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LONG ISLAND
COALITION
FOR THE
HOMELESS

LONG ISLAND HOMELESS MANAGEMENT
INFORMATION SYSTEM: DATA QUALITY
PLAN

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Introduction

The Long Island Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is Long Island's electronic data collection system that maintains client-level data about the individuals and families who receive homeless and other human services throughout the community. The HMIS also assists agencies with program administration, operations, and reporting. HMIS can be used for many different functions including maintaining client and agency information, bed/unit availability, and service delivery. Some of the typical benefits of an HMIS include:

- Improved service delivery and prompt referrals for clients
- Immediate access to important client information
- Quick and easy preparation of reports for funders, stakeholders

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that all Continuum of Care (CoC) groups receiving HUD grants install and utilize an HMIS or similar database. Federal requirements also dictate that all homeless programs receiving ESG or HOPWA funding must report client-level data into the HMIS. New York State requirements dictate that all programs receiving STEHP or HHAP funding must report client-level data into the HMIS. All VA-funded programs receiving Grant Per Diem, SSVF, or HUD-VASH funding must report client-level data into the HMIS. The only current exceptions to these requirements are programs specifically serving victims of domestic violence, and agencies that include serving victims of domestic violence as their primary purpose.

What is a Data Quality Plan?

A data quality plan is a community-level document that facilitates the ability of the CoC to achieve statistically valid and reliable data. A data quality plan sets expectations for the CoC, the HMIS Lead Agency, and the end users to capture valid and reliable data on persons accessing the homeless assistance system throughout the community.

Developed by the HMIS Lead Agency and formally adopted by the CoC, the plan:

- Identifies the responsibilities of all parties within the CoC with respect to data quality;
- Establishes specific data quality benchmarks for timeliness, completeness, accuracy, and consistency;
- Describes the procedures for implementing the plan and monitoring progress toward meeting data quality benchmarks; and
- Establishes a timeframe for monitoring data quality on a regular basis.

HMIS Data Standards

In March, 2010, HUD published revised final HMIS Data Standards. The March, 2010 Data Standards revise and replace the July, 2004 HMIS Data and Technical Standards by which client- and program-level data reporting have been guided. The March, 2010 HUD Data Standards identify Universal Data Elements, Program Specific Data Elements, and Project Descriptor Data Elements which are required of all homeless programs participating in the HMIS. HUD typically updates and revises HMIS Data Standards each year.

Universal Data Elements

The Universal Data Elements establish the baseline data collection requirements for all homeless housing and/or service providers entering data into the HMIS. They are the basis for producing unduplicated estimates of the number of homeless people accessing services from homeless assistance providers, basic demographic characteristics of people who are homeless, and patterns of service use, including information on shelter stays and homelessness episodes over time.

The required Universal Data Elements include the following:

- Project Start Date
- Name
- Social Security Number
- Social Security Number Data Quality
- Date of Birth
- Date of Birth Data Quality
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Veteran Status
- Disabling Condition
- Living Situation
- Housing Move In Date
- Project Exit Date
- Destination

Program Specific Data Elements

Program-Specific Data elements provide information about the characteristics of clients, the services that are provided, and client outcomes. Many of these data elements represent transactions or information that may change over time. Most Program Specific Data Elements should be captured at program entry and exit, and a few must be captured at program entry, exit, and on an annual basis.

The required Program Specific Data Elements include the following:

- Income and Sources
- Non-Cash Benefits and Sources
- Physical Disability
- Developmental Disability
- Chronic Health Condition
- HIV/AIDS
- Mental Health
- Substance Abuse
- Domestic Violence

Project Descriptor Data Elements

Project Descriptor Data Elements ensure that uniform information about each Project in the CoC is available so that each Project can complete the required Annual Performance Report (APR) or Quarterly Performance Reports (QPRs) for HPRP funded programs, and so that the CoC can: 1) complete required reports including the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) and the Housing Inventory that is part of a CoC's annual funding application; 2) track bed utilization; 3) calculate rates of HMIS participation; and 4) monitor data quality. Complete Project Descriptor information also enhances the HMIS as a tool for supporting information and referral services.

The required Project Descriptor Data Elements include the following:

- Organization Identifiers
- Project Identifiers
- Continuum of Care Code
- Project Type
- Method for Tracking ES Utilization
- Federal Partner Funding Sources
- Bed and Unit Inventory Information
- Operational Calendar
- Target Population A
- Target Population B
- County
- GEO Code
- Street Address
- City
- State
- Zip Code

Timeliness

Entering data into the HMIS in a timely manner helps to reduce human error that can occur when too much time has elapsed between the time of data collection/service transaction and the time of data entry. Timely data entry also ensures that the data is accessible when it is needed, whether for monitoring purposes, meeting funding requirements, responding to requests for information, or for other purposes.

