

VI-SPDAT Policy for Use in Hamilton's Homeless-Serving System

THE TOOL

The Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool, or the VI-SPDAT, is a triage tool for people working in the housing and homelessness sector. It allows the assessors to identify who should be recommended for each housing and support intervention, moving the discussion from simply who is eligible for a service intervention to who is eligible and in greatest need of that intervention. Like a triage station in an emergency room, this tool allows the housing and homelessness system to efficiently and appropriately respond to people based on need.

Participants can expect the same screening tool regardless of provider, and providers can standardize screening across workers and organizations. The tool allows Hamilton's homeless-serving system to efficiently target resources towards those participants who need them the most. Appropriate interventions are based on acuity scores.

Agencies across Hamilton's homeless-serving system were trained on how to use VI-SPDAT Version 2.0 in late 2015 and again in early 2018. Training is available through the City of Hamilton. Please contact homelesspolicyprograms@hamilton.ca for more information.

WHEN TO COMPLETE THE ASSESSMENT AND WHICH TOOL TO USE

Version 2.0 of the VI-SPDAT is to be conducted by all referral sources including emergency shelter staff, outreach teams, and transitional housing programs.

Emergency shelter staff are to complete the VI-SPDAT with clients within 14 days of intake. This threshold of engagement was determined based on community data and research on homeless intervention best practices. In order to efficiently support people, it is recommended that workers allow individuals or families to conduct a self-directed housing search and self-resolve their homelessness for the first two weeks of their shelter stay. If there is an individual or family known to the system, and suspected high acuity, a worker may complete the assessment earlier in their stay.

All other referral sources must complete the VI-SPDAT with clients as soon as possible so that acuity score can be added to the BNPL and used to triage permanent housing and supports.

The appropriate version of the VI-SPDAT is to be used by referral sources based on the individual being assessed, as prescribed by the City of Hamilton. Shelters that serve both youth and adults must administer the appropriate VI-SPDAT based on age. The youth VI-SPDAT (TAY-VI-SPDAT) is a tool designed for youth aged 24 and under. Youth aged 25 are still eligible to be referred to Housing First for Youth, but an adult VI-

SPDAT should be conducted in this case. If a youth was assessed using a youth VI-SPDAT but becomes considered an adult before being referred to permanent housing with supports, an adult VI-SPDAT is not required.

REFUSAL TO PARTICIPATE

Upon entry into Hamilton's Homeless-Serving System, an individual or family is asked to sign a common Consent Form that allows The City of Hamilton access to their information for the purpose of housing. The person's decision to decline to complete the VI-SPDAT does not prevent their access to service. If a Consent Form is completed but a VI-SPDAT is not, individuals will still be added to the By Name Priority List and follow-up should take place regarding their acuity. The worker will continue to actively engage with the individual or family to complete the VI-SPDAT.

SURVEY SCRIPT

This tool has been specially formulated based on literature reviews and research, so it is important to not significantly change the language of the questions, the order, or skip over any sections.

- My name is [INTERVIEWER NAME]. I'm going to ask you about your health and housing experiences through a 10 minute survey that is mostly yes or no questions.
- This survey is designed to help us understand your needs and to help you achieve housing stability.
- This information will be kept confidential in a secure database.
- Your information will only be shared with the services listed on the consent form who have signed a confidentiality agreement.
- You do not have to participate. Even if you don't participate, you will still have access to available services in the community.
- If you do participate, we will add your name to a priority list for Housing Services.
- As we go through the survey you can skip questions, you can take a break, or you can choose to end the survey early.

SCORING THE ASSESSMENT

After having thanked the client, take the time to score the tool and answer any questions the participant may have about consents, where the information will be stored, and what the scoring means. The score indicates level of acuity. Appropriate Housing Intervention referrals are listed below for each VI SPDAT score range along with specific examples of local programs Please be advised this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all homelessness programs in Hamilton.

VI SPDAT Score	Priority	Housing Interventions
Adult 8+ and Youth 8+ Family 9+	<p>1. Highly acute and chronic or episodic</p> <p>Chronic homelessness refers to individuals, often with disabling conditions (e.g. chronic physical or mental illness, substance abuse problems), who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year (i.e. have spent more than 180 cumulative nights in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation).</p> <p>Episodically homeless refers to individuals, often with disabling conditions, who are currently homeless and have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year.</p>	<p>➤ Housing First</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition 2 Homes • Homeward Bound • Housing First for Youth • Supporting Our Sisters <p>*Individuals are currently not referred to the below supports through the BNPL.</p> <p>➤ Permanent Housing with Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HOMES • Residential Care Facilities • InDwell • Urban Native Homes Supportive Housing
Moderate Acuity Adult 4 - 7 Youth 4 - 7 Family 4 - 8	<p>Moderate</p> <p>May or may not be chronically homeless.</p>	<p>➤ Rapid Rehousing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid Rehousing for Women <p>➤ Housing Supports (various agencies)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Management • Housing Workers
Lowest Acuity Adult, Youth, and Family – 0 - 3	<p>Low</p> <p>Should not be chronically homeless</p> <p>*If chronically homeless but scoring 1-4 please refer to moderate acuity interventions</p>	<p>➤ Self-led housing search</p> <p>➤ Housing Resource Centres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Help Centre

Other services and supports regardless of acuity score may also include:

- OW/ODSP
- Housing Stability Benefit
- ID replacement
- Brain Injury Services

- Legal clinics
- Meal programs

REASSESSMENT

Referral sources do not need to complete a VI-SPDAT if one has been conducted within the past year or if there has been no major changes in the person's life since the last VI-SPDAT was conducted. For example, if a person has been to the emergency room twice in the past month, they may have already scored a "1" in that section on their previous assessment, therefore another assessment would not necessarily yield a different acuity score.

If the participant has been out of the homeless-serving system for more than 90 consecutive days, the worker would complete a reassessment (i.e. a new VI-SPDAT) since they would be unable to see the individual on the BNPL and their VI-SPDAT score as they have been moved to the Inactive List, unless the individual's VI-SPDAT score is stored in HIFIS.