



Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT)  
Version 2.0

General Guidance

December 2015

*Portions of this document are from The Vulnerability Index: Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) Manual for Single Person Households produced by OrgCode and Community Solutions. Permission for use has been granted by these organizations.*

The purpose of this document is to provide general guidance to KY Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC) and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funded entities for the successful use of the VI-SPDAT.

See also:

- **HMIS VI-SPDAT Workflow Instructions**, which can be found on the KHC Housing Contract Administration's (HCA) Help Desk webpage under Coordinated Entry. (Available January 4, 2016) <https://kyhmis.zendesk.com/home>
- **You are strongly encouraged to watch this video produced by Community Solutions and OrgCode, the creators of the VI-SPDAT.** The video walks through each question in the VI-SPDAT and provides helpful tips for asking and scoring each question. <https://vimeo.com/126548635>
- If you want more training, you can take the VI-SPDAT Training for Frontline Workers produced by OrgCode available at <http://www.orgcode.com/product/vi-spdatt-training/>

This document may be revised from time to time. The most recent version will always be available on the KHC's website at HCA Help Desk under Coordinated Entry. (Available January 4, 2016).

### **What is the VI-SPDAT?**

The VI-SPDAT is a pre-screening, or triage tool, that is designed to be used by all providers within a community to quickly assess the health and social needs of homeless persons and match them with the most appropriate support and housing interventions that are available. The VI-SPDAT is designed to determine the presence and acuity of an issue and identify clients to refer for assessment for specific housing interventions, but it is not intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of each person's needs. The tool is designed to measure acuity and risks to housing instability. It is not designed to specifically look at eligibility for a specific program.

### **IMPORTANT:**

- **The client MUST provide informed consent prior to the VI-SPDAT being completed. You cannot complete a VI-SPDAT without the person's knowledge and explicit agreement. You also cannot complete the VI-SPDAT solely through observation or using known information within your organization.** -A Release of Information form used for HMIS purposes must be completed on each client completing the VI-SPDAT if one has not yet been completed. Even if one has been completed, you should still make sure to get the client's consent to complete the VI-SPDAT.
- **Only licensed KYHMIS users can complete the VI-SPDAT directly in HMIS or enter the responses from the paper version into the HMIS system.**
- **Only Victim Service Providers (VSP) should conduct the VI-SPDAT for victims of domestic violence, unless the client explicitly declines assistance from the VSP. VSPs will use a modified**

**process and the information will not be collected in HMIS. (Additional information is provided on page 4 of this document under Victims of Domestic Violence/Victim Service Providers).**

- **As of January 2016, all federally funded agencies required to (ESG and CoC funded emergency shelters as of January 2016) or opting to use the VI-SPDAT should use Version 2.0 for all clients.** If a family presents, the agency should complete Version 2.0 of the VI-SPDAT on the head of household. (If a local prioritization committee is in place in your area, the committee may elect to use the family version of the VI-SPDAT, but the survey will not be able to be completed or imported into HMIS at this time).
- **If you have clients that have already completed the VI-SPDAT in the past year using Version 1, you do NOT need to do another VI-SPDAT using Version 2.0.** Once it has been 12 months since the original VI-SPDAT was completed, you should then complete a second VI-SPDAT with the client using Version 2.0.

### **Who can conduct the VI-SPDAT?**

The VI-SPDAT is designed and structured to only use self-report. A person who is being surveyed using the VI-SPDAT should be able to complete it with anyone, not just the people who know his/her case history or have other information from other circumstances or sources.

*Remember, however, only licensed KYHMIS users can complete the VI-SPDAT directly in HMIS or enter the responses from the paper version into the HMIS system.*

Because the wording and sequence of the survey is critical to the validity of the score, and because there are specific do's and don'ts, it is highly recommended that only staff or volunteers who have been trained to conduct the VI-SPDAT (by reading this document and watching the training video) be allowed to conduct the survey.

