

3 County Continuum of Care

2017 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT: GUIDANCE ON REPORTING DISABILITIES

The point-in-time count requests information about disabling conditions—specifically, whether people have a disabling condition, and whether adults have the following disabilities: serious mental illness, substance abuse disorder, and HIV/AIDS. For purpose of data collection, it is important to know:

- It is completely voluntary whether persons respond to questions about disability status;
- Persons being surveyed should be informed prior to responding to any disability question that their refusal to respond will not result in a denial of service.
- The interviewer must not ask about specifics related to a reported disabling condition.

Serious Mental Illness

A mental health problem may include serious depression, serious anxiety, hallucinations, violent behavior or thoughts of suicide. A prescription for any psychoactive medication is an indication of a diagnosed mental health condition.

Developmental Disability

A developmental disability is a severe, chronic disability that is attributed to a mental or physical impairment (or combination of physical and mental impairments) that occurs before 22 years of age and limits the capacity for independent living and economic self-sufficiency. Developmental disabilities include autistic spectrum disorders. The Social Security Administration now refers to developmental disabilities as intellectual disabilities.

Substance Abuse Disorder

The Social Security Administration defines substance abuse disorder as "drug addiction or alcoholism" marked by "the presence of maladaptive use of alcohol, illegal drugs, prescription medications, and toxic substances (such as inhalants)." It does **not** include "addiction to, or use of, prescription medications taken as prescribed, including methadone and narcotic pain medications." It does **not** include the "occasional maladaptive use or a history of occasional prior maladaptive use of alcohol or illegal drugs."

Physical Disability

A physical disability is a physical impairment which is (a) expected to be of long, continued and indefinite duration, (b) substantially impedes an individual's ability to live independently, and (c) of such a nature that such ability could be improved by more suitable housing conditions.

Chronic Health Condition

A chronic health condition means a diagnosed condition that is more than three months in duration and is either not curable or has residual effects that limit daily living and require adaptation in function or special assistance. Examples of chronic health conditions include, but are not limited to, heart disease; stroke; severe asthma; diabetes; arthritis-related conditions (including arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus, or fibromyalgia); adult onset cognitive impairments (including traumatic brain injury, dementia, other cognitive related conditions); severe headache/migraine; cancer; liver disease; chronic bronchitis or emphysema.

Duration and Severity

In order to meet the definition of disability, a condition or disorder must be "of long duration" and "impede the ability to live independently."

- **"Of long duration" is best thought of as not short-term or not transient.** Homelessness is traumatic and painful. Anxiety or depression is an appropriate response to the situation. If the anxiety or depression preceded homelessness, or has been a long-term issue regardless of living situation, it is a fair assessment that the condition is "of long duration." If it is anticipated that the condition will endure indefinitely into the future, the condition is "of long duration." The Social Security Administration deems a mental health condition durable if "the evidence shows that the impairment has lasted or is expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months."
- **"Impedes the ability to live independently"** or "impedes daily functioning" encompasses impairments which interfere with the individual's ability to function successfully in everyday life. The Social Security Administration indicates that an individual's functioning is impeded if there is a "marked limitation" related to 1) activities of daily living; 2) social functioning; and 3) concentration, persistence, or pace. A marked limitation "may arise when several activities or functions are impaired, or even when only one is impaired, as long as the degree of limitation is such as to interfere seriously with the ability to function independently, appropriately, effectively, and on a sustained basis."