

Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

for Service Providers in the City of Lethbridge

March 2025

Version 1.0



Still have questions?

Speak with your site administrator, email us at HIFIS@lethbridge.ca, or submit a support ticket at [HIFIS - City of Lethbridge](#)

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General

What is the difference between the DEV site and the PROD site?

DEV Environment: devhifis.lethbridge.ca

A replica of the PROD environment used for staff training, and where new features, updates, and changes are tested before being elevated to PROD.

PROD Environment: hifis.lethbridge.ca

The live system where users perform their daily tasks and record their work. Keeping data in the production environment clean and pristine is crucial to ensure data is accurate & reliable, and to maintain the integrity of the system for all users.

Where do I access more information on HIFIS?

For user support guides, consent information, and FAQ's, visit www.lethbridge.ca/hifis under **Guide Documents**.

Additionally, users can visit the official [The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System](#) website for more information.

Data Collection and Ownership

Why is the City of Lethbridge collecting client information?

Under Reaching Home, communities must implement a Coordinated Access system, which is built into HIFIS, to collect real-time client data and triage individuals to appropriate housing and support services. The collection and management of client information in HIFIS benefits the entire homelessness sector. For more details, refer to the [HIFIS Consent Cheat Sheet and FAQs](#) and the [Reaching Home Coordinated Access Guide](#).

Who owns the client data collected within HIFIS?

The City of Lethbridge, as the HIFIS Lead organization, configures and hosts HIFIS to align with the community's needs. As data stewards, the city manages and oversees the data collected within the community. However, service providers own their dataset, and clients retain ownership of their personal information collected for HIFIS purposes.

Is a community's HIFIS data shared with other communities?

No. HIFIS operates on a licensing model where each license is independent. This means that data collected in Lethbridge is not shared with service providers in other communities such as Medicine Hat or Calgary.

How does HIFIS and communities ensure that client information is protected and secure?

HIFIS Security Measures

HIFIS incorporates multiple security features, including:

- Role-based access control
- Two-factor authentication
- Audit logs
- Data clustering

These measures work together to safeguard client data and protect privacy.

City of Lethbridge Safeguards

The City of Lethbridge is responsible for securing client information at both governance and IT levels. Safeguards include:

- Privacy Impact Assessments
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for HIFIS users
- Standardized policies and procedures
- On-site technological expertise
- Secure servers and maintained encryption standards

For more information on privacy measures, refer to the [HIFIS Implementation Guide](#).

What does Information Sharing and Visibility look like in HIFIS?

To streamline service delivery, improve client tracking, and enhance collaboration among service providers, HIFIS enables controlled data visibility. This allows different organizations to work together towards common goals, ensuring homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. The City of Lethbridge refers to this approach as **Integrated Coordinated Access**.

For more information on data sharing and visibility, please visit the [HIFIS Consent Cheat Sheet and FAQs](#).

Consent

How do I explain Coordinated Access consent to my client?

What is the minimum amount of information people can see about my client?

For a client that has Explicit, Coordinated Access, or Inherited consent, **any** HIFIS user will be able to see the following client information:

- ID/File number
- First and Last name (including aliases)
- Gender
- Date of Birth and Age
- Active Watch Concern Icon
- Client State (Active, Inactive, Archived, Deceased)

Can my client be marked as hidden or private?

A client can be marked as hidden in HIFIS. Only users with the User Rights to see hidden clients will be able to access your client's information.

How is my client's information protected and secured?

There are many safeguards in place to protect and secure client information in HIFIS:

- Only trusted workers can see client information.
- When information is shared for reporting, it is scrambled into an encrypted code that nobody can read.
- The data is stored in computers with strong security measures in place.
- Every time someone looks at or changes information, the HIFIS system remembers who did it.
- The system only shares information when it is necessary, and with client consent.
- There are regular safety checks that experts check and update, to keep the system safe.

What is the Unique Identifiers List?

The Unique Identifiers List was previously known as the By-Names List. This is a dataset that includes everyone currently experiencing homelessness who has consented to be included. The dataset can be filtered and sorted to generate a Priority List for matching people to vacancies that become available. The Unique Identifier is the client's name.

Can my client change their consent type from Coordinated Access and/or Explicit consent to Declined – Anonymous?

A client can give and withdraw their consent at any time. However, this may interfere with some of the services your client is currently receiving. If your client withdraws consent, the information already in HIFIS will remain in the system, but no further personal information about the client will be entered for the shared system. Only the client's name, gender, and date of birth will be visible in HIFIS to staff at participating agencies. Withdrawal of consent will be in effect immediately.

What happens if a client who is 16 or older does not have capacity to consent?

Capacity

Capacity refers to a participant's ability to:

- Understand the information in the HIFIS and By-Name List Consent form.
- Recognize what might happen if they do or don't give consent.
- Clearly communicate their choice, either by speaking or writing.

What if a Client Cannot Give Consent?

If a client will never be able to give consent, a guardian or spouse can sign for them. The intake worker should write: **Guardian/Parent/Spouse Proxy Signer – Client Does Not Have Capacity to Consent.**

However, if a client is temporarily unable to give consent but will be able to later, the intake worker should wait until they can consent before adding their personal information to HIFIS.

What if a Client Can't Physically Sign?

If the client can make an X or any kind of mark, they should do so on the signature line. The worker should write: **Verbal Consent Obtained – Client Mark Witnessed.**

If the client cannot make a mark, and are alone, the worker should note: **Verbal Consent Given – Client Cannot Physically Sign.**

If the client cannot sign but there is a person accompanying them, they can ask that person to sign on their behalf. The worker should note: **Proxy Signer – Client Cannot Physically Sign.**

HIFIS Use

What is the data requirement for uploading documents to HIFIS?

When uploading documents into HIFIS, there is a 5MB file size limit, per upload, to prevent overloading the server with large files. For larger documents that are essential for client support, it is recommended to store them through alternative methods, such as printing and keeping them physically in the agency office.

Can I delete Cases/Goals in Case Management?

Users currently do not have permission to delete cases or goals in Case Management. However, deletions are still possible. To request a deletion, please contact your site administrator, who can submit a request to the City of Lethbridge HIFIS team.

Can I delete Client Housing Placements in Case Management?

Similar to deleting cases and goals in Case Management, users do not have permission to delete housing placements in HIFIS. If a housing placement has been duplicated and needs to be removed, please contact your site administrator. They can submit a deletion request to the City of Lethbridge HIFIS team on your behalf.