for further information or support.