This document aims to guide communities in creating comprehensive inactive policies and procedures that align with the BFZ quality data standards for the **single adult population**. Communities can use this guide as a starting point for developing their own inactive policies and are encouraged to adapt this guide to their local context.

*BFZ defines someone as “inactive” if they no longer meet the* [***U.S. Department of Housing and Development’s definition of literal homelessness***](https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/coc-esg-virtual-binders/coc-esg-homeless-eligibility/four-categories/category-1/) *(Category 1 & 4) in the community’s geographical area. See the* [***Determining Who Is “Inactive” section***](#_796vaco8x768) *of this guide to see in more detailed scenarios where individuals may not meet HUD’s definition of literal homelessness.*

Things to consider when creating an inactive policy:

* Decide which stakeholders are involved in drafting and approving the policy. It is **highly** recommended that you involve people with lived expertise and frontline staff in creating inactive policies and procedures. BFZ increasingly finds that communities that engage these groups develop more equitable, responsive, and effective policies.
* Decide where your inactive policy will live. Communities have developed an inactive policy in a standalone document or as part of other policies and procedures, such as coordinated entry, HMIS, and by-name dataset (BND) operations manuals. Communities should decide what method works for them, and BFZ doesn’t prescribe a specific way to create an inactive policy. **Regardless, it’s recommended that wherever this policy lives, all the needed information is centralized and easily accessible to stakeholders.** This will help a community come to a shared understanding of how active homelessness and inactivity are defined.
* Build **concrete feedback loops** to help your community ensure that their inactive policy is successfully implemented. For example, write in ways that staff will continuously monitor the implementation of the inactive policy or include details about how and when this policy will be evaluated and revised. BFZ recommends that communities embed processes in their policies that focus on policy implementation over time.

Structure of this guide:

1. This guide first lists **sections** of an inactive policy BFZ recommends a community develop. Consider these sections key components of an inactivity policy to develop rather than a prescribed structure you must follow as you write your policy.
2. There are companion **workshopped community examples** from the BFZ network which you can find on the [**Inactive Policy Guide section**](https://login.builtforzero.org/toolkit/quality-data-toolkit/inactivity/overview-inactivity/) **of the BFZ Quality Data Toolkit**. The BFZ Data Coaching Team has compiled examples of inactive policies developed by communities nationwide. Each policy was selected because it is a real example of how communities approached the task of developing an inactive policy, not because it aligns perfectly with this guide. BFZ data coaches adapted some elements of these policies to make them more transferable, annotated each policy to highlight the key components from the guide, and included suggestions for continuous improvement.

## Suggested ways to use this guide to build an inactive policy:

1. Review the **suggested information** and consider what policies and procedures exist informally or in a written document that covers these topics. Then, determine which parts of the policy need to be developed from scratch.
   * If the information is scattered across documents, consider how you can create an inactive policy that centralizes that information but is consistent across sources.
2. Review the **recommendations for developing each section** as you brainstorm how to amend existing or create new content for your policy.
3. Review the **workshopped BFZ policies** in the [**Inactive Policy Guide section**](https://login.builtforzero.org/toolkit/quality-data-toolkit/inactivity/overview-inactivity/) **of the BFZ Quality Data Toolkit** to help you overcome the dreaded writer’s block. You can use the workshopped policies to start thinking about structure and language for your policy. These examples are publicly available, so feel free to copy language if it’s relevant to your community.

# Section 1: Introduction

## Suggested information to include in this section:

1. Describe why it is important to know who is actively experiencing homelessness and who is no longer experiencing homelessness in your community on a monthly basis.
2. It may also be helpful to define your “community,” especially if your community does not map to one Continuum of Care (CoC) or a clear geographical area like a county or city. For example, you could include a simple map or explanation of the geographic boundaries.
3. Briefly describe who drafted and approved this document, including how, when, and by whom changes will be made to the inactive policy. Additionally, outline avenues in which users of this policy can provide feedback.

# Section 2: Determining Who Is “Active”

## Suggested information to include in this section:

1. How someone is determined to be active and included on the by-name list as actively homeless.
2. Describe what actions need to be taken to ensure someone actively experiencing homelessness is added to the by-name list, kept active on the by-name list, exited from the by-name list, and therefore categorized as not actively experiencing homelessness.