### **When should the VI-SPDAT be conducted?**

*Remember, the client MUST provide informed consent prior to the VI-SPDAT being completed. Use the Release of Information form utilized for HMIS. You cannot complete a VI-SPDAT without the person's knowledge and explicit agreement. You also cannot complete the VI-SPDAT solely through observation or using known information within your organization.*

**It is recommended that the VI-SPDAT be conducted one to two weeks after entry into the program.**

This allows clients time to solve their own homelessness. It also allows time for the client's homelessness to be verified.

This is important because only clients who are homeless under HUD's definition should be included on a prioritization report as part of any coordinated prioritization process for permanent housing. An agency

may elect to complete a VI-SPDAT at program entry as opposed to waiting one to two weeks, but the client should only be included on a prioritization report after their homelessness has been verified.

Inclusion on a prioritization report does not guarantee housing. Resources must be available and the client must meet the eligibility requirements of said available resources.

**If the program staff is familiar with the client and can attest to the client's homelessness, the case worker can complete the VI-SPDAT upon program entry.**

The VI-SPDAT should only be conducted once per year (if the client remains homeless) and/or when there are significant changes in the client's situation.

### **Does every client have to complete the VI-SPDAT?**

No, only clients that meet HUD's definition of homelessness in 24 CFR 578.3 should complete a VI-SPDAT.

Furthermore, agencies should make every effort to determine if diversion is possible for clients before conducting a VI-SPDAT. Examples include staying with friends for families or accessing other temporary resources such as financial assistance from family, friends or church.

An individual or family that is able to solve their homelessness on their own (or with very minimal assistance) do not need to have a VI-SPDAT completed unless the program staff are unsure about what type of intervention is really best for the client.

### **How should the VI-SPDAT be conducted?**

Providers are encouraged to complete the VI-SPDAT directly in HMIS. You can do the survey on paper, but it must be entered into HMIS within 48 hours of survey completion. If the VI-SPDAT is completed on paper, once it is entered into HMIS, you should follow your agency's records retention policy for confidential client records. Electronic records, including information entered into HMIS, is an acceptable form of documentation for compliance purposes.

The exception to utilizing HMIS is a VI-SPDAT conducted by a Victim Service Provider (VSP). (See Section on Victims of Domestic Violence/Victim Service Providers on page 4)

Dos:

- Explain what the survey does.
- Encourage people to be honest.
- Provide clarification when/if requested.
- Ensure the client has completed a Release of Information (ROI) prior to completing the VI-SPDAT.

Don't:

- Complete a survey without informed consent of the client.
- Complete the survey by observation.
- Tell people there is a score (number) or refer to them as a number.
- Try to serve or case manage while doing the survey.
- Promise anything as a result of the survey.
- Lead people to believe there is a waiting list.
- Change wording or scoring.
- Change the order of questions.

Each word and phrase within the VI-SPDAT has been carefully and rigorously tested. Wording cannot be adjusted, unless KHC explicitly authorizes such change based on differences in local context. It is important to note, however, that the person conducting the survey can ask clarifying questions if the response is not clear.

The order of the VI-SPDAT cannot change. As a self-reported tool, the sequence is vitally important. To ensure fairness to clients in need of housing assistance and to ensure that the right resources are utilized for the appropriate clients, it is important that the survey be conducted and scored consistently.

#### **Additional Tips**

- All VI-SPDAT questions result in a “yes”, “no” or “refused” response. In other words, each question only requires a one-word answer. If the client starts to elaborate more than needed for the surveyor to gather a yes or no response, the surveyor should remind the client that only yes or no is needed.
- While the wording of each question cannot be adjusted, you can provide clarification if it is requested by the client or if you think the client does not understand what is being asked. Examples of this would be providing examples of something such as what is meant by “homeless”. You could say something like, “such as living on the streets or in shelters, sleeping on a friend’s floor or in a car.” You can also modify the questions that relate to time in order to provide more specific context to jog the client’s memory. Instead of saying only, “in the past three years...” you could say, “in the past three years...that is, since January 2013...”

