SACRAMENTO
STEPS FORWARD

Ending Homelessness. Starting Fresh.

HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (HMIS)

TRAINING MANUAL

VI-SPDAT

Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool

Revised 12.12.18

Need Help/Have Questions?

For more information, contact the HMIS Team:
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Need More Training?

For more information, contact the HMIS Administrative Office:
1331 Garden Highway
Sacramento, CA 95833
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Other Useful Resources

Clarity Human Services Help Portal
http://help.clarityhs.com/

HMIS Data Standards Manual
https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HMIS-Data-Standards-Manual.pdf

HUD- HMIS News & Announcements
https://www.hudexchange.info/hmis

Table of Contents

Introduction to the VI-SPDAT

The SPDAT and all of its associated products (VI-SPDAT, Family SPDAT, Family VI-SPDAT, Youth SPDAT, Next Steps Tool for Youth, Justice Discharge VI-SPDAT, Diversion and Prevention Family VI-SPDAT, Diversion and Prevention VI-SPDAT) developed by OrgCode Consulting, Inc are the most used suite of products in the world in triaging and assessing the needs of homeless populations.

They are created directly with the voice of people with lived experience. They are vetted through experts in trauma, domestic violence, and through lenses of anti-oppression and cultural competency. They are rigorously tested and all grounded in evidence with considerable academic scrutiny.

The VI-SPDAT, or Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool, A pre-screening, or triage, tool 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 allows homeless service providers to similarly assess and prioritize the universe of people who are homeless in their community and identify whom to treat first based on the acuity of their needs. The VI-SPDAT was not intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of each person's needs.

There a 4 domains of the VI-SPDAT: History of Housing and Homelessness, Risks, Socialization and Daily Functions, and Wellness.   The Risk domain surveys the household for risk of harm to self or others, involvement in high-risk and/or exploitive situations, interactions with emergency services, and legal issues. The Socialization and Daily Functions domain surveys the household on their self-care and daily living skills, their personal administration and money management, their meaning daily activities, and their social relations and networks.   The Wellness domain surveys the household of their mental health and wellness, cognitive functioning, their physical health and wellness, medications, substance use, and experience of abuse and/or trauma.

End-User Agreement

As the guardians entrusted with personal data, VI-SPDAT Surveyors have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that the data they gather is being collected, accessed and used appropriately. It is also the responsibility of each Surveyor to ensure that client data is only used to the ends to which it was collected, ends that have been made explicit to clients and are consistent with the mission to assist families and individuals in our community to resolve their housing crisis. Proper Surveyor training including HMIS User training, adherence to the HMIS Policies and Procedures Manual as well as this manual, and a clear understanding of client confidentiality are vital to achieving these goals.

Additionally, before a surveyor is able to use HMIS and access the VI-SPDAT assessment tools, they must sign a VI-SPDAT User Agreement. The VI-SPDAT User Agreement form can be found at https://sacramentostepsforward.org/resources/helpful-materials/, under HMIS New User Setup Forms.

When and Where to Conduct the VI-SPDAT

While there is no specific time that you are required to conduct a VI-SPDAT, there are some things to consider before conducting the VI-SPDAT.

Category 1 or Category 4 Homeless

The VI-SPDAT is reserved for Households that are either Category 1 or Category 4 Homeless as HUD defines these terms. Couch surfing does not qualify as Category 1 or 4 Homeless.

Category 1, Literally Homeless:

(1) Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

(i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation;

(ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); **or**

(iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less **and** who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution

Category 4, Fleeing/Attempting to Flee DV:

(4) Any individual or family who:

(i) Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence;

(ii) Has no other residence; **and**

(iii) Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing

Building Rapport

The VI-SPDAT is a self-report tool. Many of the questions are of a sensitive nature. Without rapport, clients may not be comfortable answering or answering honestly to these questions. Dishonest answers result in an inaccurate assessment.

Additionally, questions of sensitive nature can be triggering; without rapport you can be putting yourself and the client in an unsafe situation. Rapport helps you to recognize when someone is becoming triggered and determine if the survey should be revisited another day. It also helps you to prepare the client to be able to answer uncomfortable questions in a safe environment.

If at any point during the survey, the client expresses or appears that they are being triggered or becoming upset, please stop the survey and schedule it for another day.

Where should you conduct the VI-SPDAT?

When conducting the VI-SPDAT you are collecting clients' Personal Protected Information (PPI) and asking personal questions that are sensitive in nature. It is the surveyor's responsibility to conduct the VI-SPDAT in a safe environment. The surveyor needs to consider whether the location is a place where both the client and they are comfortable. The surveyor also needs to consider the risk of someone else overhearing the information the client is providing.

VI-SPDAT Tools

Our community is currently using 3 different VI-SPDAT tools: Single, TAY, and Families.

VI-SPDAT Prescreen for Single Adults (SA)

The VI-SPDAT Prescreen for Single Adults is to be conducted with single adults, 25 years of age or older, with no minor children. For households with multiple adults and no minor children, a SA VI-SPDAT needs to be conducted with each person.

VI-SPDAT Prescreen for Transition Age Youth (TAY)

OrgCode Consulting, Inc. and Community Solutions joined forces with the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) to combine the best parts of products and expertise to create one streamlined triage tool designed specifically for youth aged 24 or younger.

The VI-SPDAT Prescreen for TAY is to be conducted with single adults, 24 years of age or younger, with no minor children. For households with multiple TAY adults and no minor children, a TAY VI-SPDAT needs to be conducted with each person.

VI-SPDAT Prescreen for Families

The VI-SPDAT Prescreen for Families is to be conducted with any household with at least 1 adult and 1 minor child. In households with multiple adults it is necessary to identify one of them as the Head of Household. Only one Family VI-SPDAT is required for the entire household. However, for households with multiple adults, we would recommend conducting additional VI-SPDATs on any adult not legally related to the minor child; or in the case where the additional adults are TAY adults with no minor children of their own, a TAY VI-SPDAT.

Step 1 - Before Starting the VI-SPDAT

Inform client about the VI-SPDAT and HMIS

What is the right messaging when explaining the Coordinated Entry assessment and system?

Giving the right message about the coordinated entry system is vital to its success. Clearly explaining the benefits of participating in the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) survey will encourage people to participate. It is equally important that individuals understand that participation does not guarantee housing. Participants should receive a detailed explanation of where their information will be shared.

Suggested Messaging Script

"I'd love to tell you about a short survey that we could do together that would help us learn more about you and will give us recommendations to help you move out of homelessness. The answers will help us determine how we can go about supporting and housing you. Would you like to hear more?

