



Michigan Balance of State Continuum of Care Safety Practice Basics for Housing Based Case Managers

The work of a Housing Based Case Manager is a critical component of the work to end homelessness. Effective Housing Based Case Management (HBCM) can help people maintain their housing while also achieving stability and wellness in their lives.

A Housing Based Case Manager (HBCM) is an organized and trained professional that acts as a positive change agent in holistically assisting individuals/families in achieving and maintaining housing. At the same time, the HBCM works to promote awareness and teaches strategies that can reduce the likelihood of a return to homelessness in the future.

Home visits are a critical component of the work of a HBCM as they allow for the tenant and the HBCM to skillfully build on strategies that will reduce the likelihood of a return to homelessness IN the home environment.

As HBCM happens in the client's home, it is important to adhere to safety protocols that can enhance the HBCM experience and maintain safety for both the case managers and the clients. Case managers should be trained on how to assess and manage risk, and should have a plan in place with their internal teams for responding to incidents of violence or mental health crises.

Housing Based Case Management Tools for Home Visits

- Ensure you and your teams have completed the MIBOSCO Housing Based Case Management Curriculum on the MIBOSCO Training Site.
 - [MIBOSCO Training Site](#)
- Use these discussion questions that accompany each HBCM training to talk with your teams about doing this work.
 - [Discussion Questions](#)
- Get to know your clients and their needs. This can include completing the full SPDAT assessment together shortly following move-in as well as prior to move-in during the warm transfer meeting/s. Reviewing the full SPDAT assessment during the warm transfer process with the client's Street Outreach worker is an important part of the relationship building process and can help with continuity of care as the client transitions from homelessness into housing.

- You can refer to the NW Michigan Coalition to End Homelessness Warm Transfer Process as a resource. [NW Michigan Coalition to End Homelessness Warm Transfer Process](#)
- Get to know your clients and their needs by having intentional conversations with them about what you can do to make them feel safe with you in their home and vice versa. Talk openly with your clients about what it means for you to feel safe in their home and let them share what it feels like to have you in their home. It's important to establish professional boundaries immediately with clients. Boundaries can also help establish trust and transparency throughout the HBCM process.
- Develop individualized safety plans for clients who are at high risk. These plans should include strategies for avoiding dangerous situations and coping with stress. You can use the following tool to help guide you and your client when developing a safety plan.
 - [MIBOSCOC uses the Org Code Crisis Planning Tool](#) as a guide.

Here are some specific tips to ensure safety for you and your clients during home visits

- Learning how to effectively engage with clients in an in-home setting takes time and practice. Ensure that shadowing other HBCM or staff people for at least 30 days occurs when new staff are hired on.
- Establish internal protocols for conducting home visits and working within the community. Examples include:
 - Making your work calendar shareable to your team and supervisor. Indicate the client's name and address on each calendar appt.
 - If necessary, let your supervisor know where you are going and when you expect to be back; either via email or text--in addition to your calendar if needed.
 - Turn on location services on all work phones during working hours.
- If you feel it necessary, conduct home visits with a partner or colleague. This is especially important if you are working with clients who have a history of violence against staff members.
- Carry as little as possible into the home, do not take your personal belongings such as a purse.
- Be mindful of others in the apartment/house for confidentiality and safety reasons.
- Know where your exits are, you may need to leave a different way than you entered.
- Be aware of your surroundings and take precautions to stay safe.
- Trust your gut instinct. If you feel unsafe in a situation, leave immediately.
- Be aware of your surroundings and watch for any suspicious activity.
- If you feel unsafe, leave immediately and call for help.