

Interview Guide for TANF State Directors or other TANF application experts

This version to be used for programs that do include questions about homelessness or risk factors associated with homelessness on the TANF or combined applications

State: _____

Name of Respondent: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address of Respondent: _____

Interview conducted by: _____

Date of interview: _____ / _____ / _____
Month Day Year

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NOTE to Interviewer: Review the TANF and/or Combined Application prior to the interview to review the type of homeless data or risk factors for homelessness collected on the application. Also note the date when Abt obtained the application to confirm that it is the most recent version.

Introduction: My name is _____ and I work for a private, independent research firm called Abt Associates. The office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services is sponsoring this study. The purpose of the study is to conduct interviews with each state's TANF and Medicaid program staff to collect information about the type of housing status and/or homeless status data that is collected on TANF and Medicaid application forms. Someone from the Abt study team contacted you in October or November 2006 to obtain a copy of your TANF and/or combined application. Today I'd like to ask some more detailed questions about your applications and the information you collect from program applicants about whether they are homeless and their housing status in general. Neither the study nor this interview is being used to monitor program performance in any way. The information you provide will only be used for the purposes of this study.

A. Confirmation that application on hand is current

1. We collected a TANF application from you (online/via email/copy sent to us) in October 2006. Is that application still in use?

Yes

No → When was the application updated? [ENTER DATE]. Could you please fax me a copy of the application that is now in use or direct me to a copy on your website? What has changed on the application from the version we collected in October 2006? [ENTER WEB ADDRESS—INTERVIEWER: INTERVIEW CAN CONTINUE IF CHANGES TO THE APPLICATION DO NOT INVOLVE QUESTIONS REGARDING HOMELESSNESS. INTERVIEW SHOULD BE SUSPENDED AND RESCHEDULED IF CHANGES REGARDING HOMELESSNESS HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE APPLICATION.]

2. [IF WE IDENTIFIED A COMBINED APPLICATION] We collected a Combined benefit application from you (online/via email/copy sent to us) at the same time. Is that application still in use?

Yes

No → When was the application updated? [ENTER DATE]. Could you please fax me a copy of the application that is now in use or direct me to a copy on your website? What has changed on the application from the version we collected in October 2006? [ENTER WEB ADDRESS—INTERVIEWER: INTERVIEW CAN CONTINUE IF CHANGES TO THE APPLICATION DO NOT INVOLVE QUESTIONS REGARDING HOMELESSNESS. INTERVIEW SHOULD BE SUSPENDED AND RESCHEDULED IF CHANGES REGARDING HOMELESSNESS HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE APPLICATION.]

3. [IF WE DIDN'T IDENTIFY A COMBINED APPLICATION] As we collected application forms from other states, we learned that many states use a combined application covering several programs, either in addition to or in place of a separate TANF application. Does your state use a combined application for the TANF program?

No (skip to Section C)

Yes

B. Clarification regarding use of combined application

4. Is the combined application used ***instead of*** a separate application for TANF or ***in addition*** to the TANF application?

Combined application used ***instead of*** a separate TANF application (Ask 4a)

a. Does that mean that when a family applies for TANF assistance they complete only the combined application?

Yes

No (please explain under what circumstances the separate application is used)

Combined application used ***in addition to*** a separate TANF application (Ask 4b)

b. Does that mean that when a family applies for TANF assistance they must complete both applications?

Yes

No (please explain under what circumstances the combined application is used)

Don't know → Is there someone else we could talk to, to find out more about how the combined application is used? [ENTER CONTACT INFORMATION].

C. Collection of Housing Status, Homeless, or Risk Factors Data

These questions are used to confirm that the correct set of questions is being asked.

The purpose of this study is to find out whether states routinely collect information about homelessness or risk factors often associated with homelessness for TANF applicants through the regular application process. Examples of items on an application that might indicate homelessness are things like living in a shelter, or having no permanent residence. Risk factors associated with homelessness include things like living with friends or relatives, having an eviction notice, or others.

5. a. What is the typical process for completing the application? Which is the *most common* way applications are completed? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

application completed online

application completed in-person at a TANF office
 application filled out and mailed to the TANF office
 Other (SPECIFY)

b. Do applicants usually fill out the applications themselves without assistance, or do they receive assistance from an intake worker to complete the application? Which is the *most common* approach?

fill out *with* assistance
 fill out *without* assistance

c. Is the same application used throughout the state?

Yes
 No

d. Other than in the application form, is additional information on housing status collected at other points in the eligibility determination process? If yes, when?

Yes (SPECIFY)
 No

We'd like to ask you some questions to confirm that our understanding of the types of information included on your TANF/combined application is correct and to find out more about how these data are collected and used, and reasons why your state collects this information.

[ENTER RESPONSES FOR 6-8 IN THE TABLE BELOW. REVIEW APPLICATION REVIEW DATABASE AND MARK PRELIMINARY RESPONSES FROM THE DATABASE FOR QUESTIONS 6 AND 7 IN THE TABLE BELOW.]