- The short survey will take about 20-30 minutes for us to complete.
- Most questions only require a Yes or No. Some questions require a one-word answer. I'll be honest; some questions are personal in nature. We ask that you are honest with your responses.
- The information collected goes in to secure database known as HMIS (Homeless Management Information System)
- After the survey, I can share its recommendations with you and give you some basic information about resources that could be a good fit for you. Based on your survey, I may also be able to connect you with a case manager who can continue to work with you on your housing and other goals.
- I want to make sure you know there are very few housing resources connected to this survey, so it's

unlikely that you will receive housing right away. The main benefit to doing the survey is that it will help identify your needs and help match you with all of the resources available to you through this program. Based on our conversation, I may recommend that we do additional paperwork to help you apply to additional housing programs.

- Your survey information will be available to the service providers that participate in the Sacramento Coordinated Entry System and used to determine if you are eligible for any of the participating housing, service and other related programs. Your information is shared so that:
  - You don't have to complete the survey multiple times;
  - Housing providers can identify the people eligible for housing resources as they come available; and
  - Sacramento County can identify the overall need for housing and the type of housing needed. This information can be used to better plan how to increase the housing resources available in the city and to advocate for sufficient housing resources to end homelessness.

Would you like to take the Survey with me?"

If yes, ask individual to sign release of information and explain about the HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) before proceeding with the Survey.

DOs and DON'Ts of VI-SPDAT

When explaining the VI-SPDAT and Sacramento Coordinated Entry System to a Client:

- **DO** explain **Sacramento Coordinated Entry System** as a collaboration of service providers working to streamline services to help connect homeless individuals to available resources and appropriate housing.
- **DO** ask a client to sign the VI-SPDAT consent form prior to conducting the survey.
- **DO** explain the VI-SPDAT as an assessment that enables our network of service providers to understand their needs, program eligibility, and assist in matching them to the best resources available.
- **DO** read all questions as is to the client. The order of the VI-SPDAT cannot change. As a self-reported tool, the sequence is vitally important. An individual must provide informed consent prior to the VI-SPDAT being completed.
- **DO** provide clarification of any questions the client expresses or appears to not understand,
- **DON'T** complete the VI-SPDAT solely through observation or using known information within your organization.
- **DON'T** change client answers because you believe they are being dishonest.
- **DON'T** mention that people will receive a score after participating in a VI-SPDAT, and **DON'T** give them the score.
- **DO** explain Rapid Rehousing (RRH) or Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and how each type of housing program caters to a client's needs.
- **DO** empower and encourage those who score <5 to utilize community resources to exit homelessness on their own.
- **DON'T** guarantee housing to a client or give them a timeframe in which they will be housed.
- **DON'T** tell a client that the most vulnerable are being prioritized for housing. Please remember that we are using the VI-SPDAT to **match people to appropriate housing**.
- **DON'T ever go back into and Assessment to change answers, the system logs all changes. If you change answers, your HMIS account will be deactivated!**

VI-SPDAT Survey and Housing Services Match Initiation Consent Form

*Review a written copy of the VI-SPDAT Survey and Housing Services Match Initiation Consent form so the client will understand what they are agreeing to **PRIOR** to you starting the survey and entering the data into the HMIS system.*

The VI-SPDAT Survey and Housing Services Match Initiation Consent form can be found at https://sacramentostepsforward.org/resources/helpful-materials/, under HMIS Client Intake Forms.

List of Participating Agencies

A current List of Participating Agencies can be found at https://sacramentostepsforward.org/resources/helpful-materials/ under HMIS Client Intake Forms, Sacramento & Yolo County Agencies Participating in HMIS.

Step 2 - Searching For A Client

Reduce Duplications in HMIS

The burden of *not* creating duplicate records falls on each participating agency. In order to reduce the duplication of client records, **HMIS Users should always search for the client in HMIS before creating a new client record**. If matches are found, the user must determine if any of the records found, match their client. Having multiple (duplicate) records in the database for a single client causes confusion and inaccurate information being stored.

Search for a Client

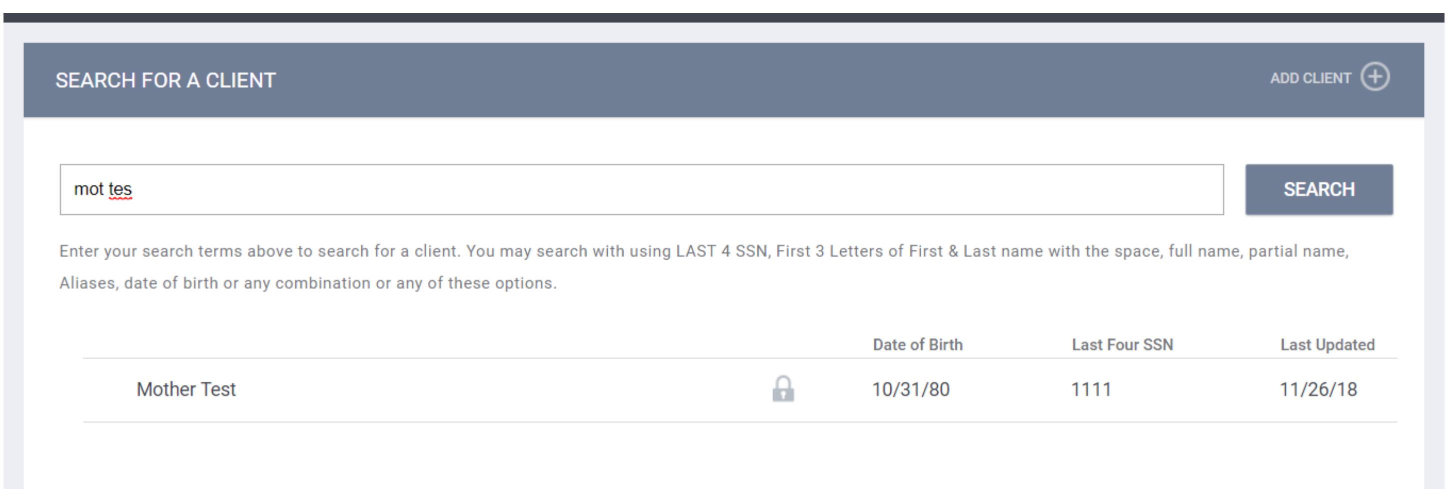
In order to view a client's information, or to add or edit their information, you must first locate the client. Your search to determine if the client already exists in the HMIS system needs to be thorough. If you don't do a thorough search, the likelihood of creating a duplicate client record is very high.

- Keep in mind that if a client was entered by another provider in the HMIS system, it's possible that an alias was used, or the name could be spelled differently. This is why we **ALWAYS SEARCH ON PARTIAL SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER FIRST**.