Deadline

All data shall be entered into the HMIS in a timely manner. Toward that end, the following data entry deadlines are set forth:

- Emergency Shelter programs: All Universal Data Elements and Program Specific Data Elements entered within seven (7) days of intake and/or admission.
- Transitional Housing and Permanent Housing programs: All Universal Data Elements and Program Specific Data Elements entered within three (3) days of intake and/or admission.

- Supportive Service Only programs: All Universal Data Elements and Program Specific Data Elements entered within three (3) days of intake and/or admission.
- Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing programs: All Universal Data Elements and Program Specific Data Elements entered within three (3) days of intake and/or admission.

Client-level data entered into the HMIS via data integration will not be subject to the above deadlines. Agencies entering client-level data into the HMIS via data integration must perform a data upload to the HMIS by the 10th of each month, or the first business day following the 10th of each month.

Project Descriptor Data Elements for all program types (Emergency Shelter programs, Transitional Housing programs, Permanent Housing programs, Supportive Service Only programs and HPRP programs) shall be entered concurrently with setup of the program in the LI HMIS.

Completeness

Complete HMIS data is necessary to fully understand the demographic characteristics and service use of persons accessing the homeless housing and services in the community. Complete data facilitates confident reporting and analysis on the nature and extent of homelessness, including:

- Unduplicated counts of persons served;
- Patterns of use of persons entering and exiting the homeless assistance system in the community; and
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the community's homeless assistance system.

Complete HMIS data helps a CoC meet various funding compliance requirements, and ensures that persons in the homeless assistance system receive the services needed to secure and maintain permanent housing.

Completeness – Universal Data Elements

All Universal Data Elements must be obtained from each adult and unaccompanied youth who applies for services through the homeless assistance system. Most Universal Data Elements are also required for children age 17 years and under.

Most data elements include a “Don’t Know” or “Refused” response category. These are considered valid responses if the client does not know or the client refuses to respond to the question. The “Don’t Know” or “Refused” responses should not be used to indicate that the case manager or data entry person does not know the client’s response.

Target

The CoC recognizes that collecting 100% of all data elements (Universal and Program Specific) may not be possible in all cases. However, in order to ensure that the CoC meets HUD-funding compliance requirements, and to further ensure participation by the CoC in the Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR), the following acceptable response rate ranges have been established:

UNIVERSAL DATA ELEMENT	TARGET %	ACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE "DON'T
		NULL/MISSING	KNOW" /"REFUSED"
		%	%
Admission Date	100%	0%	0%
Name	100%	0%	0%
Social Security Number	85%	5%	35%
Social Security Number Data Quality	85%	5%	35%
Date of Birth	85%	5%	35%
Date of Birth Data Quality	85%	5%	35%
Race	75%	5%	30%
Ethnicity	75%	5%	30%
Gender	100%	0%	0%
Veteran Status	85%	10%	35%
Disabling Condition	85%	10%	35%
Living Situation	80%	10%	40%
Housing Status	85%	5%	35%
Discharge Date	100%	0%	0%

Completeness – Program Specific Data Elements

All Program Specific Data Elements must be obtained from each adult and unaccompanied youth who applies for services through the homeless assistance system. Most Program Specific Data Elements are also required for children age 17 years and under.

Most data elements include a "Don't Know" or "Refused" response category. These are considered valid responses if the client does not know or the client refuses to respond to the question. The "Don't Know" or "Refused" responses should not be used to indicate that the case manager or data entry person does not know the client's response.

Target

The CoC recognizes that collecting 100% of all data elements (Universal and Program Specific) may not be possible in all cases. However, in order to ensure that the CoC meets HUD-funding compliance requirements, and to further ensure participation by the CoC in the Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR), the following acceptable response rate ranges have been established:

PROGRAM SPECIFIC DATA ELEMENT	TARGET %	ACCEPTABLE NULL/MISSING %	ACCEPTABLE "DON'T KNOW"/"REFUSED" %
Income Received From Any Source in Past 30 Days	75%	10%	40%
Income Sources	75%	10%	40%
Non-Cash Benefits Received From Any Source in Past 30 Days	75%	10%	40%
Non-Cash Benefits Sources	75%	10%	40%
Physical Disability	80%	5%	30%
Developmental Disability	80%	5%	30%
Chronic Health Condition	80%	5%	30%
HIV/AIDS	80%	5%	30%
Mental Health Condition	80%	5%	30%
Substance/Alcohol Abuse	80%	5%	30%
Domestic Violence	80%	5%	30%
Destination	80%	0%	30%

Completeness – All Clients Served

HUD expects that all clients receiving housing and/or services through the homeless assistance system will have their service delivery documented in the HMIS. If a program only enters data on a few of its clients, the program's efficacy cannot accurately be determined. Incomplete data may erroneously reflect low bed utilization rates (for housing programs), and may inaccurately reflect clients' progress in meeting programmatic goals (i.e. employment, transitioning to permanent housing).