### Recommendations for developing this section of your inactive policy:

* Describe how you define homelessness. If this policy only applies to specific populations or subpopulations of people experiencing homelessness, state that and include the definition of those populations or subpopulations.
* Be as explicit as possible about what actions cause someone to be identified as active. This will help increase transparency across the homeless response system about what actions are needed to ensure individuals are identified as actively experiencing homelessness and included on the by-name list.
* Consider how a person who has been moved off the active list but is found to still be experiencing homelessness can be *immediately reactivated to receive support in pursuing permanent housing and services.*

# Section 3: Determining Who Is “Inactive”

## Suggested information to include in this section:

1. Describe situations in which someone actively experiencing homelessness would be considered inactive and the process by which that person is then moved to the inactive status. BFZ recommends that a community develop processes and protocols covering the three following situation types:
2. **No longer active because of loss of contact:** clearly describe the threshold and processes your community has set to determine when a person is considered “inactive” because the homeless response system lost contact with them, including:
   1. How many days without being able to find, get in contact with, or get an update about someone until they are no longer considered active
   2. The number and frequency of expected attempts to contact or locate a person who is currently counted as actively experiencing homelessness before they are moved to the inactive status
   3. Expectations for when, by whom and how each contact attempt happens
   4. Where contact attempts are documented in your HMIS or by-name dataset
3. **No longer active due to institutional stays:** include specific information about how you identify whether a person who is on your active list is considered inactive because they have entered an institutional setting for more than 90 days.
   1. Describe what settings your community defines as an institution
   2. Describe where institutional stays are documented in your HMIS or by-name dataset
4. **No longer active because of a verified absence (other than loss of contact or an institutional stay):** include information about how each of the following situations would impact someone’s active status, including expectations for how information should be updated in your HMIS system or by-name dataset:
   1. Moved out of the geographic area but are not permanently housed
   2. Moved into a housing situation other than permanent housing that does not meet HUD’s definition of literal homelessness for greater than a specified number of days set by your community
   3. Passed away
5. Define roles and responsibilities for updating, monitoring, and reporting inactivity in your HMIS system or by-name dataset.
6. Describe how you report the *moved to inactive* and *return from inactive* monthly metrics.

### Recommendations for developing this section of your inactive policy:

* **Tracking inactivity due to loss of contact:** 
  + As you develop this section, BFZ recommends you engage individuals with lived expertise and frontline staff to create strategies for how to most effectively and equitably contact and stay in contact with people experiencing homelessness.
  + To determine your number of days threshold and contact/locate attempts, reflect on how your homeless response system works, your capacity, and how this impacts your ability to quickly and equitably match resources, services, and permanent housing to people. Some systems may focus on 30 days with weekly attempts, while others may choose 90 days with monthly attempts based on what is feasible and most effective locally.
* **Tracking inactivity due to institutional stays:**
  + As you develop processes around how to track inactivity when someone enters an institution, think about how to collect information so that:
    - Staff across the system can coordinate care before and after someone enters an institution, and
    - Your system can better understand the historical movement of individuals between homelessness and institutions.
* **Tracking other cases of inactivity:** 
  + Be specific about what scenarios would result in someone being moved to inactivity if they move outside your community and how you would operationalize any thresholds created. If you know that individuals often move back and forth between your community and a neighboring community, you will want to think about how to determine when someone should be classified as active versus inactive. For example, this could be operationalized by keeping people active in the by-name dataset if they still prefer to be housed in your community but are located in another. Another approach could be to define the number of days that individuals will stay active in the by-name dataset if they move to a nearby community but are not permanently housed.
  + Think about how to collect and share information about individuals who may be inactive because they do not meet HUD’s definition of literal homelessness but are unstably housed. This information can help a community identify when someone returns to active homelessness from an unstable housing situation so the system can account for that information as they are triaged and prioritized for resources.
  + When moving someone to inactive if they pass away, it is highly recommended that a community:
    - Develops a process that allows staff to alert others in the system that someone passed away and
    - Develop a way to specifically track this information to better understand system-wide mortality rates for people experiencing homelessness.
* As you write out the **roles and responsibilities** for updating, monitoring, and reporting inactivity, be specific about ongoing expectations for staff across the system. For example, you can include data entry timelines, instructions for updating the data elements required for inactivity, a specific outline of what types of roles in the system are responsible for what aspects of the inactive policy, etc.
* BFZ recommends documenting in some way **how to report the BFZ inactive metrics**, *moved to inactive* and *returned from inactive*. This information may belong in a standalone inactive policy or be described in a process document for data-specific staff. Regardless, having that information documented and accessible to the appropriate staff can help the sustainability of inactive policies.