DO NOT SEARCH ON FULL NAMES - LESS IS MORE!

The fewest letters used in searches will find the most possible matches.

This helps prevent duplicate clients being entered due to misspellings!



Search Criteria

Before entering a NEW client, you must search to insure that the client does not already exist in the database. To search for a client in Clarity, complete these **separate** searches in the order listed below:

1. Enter a **Partial Social Security Number** (the last four digits of the SSN). Click On 
   (If client found, record the client ID. If client not found, clear search window, conduct next search)

2. **If no possible matches show up on the Social Security number search, next search on partial name and partial alias, separately, using the fewest letters possible.** Enter **Partial First Name** and **Partial Last Name** (3 letters from first name and 3 letters from last name). Click On 
   (If client found, record the client ID. If client not found, clear search window, conduct next search)
   I.E. If you are searching for **Michael Jones**, entering a **mic jon** in the search field makes it much easier to find the correct client. See example below:

3. You also have the ability to search using the last four SSN digits or a combination of the client name and SSN (mic jon 2333) OR by date of birth (09/20/65).

Remember, Less is More!

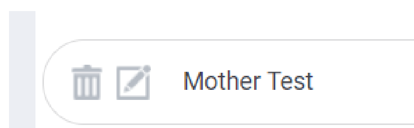
STEP 3 - Editing or Adding New Client

Editing a Client found in Search

If, after a thorough search, you have determined that your client exists

in HMIS follow the steps below:

- **To select a client from your search results, hover over the client you would like to select to produce an "EDIT" option.**
- Click on **"Edit"** to open the client file.
- **Update the profile screen with current information.**



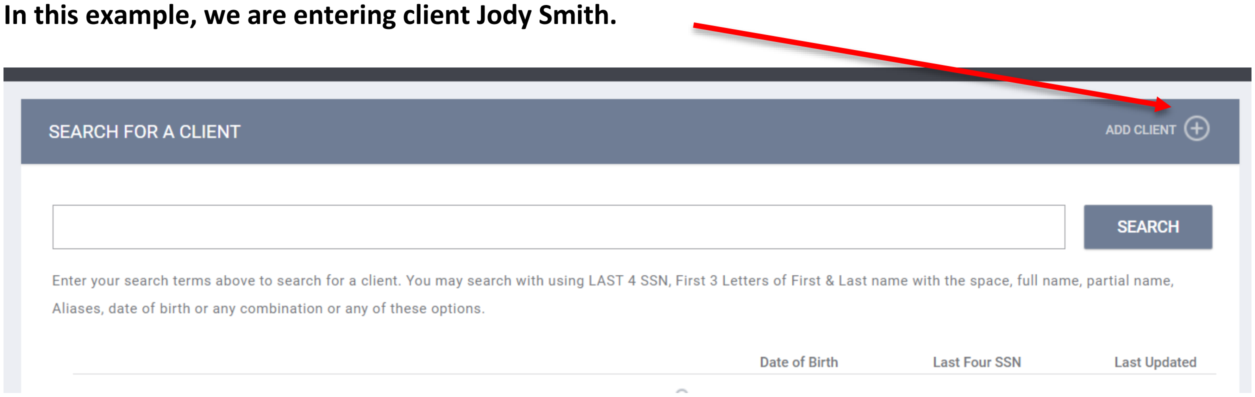
***Note* If a client has changed their last name, update the record and include the previous last name on the "Alias" line. In the "Notes" tab, indicate the old last name and the documentation you saw to validate the name change (DL, SSC, etc.)**

Adding a New Client (if client is not in the system)

If, after a thorough search, you have determined that your client does not exist in HMIS, a client profile would need to be created. Please review your HMIS Training Manual for all necessary protocols when entering a new client into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), such as providing the notification form that explains HMIS and why their personal information is being collected and obtaining the HMIS Consent form.

To create a Client profile:

- **Click** The Plus sign icon in the upper right corner of the Search screen.
  In this example, we are entering client Jody Smith.



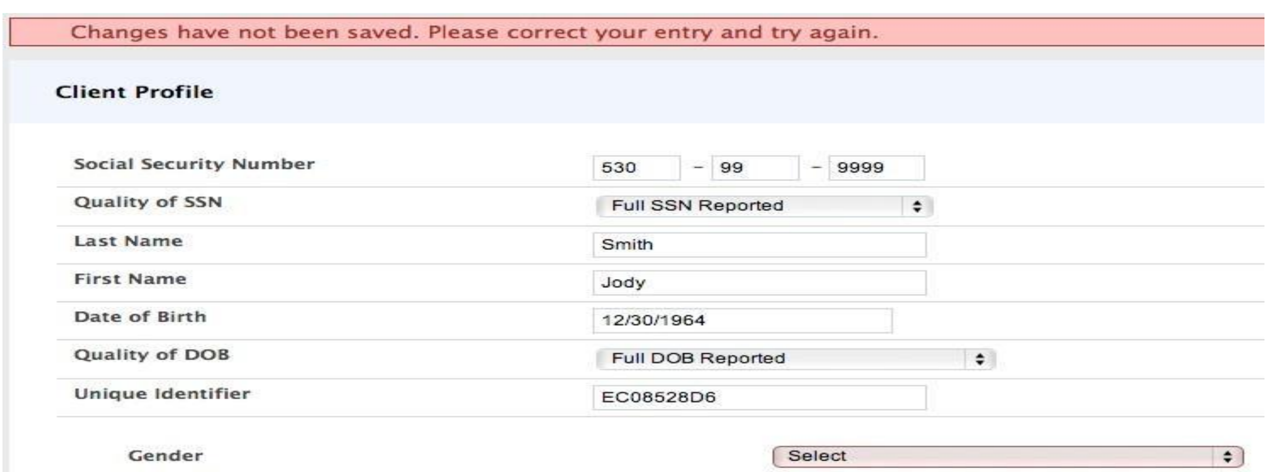
- Complete ALL fields on the following Intake screen with the proper response and click "Add Record" at the bottom of the page when you are finished. All fields REQUIRE complete data.

Add record or Cancel

- If you do not have the complete Zip Code of Last Address, you may estimate the zip code, and complete the remainder with 0's. i.e. 95000 for Sacramento/Yolo.

Please review your intake to insure accuracy and completeness.

