

HMIS DATA QUALITY STANDARDS AND POLICIES

HMIS data quality is based on the extent that the information recorded in an HMIS accurately portrays valid and true information. To assist the Federal Partners in better understanding and being able to present accurate and consistent information on homeless veterans, it is critical that the HMIS have the best possible representation of reality as it relates to homeless veterans and the programs that serve them. The following data collection and data entry standards are best practices that all homeless programs should consider implementing when entering data into HMIS. These standards will ensure that data are entered in a timely fashion and consistently across different programs and jurisdictions.

Timeliness and Frequency of Data Entry

POLICY: Data entry should be current within 5 business days of intake, exit, and service provision.

The local service agency must utilize their local Continuum of Care HMIS system for intake, service provision, and program exit data collection as required by the grant guidelines. Many of the program-specific data elements represent transactions that may change over time. Some data elements will only need to be captured at entry, exit, or on an annual basis, while other elements may need to be updated upon service provision or when a change in income or employment status is necessary to enhance case management services.

Data Completeness

POLICY: A 95% standard of completeness rate for all funded homeless projects should be established and expected. Programs should work toward ensuring that 95% of all required data elements for each client served are collected and entered correctly into the HMIS.

Data collected and entered need to be as complete as possible. The local service agency should make every attempt to collect and enter all required information on all people being served within each household during the time period the household is enrolled in the program. Achieving adequate HMIS coverage is essential to ensuring that the records are representative of all the clients being served. Missing individual records may result in the inability to determine whether or not the characteristics of those served are significantly different than those that are included. A significant number of missing records may result in aggregate reports not accurately reflecting the homeless population being served.

Data Accuracy

POLICY: Data entered into an HMIS needs to be valid. If valid data cannot be collected it is better to leave it incomplete or missing, preferably marked as don't know or refused. Missing information can be acknowledged as missing, while inaccurate data whether intentional or unintentional is misleading and may result in the inability to accurately measure performance or accurately report results.

Erroneous data can be a result of either deliberately providing or entering false data or accidental data entry errors resulting from activities like misspellings or inadvertently selecting the wrong response from dropdowns. Users should attend training to learn about the benefits of HMIS and

attempts to develop trust between clients and front-line staff can diminish the extent of false information provided. In addition, users need to be trained to understand the intent of each question to ensure that the data being collected is not based on a misunderstanding of the question. Finally, where possible, asking clients to review and providing opportunities to correct personal information after it has been entered can improve data accuracy.

Data Consistency

POLICY: Standardized data collection forms based on workflow and required data elements should be used by all participating data collectors and data entry users.

VHPD Programs are required to collect and enter all the Universal, most of the Program Specific and some of the Optional Program Specific Data Elements in HMIS. Many CoCs have standard Data Collection forms that they require agencies to use. Review the CoC forms to verify that all required data elements are being collected. VHPD Standard Data collection templates will be posted on the HUDHRE. Use these templates to collect data if your CoC does not have a standard Data Collection forms or if all the required fields are not included on the CoC form. A VHPD Data Collection Protocols Training Guides will be posted on the HUDHRE. The training guide provide a standardized list of all required data elements and corresponding responses that should be communicated to all data collectors and data entry workers. The training guides outline the rationale behind why the data is being collected, who should collect the data, when the data should be collected and on whom data should be collected.