#### **Victims of Domestic Violence/Victim Service Providers**

Only Victim Service Providers (VSP) should conduct the VI-SPDAT for victims of domestic violence, unless a client explicitly declines assistance from a VSP.

**Before completing a VI-SPDAT at a non-VSP agency, staff must ask three questions (shown below) to identify whether or not the client is a victim of domestic violence. These questions should be asked of all clients.**

1. Has your partner ever threatened to hurt you?

2. Has your partner ever hit, slapped, kicked or otherwise physically hurt you or made you do something sexual you did not want to?
3. Are you afraid of your current or former partner?

**If the client answers “yes” to any of these questions, refer the client to the nearest VSP provider to complete the VI-SPDAT and to potentially receive services from the VSP.**

VSP Instructions:

1. The VSP will conduct the VI-SPDAT on paper.
2. After the survey is completed, the VSP will calculate the client’s score and then transfer that score to the VSP Inclusion Form (attached). The VSP Inclusion Form requires two signatures attesting to the client’s score.
3. After completing the inclusion form, the VSP should destroy the paper survey.
4. The VSP should then send the score to the local prioritization committee (if one exists) for inclusion in the process for placing people into appropriate housing. If a prioritization committee is not in place, the providers can still utilize the scores to determine the best housing options for clients.

In the event there is not space for the client to transfer to the VSP for shelter, the VSP should still complete a VI-SPDAT either in person or via phone if necessary. The score should be conveyed to the original provider via the VSP Inclusion Form so that that provider can include the score with the client’s records and include it on the local prioritization list if one exists. This provider should enter **ONLY** the score into HMIS for inclusion on the prioritization list. In other words, though the VSP completes the VI-SPDAT, if the client is not receiving shelter or services from the VSP, the non-VSP agency that is providing the services should maintain the client’s VI-SPDAT score in the client’s records associated with that program.

In the event a client is identified as a victim of domestic violence, but declines the assistance of a VSP, the provider should complete the VI-SPDAT as usual and follow the same process and protocols as a non-victim client.



### VSP Local Prioritization Inclusion Form

Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC), the Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence (KCADV), and the KY Balance of State CoC Advisory Board recognize the highly sensitive nature of information gathered from individuals experiencing domestic or intimate partner violence. These groups have worked together to develop the following protocols that ensure Victim Service Providers (VSPs) and their clients are included in the Coordinated Entry/Assessment process while adhering to the strict confidentiality requirements mandated by federal laws protecting victims of intimate partner violence.

- Three pre-screening questions are asked at the point of entry into the housing/ homeless services system in order to identify individuals who may be experiencing domestic violence. Those who respond “yes” to any of these questions are referred to the appropriate VSP. (For more information on this topic please see the KHC VI-SPDAT General Guidance document on KHC’s HCA Help Desk.)
- Housing referrals from VSPs will be handled differently by regional Coordinated Assessment teams. DV clients will be given one VI-SPDAT completed on paper by the VSP. After the VI-SPDAT is completed by VSP, a Client/Family Identifying Number should be assigned, and **this form should be completed and submitted for inclusion on the local/regional prioritization list**. The acuity score from the VI-SPDAT must be verified as accurate by at least two employees of the VSP.
- When the Coordinated Assessment Team determines that a VSP referral is the next appropriate match for available housing, the referring agency and housing provider will coordinate services using the time-limited Release of Information used by the VSP.

Client/Family Unique Identifying Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this an Individual of Family SPDAT score?: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-Screen Total VI-SPDAT (or F-VI-SPDAT) Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Entry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the client or head of household a (please check all that apply):

- Disabled     Chronically Homeless     Veteran

VSP Provider Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Performing VI-SPDAT/F-VI-SPDAT Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee attesting to accuracy of the VI-SPDAT/F-VI-SPDAT Pre-Screen Total Score

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_