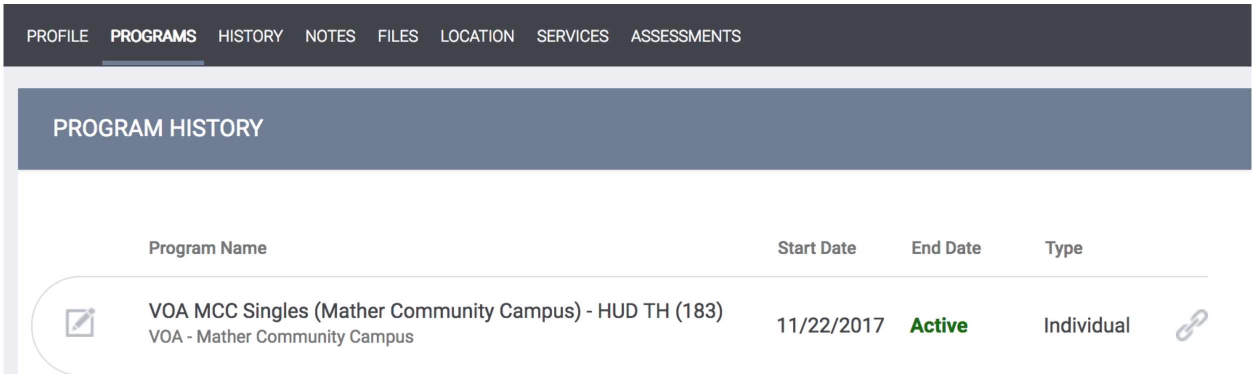
- Most data elements include a **'Client doesn't know'** or **'Client refused'** response category. These are considered valid responses if the client does not know or the client refuses to respond to the question. It is not the intention of the federal partners that clients be denied assistance if they refuse or are unable to supply the information. However, some information may be required by projects or public or private funders to determine eligibility for housing or services, or to assess needed services.
- The 'Client doesn't know' or 'Client refused' responses should not be used to indicate that the case manager or data entry person does not know the client's response, response category **"Data not collected"** must be used. In such cases, that response category will be treated as missing data for reporting purposes.
- If any of the required HUD Universal Data Elements have been left blank, you will be unable to save/create the file. These fields will be highlighted in red for your attention:



- Complete the missing fields and click "Add Record" to create the file.

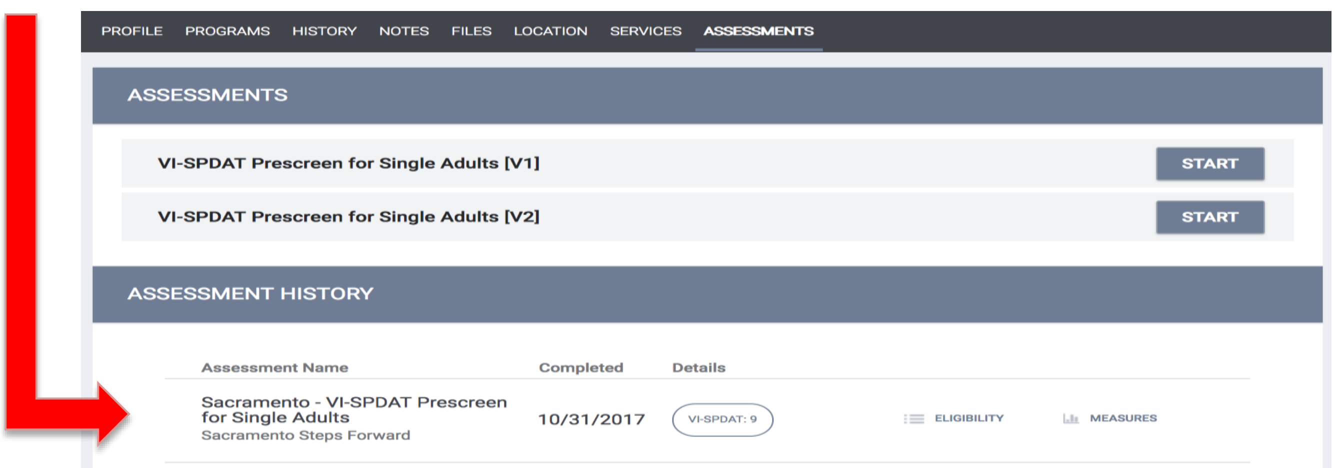
Program Screen Verification (Existing Clients ONLY)

The Program screen provides a complete look at **"Projects"** that an existing client in the system has participated in, in addition to any that the client might be currently active in. ALWAYS check this screen prior to completing a VI-SPDAT to make sure the client is not active in a housing program.



Assessment Screen Verification (Existing Clients ONLY)

When working with a client that already exists in the system, prior to completing the Consent or a VI-SPDAT, you must verify whether they have a current VI-SPDAT assessment. To do this, open the **"Assessments"** tab and look for "Assessment History". If the client has not had a VI-SPDAT done, this will not appear on the screen. The client in this example has already had a VI-SPDAT conducted on them.



If the client has had a VI-SPDAT assessment, check the date that it was conducted. If the date is greater than 1 year ago, proceed with conducting the survey.

If the client's household has changed from Single to Family or Family to Single, proceed with conducting the survey.

If the client has "aged" into adulthood (e.g., recently turned 25 years of age), proceed with conducting the survey.

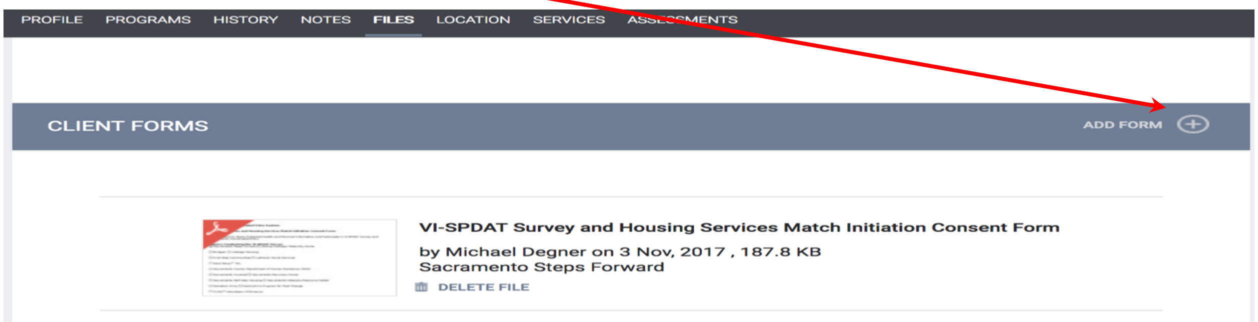
If the household was housed and has fell into homelessness again since the last assessment, proceed with conducting the survey.

If the household has experienced other life qualifying events since the last assessment (PLEASE consult with your direct supervisor), proceed with conducting the survey.