Target

All programs using the LI HMIS shall enter data for one hundred percent (100%) of clients served.

Completeness – Bed Utilization

One of the primary features of the HMIS is its ability to record the number of client stays or bed nights at a homeless residential facility. A program's bed utilization rate is the number of beds occupied as a percentage of the entire bed inventory. When a client is admitted into a residential program (emergency, transitional, or permanent), s/he is assigned to a bed or unit. The client remains in that bed or unit until s/he is either transferred to another bed or unit, or is discharged from the program. When the client is discharged from the program, s/he is also discharged from the bed or unit in the HMIS.

One method to examine a homeless assistance system's bed utilization rates is through the HMIS Bed Utilization Tool. The HMIS Bed Utilization Tool is a spreadsheet that helps a CoC track the percentage of beds that are occupied in the system on the last Wednesday of each month. Using the HMIS Bed Utilization Tool, the CoC enters the number of persons that were housed in each residential facility on the last Wednesday of each month over a 12-month period. The HMIS Bed Utilization Tool then calculates the bed utilization rates for the homeless assistance system.

Deadline

The CoC Lead Entity will request housing inventory from each residential facility in the homeless assistance system for the last Wednesday of each month within three (3) business days following the last Wednesday of each month.

The homeless assistance provider operating the residential facility will provide its housing inventory for the last Wednesday of each month to the CoC Lead Entity within five (5) business days following the last Wednesday of each month.

Target

A program's bed utilization rate is an excellent barometer of data quality. A low utilization rate could reflect low occupancy, but it could also indicate that data is not being entered in the LI HMIS for every client served. A high utilization rate could reflect that the program is over capacity, but it could also indicate that clients have not been properly discharged from the program in the LI HMIS.

HOUSING PROGRAM TYPE	TARGET UTILIZATION RATE (%)	ACCEPTABLE UTILIZATION RATE (%)
Emergency Housing	75%	65%
Transitional Housing	85%	65%
Permanent Housing (including S+C)	90%	65%

Completeness – Project Descriptor Data Elements

Pursuant to HUD's HMIS Data Standards, all Project Descriptor Data Elements must be entered for all programs participating in the HMIS.

Target

The CoC recognizes that collecting 100% of all Project Descriptor Data Elements may not be possible in all cases (i.e. non-mandated programs). However, in order to ensure that the CoC meets HUD-funding compliance requirements, the following acceptable response rate ranges have been established:

PROJECT DESCRIPTOR DATA ELEMENT	TARGET %	ACCEPTABLE NULL/MISSING %
Program Name	100%	0%
Program Group	90%	10%
Bed Inventory	90%	10%
Unit Inventory	90%	10%
Category	90%	10%
Intake Form	100%	0%
Submits HUD APR	90%	10%
Serves Homeless Only	80%	15%
Program Site Configuration	90%	10%
Site Type	90%	10%

Housing Type	90%	10%
HUD Program Type	90%	10%
Operational Calendar	80%	15%
Target Population A	90%	10%
Target Population B	90%	10%
Continuum of Care	90%	10%
County	90%	10%
GEO Code	90%	10%
Street Address	90%	10%
City	90%	10%
State	90%	10%
Zip Code	90%	10%

Accuracy

Accurate collection and entry of data into the LI HMIS ensures that the data is the best possible representation of reality as it relates to homeless persons and the programs that provide homeless housing and services. Data in the LI HMIS should accurately reflect client data recorded in the client's file, along with information known about the client and the housing and/or services received by the client.

Target

All data entered into the LI HMIS shall be a reflection of information provided by the client and as documented in the client's file. Changes or updates in client information shall be reflected in the LI HMIS as they occur. To ensure the most up-to-date and complete data, data entry errors should be corrected monthly, or more frequently as required.

