# SMAC Variance Request FAQ

## What is a Variance Request?

A Variance Request is the formal process to appeal a client’s situation at any point during their journey through our system.

## When should I make a Variance Request?

An assessor or housing provider may submit a Variance Request to the Advisory Committee whenever they feel the standard Coordinated Entry workflow is not appropriately serving a client. Some examples are as follows:

* A client is currently housed in a program through CE, but the client is losing their housing and will return to homelessness
* A client is currently housed in a program through CE, but that program is not able to adequately meet the needs of the client
* I am a shared housing provider, and my client has identified a potential roommate who has not been referred to me through CE
* The assessment is not accurately capturing the vulnerability of a client

## What are possible outcomes of a Variance Request?

* Further resources to explore
* Transfer from one housing program to another
* Prioritization for next available housing opportunity

## How do I submit a Variance Request?

1. Ensure you have problem-solved with your agency to the best of your ability
2. Find the Variance Request form at www.smacmn.org/service-providers and click on the link titled, “SMAC Variance Request Form” or email Coordinated Entry staff.
3. Update client’s homeless history in HMIS or include it on the form.
4. Complete the Variance Request fully, including client’s HMIS number.
5. Send the completed Variance Request in a secure email to smac.ces@hearthconnection.org

## How long will this process take?

The Advisory Committee meets on the first and third Tuesdays of every month. The Coordinated Entry staff collects the variances throughout the 2-week period and sends them to Advisory members on the Tuesday opposite of the meeting. Any request received after this time will be added to the agenda for the following call.

For best results, submit Variance to the Advisory Committee 3 months prior to project exit (if applicable) for better chance to yield a housing opportunity. You may request a time-sensitive variance if there is an imminent need. The Advisory cannot guarantee the outcome of any request.

Advisory may return your request with further questions or suggestions to be acted upon before a denial or approval can be given.

## What does the Advisory consider when making decisions?

The advisory’s values are to prioritize clients:

* Who are or are nearly Chronically homeless
* Who are in imminent risk of harm (fleeing domestic violence, highly vulnerable, and/or show risk of exploitation)
* Who were previously close to or were Chronically homeless and will exit their housing program into HUD homelessness
* In the interest of household preservation
* Who need both intensive supportive services and rental assistance

The Advisory Committee will make every effort to provide creative solutions outside of Coordinated Entry in addition to discussing the approval of the Variance Request. They will also hold requestors to a high standard of service by expecting the requestor to demonstrate exhaustive attempts at resolution of the situation prior to making the request.

In pursuance of these values, approval or denial may be contingent on:

* Housing history is complete and as accurate as possible. Variance will be returned for clarification if HMIS is not up to date or variance is not complete.
* Homeless definition and number of months homeless prior to project entry
* Demonstration that all interventions have been exhausted to find housing or resolve the situation that may apply
	+ 3-6-9-12 - month transition plans (RRH/TH programs)
	+ Application to all project based units/other income-based housing lists
	+ Attempts to increase income beyond application for SSI
	+ Attempts to re-house client, or extend time in program
	+ Creative problem-solving attempts

## A Variance is **not** required:

If a housing provider identifies that their referral would like to be housed with someone else who is on CE, and the slot utilization remains the same (2 people for a 1 BR, for example), then no Variance is required.

If a housing provider identifies that their referral would like to be housed with a **family member**, the housing provider may request a referral for those individuals, regardless of slot utilization. If the person is not on the list, that person should receive an assessment to determine eligibility. A household or family is defined by clients and state a desire to find housing together.

If the client would like to move in prioritization from PSH to RRH.

For a program-to-program transfer of same funding source and project type (ex. HUD PSH to HUD PSH).