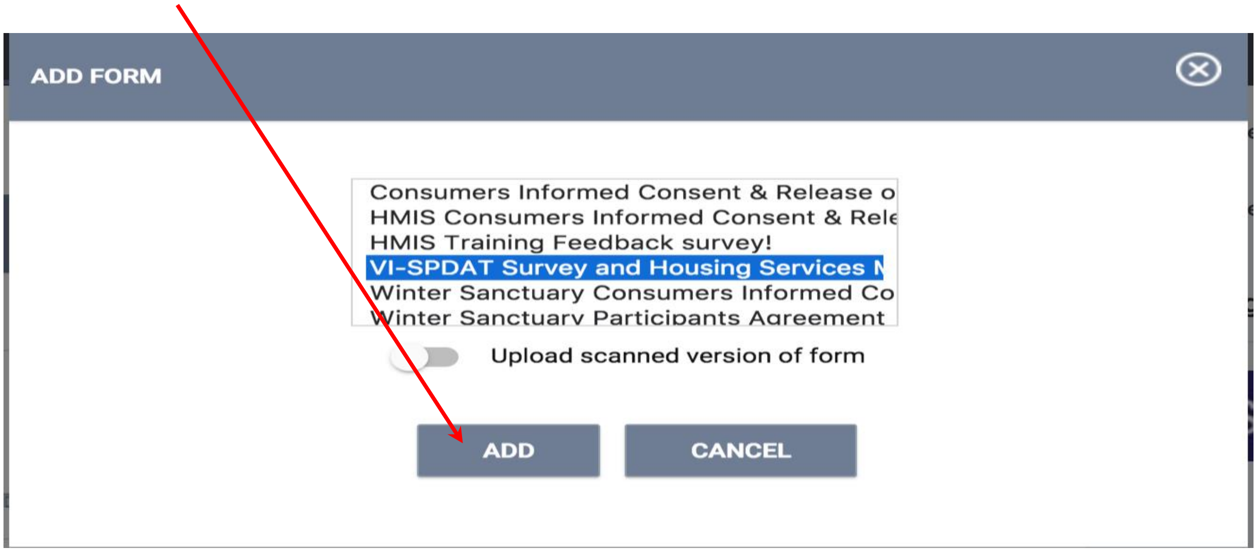
STEP 4 – Complete VI-SPDAT Consent Form

To Complete the VI-SPDAT Consent Form with the client in the system, open the "**Files**" tab.

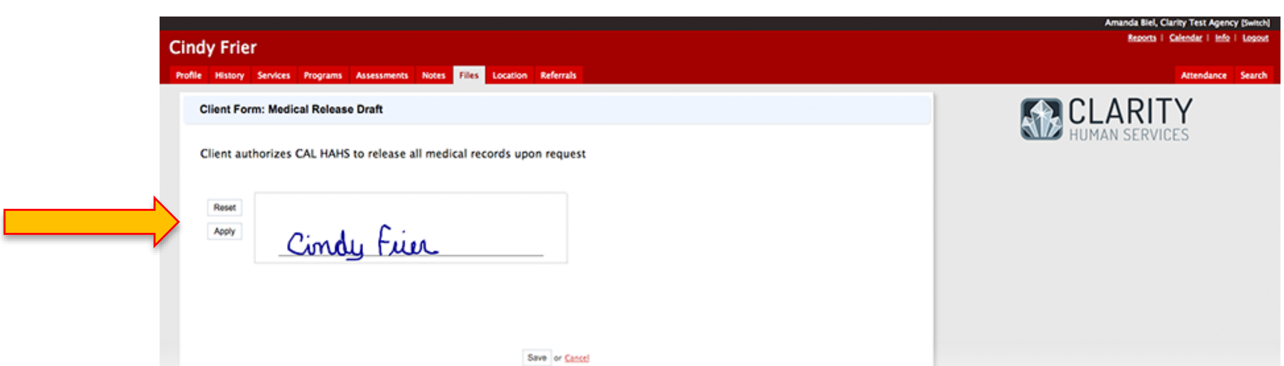
Then select "**Add Form**".



Select the "VI-SPDAT Survey and Housing Services Match Initiation Consent Form" from the pop-up box and click "**Add**". (Note – if you are using an iPad, you should see a bar with an arrow, click the arrow to view the available forms)



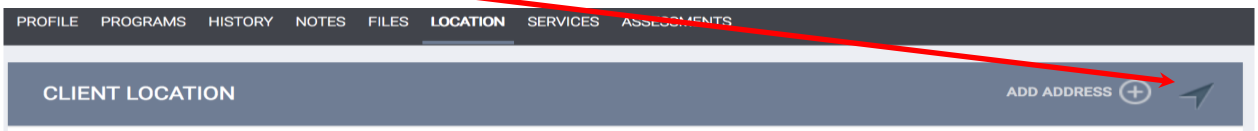
After marking the boxes, both you and the client will be required to sign. The electronic signature can be created with a computer mouse or finger pad. In the field, the client can use their finger to create their signature on the mobile device. If needed, you can select 'Reset' to redo the signature again.



"NOTE: After adding a signature, you must click "Apply" to save the form."

STEP 5 – Location Tab (Must Be Done at Assessment)

- Click on the "Location" tab in the client file.
- Click the **Arrow** next to "Add Address" and complete the pop-up window prompts.

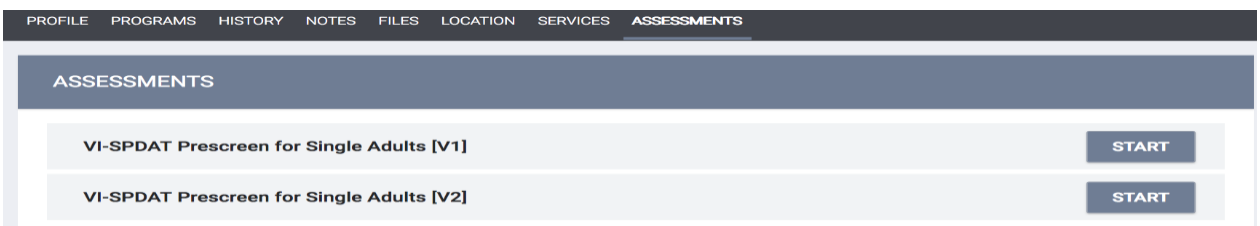


- You can continue to use this each time you meet your client to track movement, but it **must be done at the time of the VI-SPDAT** in order to be reported correctly.