6. When we reviewed your combined benefit application, we found that you collect [READ DATA ELEMENTS FROM Q6 COLUMN] on housing status, homelessness, and homeless risk factors. Is our understanding accurate? Is it correct that you do not collect [READ REMAINING DATA ELEMENTS] on the combined application? [INTERVIEWER: IF STATE DOES NOT USE A COMBINED APPLICATION, CODE AS NOT APPLICABLE.]
7. We also determined that you collect [READ DATA ELEMENTS FROM Q7 COLUMN] on your separate TANF application. Is our understanding accurate? Is it correct that you do not collect [READ REMAINING DATA ELEMENTS] on the separate TANF application? [INTERVIEWER: IF STATE DOES NOT USE A SEPARATE TANF APPLICATION, CODE AS NOT APPLICABLE]
8. If a combined application is used, do applicants for all programs covered by the combined application answer each item? Or are there items that are only required for some of the programs included on the combined application? Please explain. [INTERVIEWER: IF STATE DOES NOT USE A COMBINED APPLICATION, CODE AS NOT APPLICABLE]

Item on application	6. Confirmation that [READ ITEM] is included on your combined application. [Fields should be highlighted in advance based on app review. Code Yes if it is included; Code No if it is not included.]	7. Confirmation that [READ ITEM] is included on your separate TANF application.	8. If combined application is used, do applicants for all programs (TANF, FS, Medicaid, etc) answer the question about [READ ITEM] (if no, please explain)
Housing Status Items			
a. Home Address	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>
b. Mailing Address	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>
c. Directions to home address	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>
d. Do you live in public/subsidized housing?	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>
e. Do you intend to stay in State?	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>
f. Do you live in a long-term care facility or nursing home?	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>
g. Do you live in a medical or rehab facility?	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>
h. Any other questions on housing status? PLEASE SPECIFY	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>
Homeless Items			
i. Are you homeless?	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>
j. Do you reside in a shelter?	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>
k. Are you staying in a domestic violence (DV) shelter?	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>
l. Do you have a permanent home?	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>
m. Other Homeless item (PLEASE SPECIFY)	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>
Homeless Risk Factors			
n. Do you live with friends or relatives?	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>NA</u> <u>No</u>

Item on application	6. Confirmation that [READ ITEM] is included on your combined application. [Fields should be highlighted in advance based on app review. Code Yes if it is included; Code No if it is not included.]	7. Confirmation that [READ ITEM] is included on your separate TANF application.	8. If combined application is used, do applicants for all programs (TANF, FS, Medicaid, etc) answer the question about [READ ITEM] (if no, please explain)
o. Do you have an eviction notice?	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> NA <u> </u> No	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> NA <u> </u> No	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> NA <u> </u> No
p. Other risk factors? SPECIFY	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> NA <u> </u> No	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> NA <u> </u> No	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> NA <u> </u> No
q. Are there any other items on your application that we have not talked about that are related to housing status, homelessness, or risk factors associated with homelessness? SPECIFY	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> NA <u> </u> No	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> NA <u> </u> No	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> NA <u> </u> No

The responses to these questions will be used to determine which set of detailed questions should be asked. For those programs collecting **neither** homeless items nor items considered risk factors for homelessness, the "**no-homeless data**" questions will be asked. For those collecting either homeless or homeless risk factor items, the "**homeless data**" questions will be asked.

D. Homeless Data Questions

I'd like to understand more about the data that you collect for each of the questions that specifically relate to homelessness. If there are different answers for the combined application and separate TANF application, please let me know. [INTERVIEWER: ONLY ASK ABOUT THE RELEVANT COLUMNS, AS CONFIRMED IN Q6-7. PROBE FOR WHETHER RESPONSES DIFFER FOR COMBINED APPLICATION AND SEPARATE TANF APPLICATION.]

INTERVIEWER: MOVE DOWN EACH COLUMN ↓	a. Are you homeless	b. Do you reside in a shelter	c. Do you live with friends and relatives	d. Do you live in a DV shelter	e. Do you have a permanent home	f. Do you have an eviction notice	g. Other
9. Is a response to the question required for the application for assistance to be considered?	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> No	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> No	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> No	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> No	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> No	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> No	<u> </u> Yes <u> </u> No
10. Is the response to this item used for any of the following: (Codes: 1-currently used, 2-Planned to be used in the future, 3-Possibly will be used in the future, 4-Not used for this purpose, 5-Don't Know)							

INTERVIEWER: MOVE DOWN EACH COLUMN	a. Are you homeless	b. Do you reside in a shelter	c. Do you live with friends and relatives	d. Do you live in a DV shelter	e. Do you have a permanent home	f. Do you have an eviction notice	g. Other
a. Program Eligibility							
b. Benefit Amounts							
c. Used in Reports (describe)							
d. Referral to Services							
e. Program Outcome Measure							
f. Used to match with other datasets							
g. Other							
11. Is the response entered into a statewide database?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No						
12. For all applications received in 2006, approximately what percent of cases in your database have missing data for this item? [INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT DOES NOT KNOW, ASK FOR CONTACT INFORMATION FOR STAFF KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT DATA SYSTEM]	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
13. Do you have specific procedures in place to improve the quality of data for this item and to reduce missing data?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No						
14. When did you begin asking this question?							
15. Has the wording of the question or the response format changed since that time?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No						
16. Do you expect to make changes to the wording or response format?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No						
17. Do you foresee eliminating it?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No						

18. Do you collect any data on the homeless status of applicants at any time other than in the application?

No (Skip to 20)
 Yes

19. Do you collect homeless status information at [READ ITEM]? At each of the subsequent times you mentioned, do you update the information (that is confirm or update the same

data items again), or do you collect new information on housing or homeless status? Is the new or updated information entered into the database?