Consistency

Consistency of data directly affects the accuracy of data. Consistency ensures that data is understood, collected and entered in the same manner across all programs in the LI HMIS. Basic intake, annual update, and discharge forms, designed to capture client data pursuant to HUD's HMIS Data Standards, provide for common and consistent data collection and are available to all programs. These forms can be altered to meet the needs of any program, provided that the base document does not change.

Target

All data in the LI HMIS shall be collected and entered in a common and consistent manner across programs. Data collection and entry should be conducted in accordance with the most current HUD HMIS Data Standards.

Monitoring

The purpose of monitoring is to ensure that the agreed-upon data quality targets are met to the greatest extent possible, and that data quality issues are quickly identified and resolved. The CoC recognizes that the data produced from the HMIS is critical to meet the reporting and compliance requirements of HUD, the individual agencies, and the CoC as a whole.

Deadline

Monitoring and data quality reviews will be conducted monthly, in an annual cycle as follows:

MONTH	DATA UNDER REVIEW	TARGET REVIEW DATE
Month 1	Month 0 Data*	17 th
Month 2	Month 1 Data	17 th
Month 3	Month 2 Data	17 th
Month 4	Month 3 Data	17 th
Month 5	Month 4 Data	17 th
Month 6	Month 5 Data	17 th
Month 7	Month 6 Data	17 th
Month 8	Month 7 Data	17 th
Month 9	Month 8 Data	17 th
Month 10	Month 9 Data	17 th
Month 11	Month 10 Data	17 th
Month 12	Month 11 Data	17 th
Month 1 (new cycle)	Month 12 Data	17 th

*Month 0 Data is the month's data prior to Month 1 of the implementation of the data quality plan. In all subsequent cycles of the data quality plan, Month 12 Data will be reviewed in Month 1 of the following cycle.

Additional monitoring, data quality and utilization rates reviews will be conducted in preparation for submission of AHAR data to HUD, in accordance with the following schedule:

AHAR REVIEW MONTH	TARGET REVIEW DATE
October	October 31st
November	November 30th
December	December 31st
January	January 31st
February	February 10th

Target

When data quality benchmarks are met, reporting will be more reliable and can be used to evaluate service delivery, program design and effectiveness, and efficiency of the system. All HMIS participating agencies are expected to meet the data quality benchmarks described in this document. To achieve this, HMIS data will be monitored and reviewed in accordance with the schedule outlined in this section. All monitoring will be conducted by the LI HMIS Lead Agency in accordance with the HMIS Data Quality Monitoring Tool (Appendix A), and with the full support of the CoC.

Incentives and Enforcement

Timely HMIS data entry ensures that the data is accessible when it is needed, whether for monitoring purposes, meeting funding requirements, responding to requests for information, or for other purposes. Complete HMIS data is necessary to fully understand the demographic characteristics and service use of persons accessing the homeless housing and services in the community. Complete data facilitates confident reporting and analysis on the nature and extent of homelessness throughout the CoC. Complete HMIS data helps the CoC meet various funding compliance requirements, and ensures that persons in the homeless assistance system receive the services needed to secure and maintain permanent housing. Accurate collection and entry of data into the LI HMIS ensures that the data is the best possible representation of reality as it relates to homeless persons and the programs that provide homeless housing and services. Consistency of data directly affects the accuracy of data. Consistency ensures that data is understood, collected and entered in the same manner across all programs in the LI HMIS.

All HMIS participating agency administrators must ensure that these minimum data entry standards are fulfilled for every program utilizing the HMIS.

Target

To ensure that HMIS participating agencies meet the minimum data entry standards set forth herein, a copy of this Data Quality Plan will be posted to the HMIS Lead’s website. Sample intake, annual update and discharge forms will also be posted to the HMIS Lead’s website. The HMIS Lead will provide data quality reports to HMIS participating agencies in accordance with the monitoring schedule described in the “Monitoring” section to facilitate compliance with the minimum data entry standards.

Agencies that meet the data quality benchmarks will be periodically recognized by the CoC. HMIS participating agencies that do not adhere to the minimum data entry standards set forth herein will be notified of their deficiencies and provided with specific information regarding the nature of the deficiencies and methods by which to correct them. HMIS participating agencies will be given one month to correct any identified data quality issues. Training will be offered to agencies that remain noncompliant with the minimum data entry standards. HMIS participating agencies continuing in default may have HMIS access suspended until such time as agencies demonstrate that compliance with minimum data entry standards can be reached.

Questions

For further assistance, please contact:

Local HMIS Lead Agency: Long Island Coalition for the Homeless
(631) 464-4314 – phone
www.lihomeless.org

HMIS Software Developer: Foothold Technology
(212) 780-1450 – phone
www.footholdtechnology.com