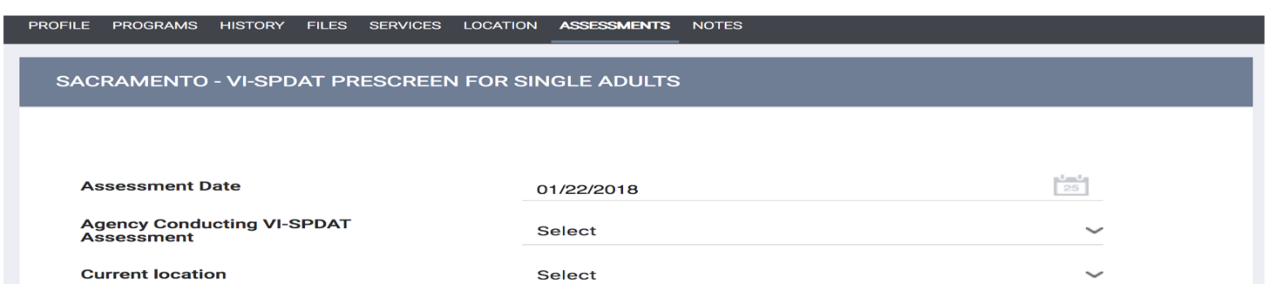
Clarity HMIS utilizes Google Maps to chart the location of your client. After adding an active address, that location will be visible in the map on the Location tab. The location of your agency will also be shown.

STEP 6 – Conduct the VI-SPDAT Assessment

Based on if the client is a Single Adult 25 years of age or older, a Transition Age Youth 24 years of age or younger, or a Family with at least 1 adult and 1 minor child; select the appropriate VI-SPDAT Assessment from the "**Assessments**" tab by clicking on the "**Start**" button to the right:

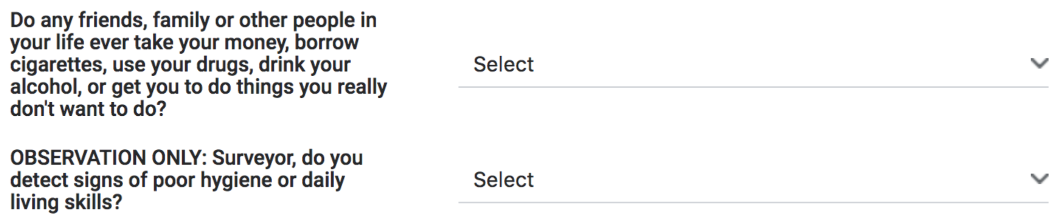


Selecting 'Start' will bring you to the VI-SPDAT Assessment main screen. Select your Agency and the current location, the Assessment Date will pre-populate with today's date. Next, complete each data field included in the assessment screen. Selecting the down arrow next to each data field will open a dropdown menu where you can select the appropriate response.

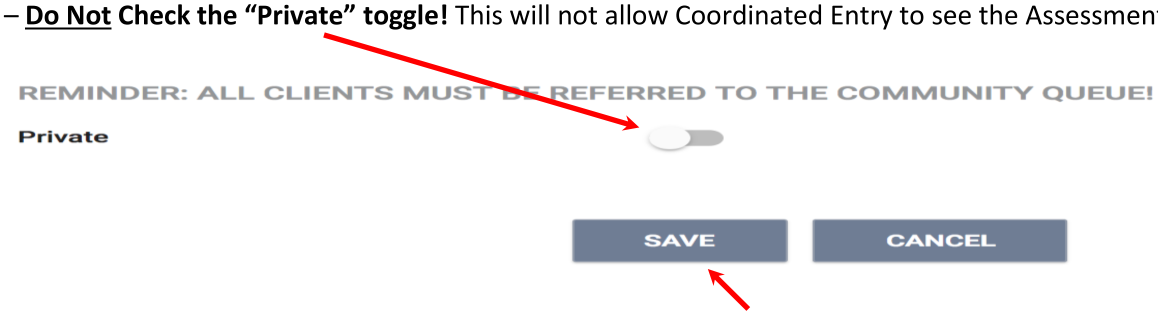


Note that some questions have only a toggle switch. Simply click on the toggle if the client answers 'Yes' and do not click on it if they answer 'No'.

NOTE – For questions marked as '**OBSERVATION ONLY'**, select the response based upon your visual observation of the client – **do not ask the client directly**.



NOTE – **<u>Do Not</u> Check the "Private" toggle!** This will not allow Coordinated Entry to see the Assessment.

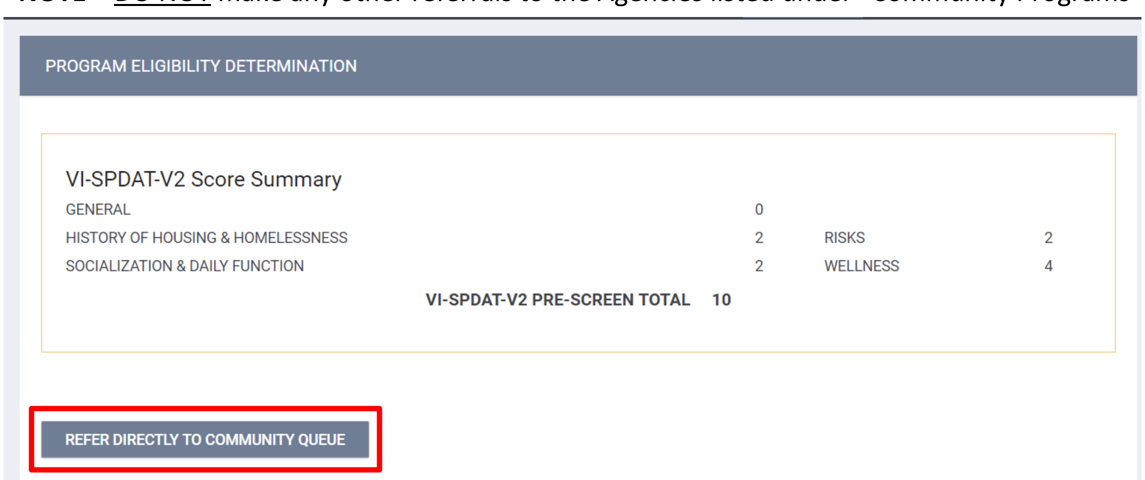


Once you have completed all questions on the VI-SPDAT, Click "SAVE"