INTERVIEWER: ASK QUESTIONS 19a, 19b, 19c and 19d FOR EACH TIME PERIOD

INTERVIEWER: MOVE DOWN ↓ EACH COLUMN	Prior to eligibility determination (during subsequent interview or home visit with applicant)	After eligibility is determined but prior to recertification (during an interview or on another form)	At recertification	Other (SPECIFY)
19a. Do you collect homeless status information...	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
19b. Do you update (or confirm) the same data elements at subsequent periods...	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
19c. Do you collect different or additional information at subsequent periods...	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
19d. Do you enter new or updated information into the database...	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

20. [ASK ONLY IF RESPONSE TO 6 and 7i: Are you homeless IS NO]. Even if you do not explicitly ask program applicants or participants if they are homeless, do you use any other standard conventions for noting that an applicant is homeless in your database or on application materials? Examples of this might be noting that an applicant is living with family or friends, has not had a permanent address in recent months, note whether an address given is for a shelter, enter 99999 for zip code when homelessness is suspected, etc.?

- No (SKIP TO 23)
- Yes – confirm all addresses (would know if address was a shelter)
- Yes – intake workers are instructed to follow certain protocol (e.g., enter 99999 for zip code) for applicants who are thought to be homeless PLEASE DESCRIBE:
- Yes – Other (DESCRIBE)

21. Are these conventions formalized in such a way that you would say that they have been adopted throughout the state? [PROBE: E.g., are they written down in training instructions? Are they written on the computer screen where intake workers enter the data?]

- No
- Yes (SPECIFY) _____

22. Do you have the ability to query the program database based on these protocols to produce statistics about homelessness among program applicants?

- No
- Yes (please describe how, if you have done it before, and limitations of the results)

23. Has your state developed a formal definition for homelessness for purposes of this application/program?

No (SKIP TO 25)

Yes (please tell me what the definition is and how it is used by the state) _____

24. Is the definition of homelessness clearly documented or widely known to intake workers or others involved with helping applicants complete the application forms?

No

Yes (DESCRIBE) _____

If yes, SKIP TO 26

25. Has homelessness been *informally* defined in the state?

No

Yes (specify how and please provide the definition) _____

26. Many states have not chosen to include questions on homelessness on their applications for TANF benefits. We would like to understand more about why leaders in your state believe that it is important to do so. What are the main reasons? [INTERVIEWER: RECORD VERBATIM AND THEN RECODE TO ONE OF THE CODES BELOW. IF MORE THAN ONE REASON CHECK ALL THAT APPLY. PROBE AS NEEDED].

Program and reporting purposes (DESCRIBE)

Collected as part of State effort to enhance access to mainstream benefits for people who are homeless

Collected to support development or implementation of State Plan to End Homelessness

State Policy Academy requested data or uses it

Other (SPECIFY)

27. Has the state conducted any analysis on the homelessness data yet?

No (SKIP TO 33)

Yes

28. Describe what was done, produced, and learned (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY).

Estimates of homeless persons applying for benefits

Estimates of homeless persons receiving benefits

Estimates of impact of benefits on alleviating persons' homelessness

Studies on costs of mainstream services for people who are homeless

Other? (SPECIFY)

29. How has the state used the results of the study?

30. Did you alter your data collection requirements, training of intake workers, or analysis/use of data as a result of this study? PLEASE DESCRIBE

31. Are the data on homelessness accessible to the public? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

No (SKIP TO 33)
 In written reports
 In state-level data sets

32. Who has access to the data sets?

33. Would you consider providing periodic de-identified data extracts or aggregate reports to HHS on homelessness on applicants to your TANF program?

34. Do you think it takes more time to collect the questions on homelessness than other items on your application?

No
 Yes (DESCRIBE) _____

35. Does it take more time to verify, record, or analyze the responses than for other items on the application?

No
 Yes (DESCRIBE) _____

36. Are there any additional costs incurred to collect this information? For instance, does it add to the verification time or effort?

No
 Yes (DESCRIBE) _____

37. How frequently is your TANF application updated?

Monthly
 Quarterly
 Semi-annually (every 6 months)
 Annually
 Other (SPECIFY)

38. Are these updates seen as an opportunity to add or refine questions on homelessness or housing status?

Yes
 No

39. That is all the questions I have about homelessness data and your TANF and/or combined application. Is there anything else you would like to add that you think is important for this study to take into account?

Thank you very much for your time and help with this study.