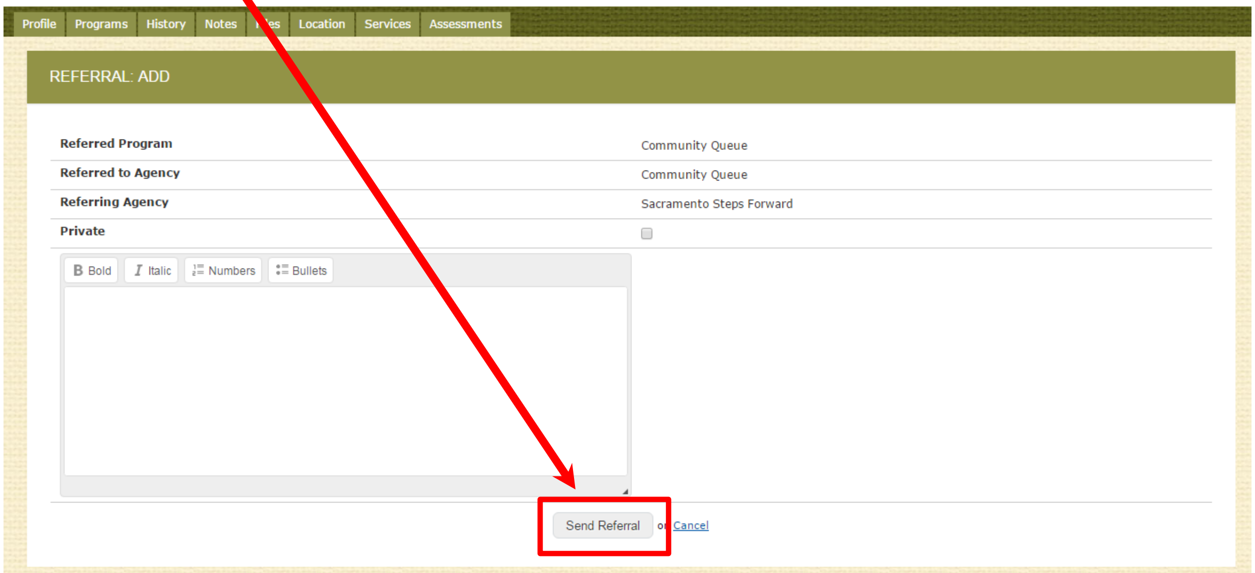
Send to the Community Queue

After you have completed the VI-SPDAT a screen will come up that will show the VI-SPDAT score and a button to "Refer Directly to Community Queue". It is recommended that you send ALL clients to the Community Queue. If they already have an active Community Queue referral, instead of "Refer Directly to Community Queue" you will see "Client pending on Community Queue. No additional steps are needed.

***NOTE** – <u>DO NOT</u> make any other referrals to the Agencies listed under "Community Programs"*

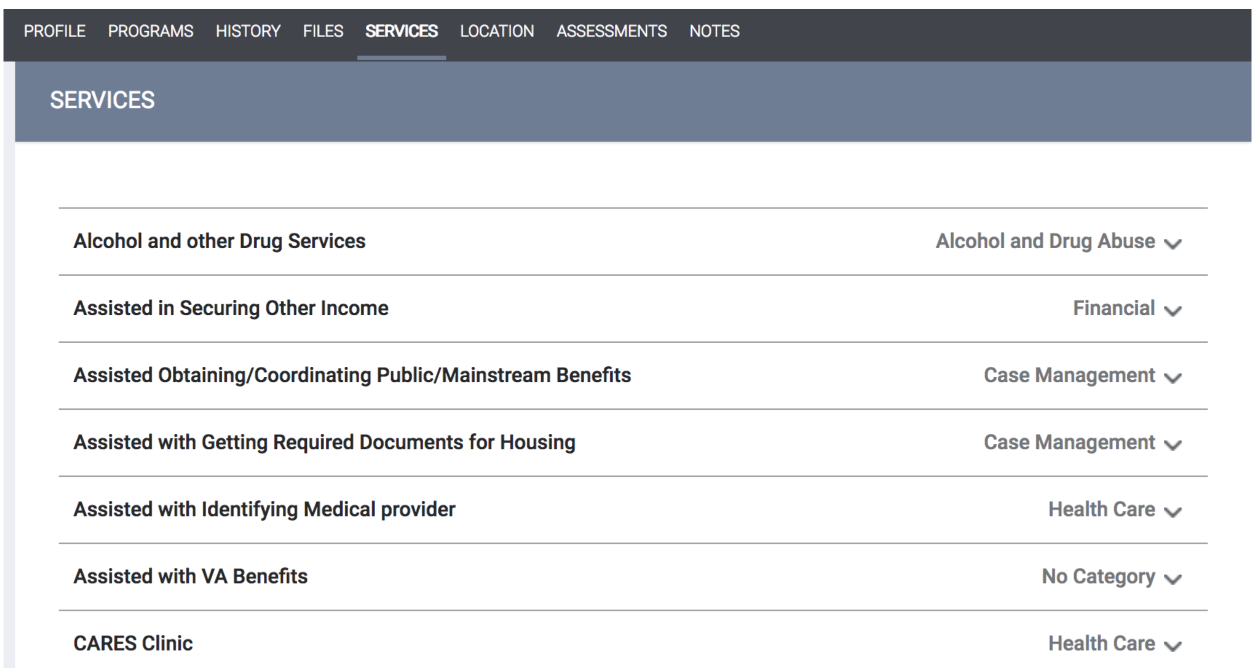


Note A second box will pop-up that will allow you to type any notes that would be helpful for Coordinated Entry to know about this client. Even if you have no notes to type at the time, **you MUST click on "Send Referral" for this step to be complete**!



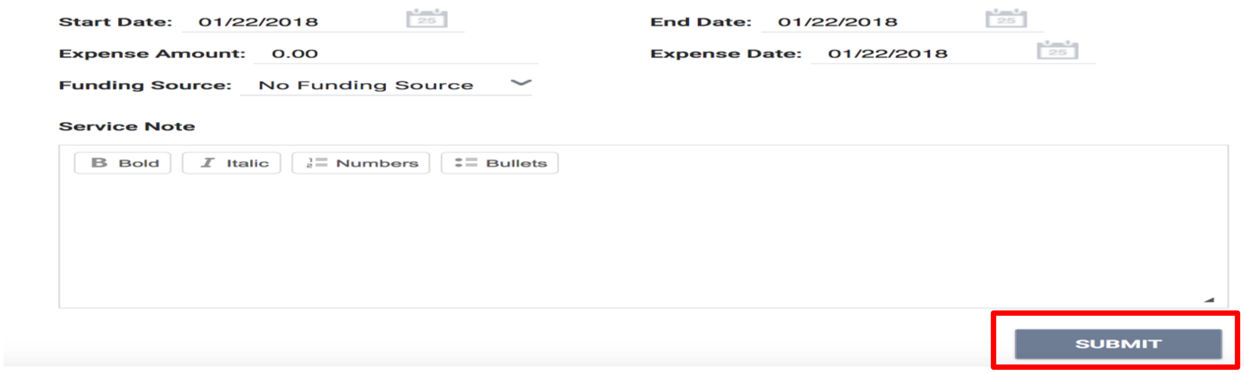
STEP 7 – Linking Services

After you have completed the VI-SPDAT and added your location, click on the **"Services"** tab to link all services you are providing the client with that day.



- **"Click" the arrow on the service you wish to provide to expand the drop down.**
- Enter the **Start and End Date** and any Expense associated with the service. If applicable verify that the proper funding source is selected and checkmark any group members (other household members) who should also receive this service.

- Click **“Submit”** to complete the service placement. In this example we have indicated we worked with the client to obtain a free phone.



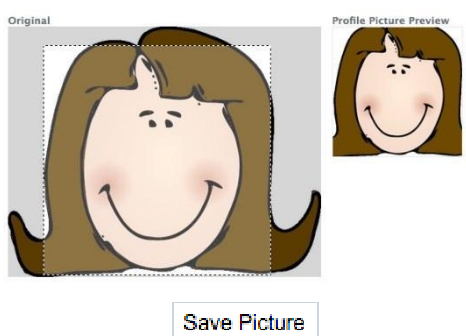
- Continue placing the client with any additional services that are being provided via this program

Additional System Features

Adding a Client Photo

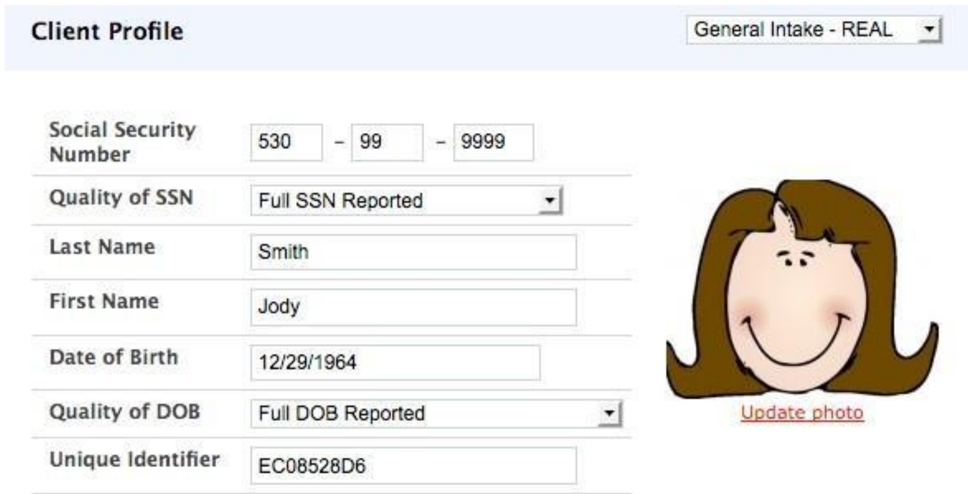
Uploading photos to your client files can provide a quick method of identification.

- Save a digital photo of the client to your computer.
- From the Client Profile screen, select **“Update Photo”** in the upper right section.
- Click **“Select File”** from the Upload Photo screen.
- Locate and select the photo from its location on your computer.
- Click “Upload”



- Using your mouse, define the area you wish to use in the original picture by dragging the outline as desired. The image on the right will display a preview of your selection.
- Click **"Save Picture"** when you are satisfied with the completed image.

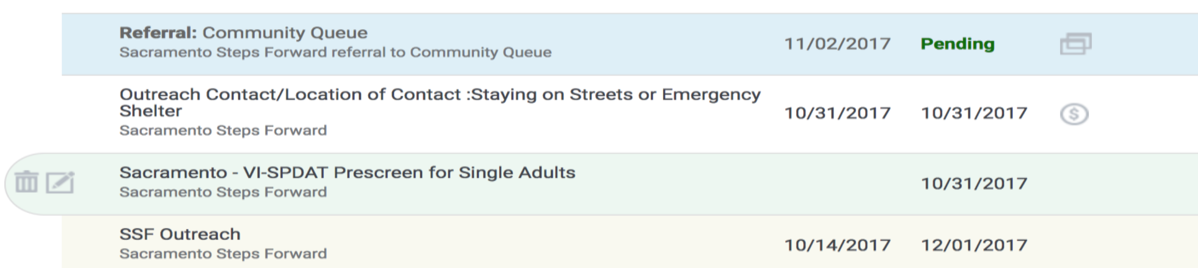
Your saved photo will now be visible from the Client Profile screen.



Adding Notes

Any time you have note that pertains to housing and the client's referral to the Community Queue, you should enter those notes in the client's referral. This will keep a single record in one area. This is especially important if the client moves into their own housing and they need to be removed from the Queue.

- To access the referral, click on the client's "History" tab. Mouse over the "Referral: Community Queue" and select "Edit".



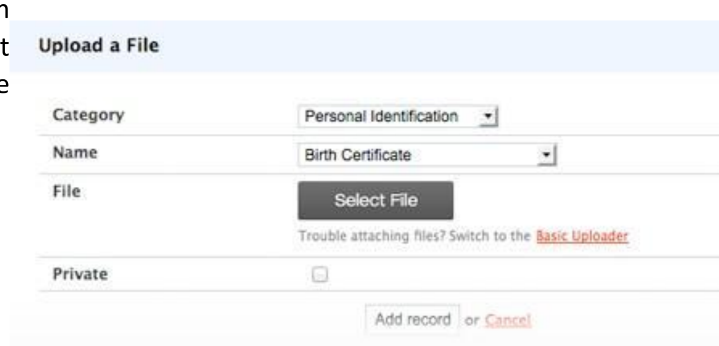
- At the bottom of the screen, you will see a "Notes" section. Type your note into the box below that and click "**Send Note**" when finished.

Note **Never** use the "Save Changes" box in the "Re-Assign" section. This will remove the client from the Community Queue!

Uploading Files

NOTE: This section will assume you have previously scanned and saved documents into separate files that are accessible through your computer.

- **Click** on the ***"Files tab"*** in the client's record to open the Client Files page. Then click ***"Add File"*** in the upper right corner.
- **Select** a **category** and **name** from the drop down menus that closest resembles the type of file you are uploading.



By clicking **"Select File"** you are using an advanced upload to select the file from your personal computer. If your system is not compatible with the advanced upload, you can choose the Basic Uploader.

- **To make Record Private** – Check the small check box. When checked, the file becomes Private and only your agency will have the ability to view the file. When unchecked, regular Sharing rules for your agency apply.
- **Click "Add Record"** to complete the upload and save.

The file will be listed by category and name with a small thumbnail image.

Once a file is uploaded, it is saved to the File tab by order of the upload date. There is no limit to the number of files that can be uploaded for each client. You can view the existing file simply by clicking **"View,"** or edit the document by uploading a new version. **Clarity supports all of the most common file types. (Word, Excel, PDF, JPG, PNG, etc…)**