

# The City of Philadelphia's Homeless Management Information System Data Quality Plan

## A. GENERAL INFORMATION

### Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Background

For more than a decade, Congress has expressed the need for better local and national information about homeless persons in a series of Congressional directives, beginning with the FY 1999 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Appropriations Act. In 2001 Congress directed HUD to take the lead in requiring every jurisdiction to have unduplicated client-level data within three years. In subsequent years, Senate and House Appropriations Committee reports have directed HUD to assist communities in implementing local Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) and to develop an Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) that is based on HMIS data.

The City of Philadelphia's (HMIS) is a client information system designed to record and store client-level information on the characteristics and service needs of homeless persons. HMIS assists the Philadelphia Continuum of Care (CoC) to become better informed about the extent and nature of homelessness over time. Specifically, HMIS can be used to produce an unduplicated count of homeless persons, understand patterns of service use, measure the effectiveness of homeless programs, and assist in the efficient provision of services to homeless persons. HMIS is also used to help with system planning and design including long-term strategic planning and shorter-term evaluations and interventions.

HMIS is administered by the City of Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services (OHS) in partnership with the Philadelphia CoC and in accordance with HUD's HMIS regulations.

### Definitions

- a. HMIS Participating Programs ("Programs") refers to any program that collects client-level data on homeless clients for inclusion in HMIS, including programs that enter data directly into HMIS and programs that submit data extract files for upload into HMIS.
  - With HUD's encouragement, both OHS-contracted and non-contracted agencies participate in HMIS.
  - Programs which submit via data extract have chosen to participate in HMIS in this way because they have their own proprietary data systems in place to track and maintain data on their constituents. They create an annual export for import into HMIS.
- b. HUD-required Data Elements refers to the Universal Data Elements (UDE) and Program-Specific Data Elements (PDE) contained in the HUD HMIS 2010 Revised Notice as well as any subsequent revisions. Please see Appendix 1 for a complete listing of the UDEs and PDEs.

### Purpose

The purpose of "The City of Philadelphia's Homeless Management Information System Data Quality Plan" (Data Quality Plan) is to standardize expectations and provide guidance to HMIS-participating programs on the extent, completeness, and quality of HUD-required Data Elements entered into HMIS.

In so doing, the City hopes to streamline the process of completing Annual Performance Reports for HUD and submitting information for the Annual Homeless Assessment Report in full compliance with HUD's expectations. In addition, the Data Quality Plan is intended to assist the CoC in its preparations for the new system-wide performance measures contained in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as amended by S. 896 The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing

(HEARTH) Act of 2009. Further, the improvement of HMIS data will assist the CoC to continue to achieve a high score in the competitive annual application for McKinney-Vento Act funding.

## **Development Process**

The Data Quality Plan was developed through a collaborative effort across homeless service providers and spearheaded by the HMIS & HEARTH Data Subcommittee of the McKinney Public/Private Strategic Planning Committee, which included representatives from the following organizations: City of Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services, People's Emergency Center, Kutztown University, Project H.O.M.E, Dignity Housing, The Salvation Army Red Shield Family Residence, SELF, Inc., and Temple University.

## **Definition of Data Quality**

HMIS data quality refers to the extent that data recorded in HMIS accurately reflects the same information in the real world. To meet the Philadelphia CoC's goal of presenting accurate and consistent information on homelessness, it is critical that HMIS have the best possible representation of reality as it relates to homeless people and the programs that serve them. Specifically, the goal is to record the most accurate, consistent and up-to-date information in order to draw reasonable conclusions about the extent of homelessness and the impact of homeless services and to utilize for planning and evaluation purposes.

## **Applicability of Data Quality Standards**

The Data Quality Standards contained herein are applicable to **all** HMIS participating programs, including programs that enter data directly into HMIS and programs that submit data extract files for upload into HMIS. For those programs that submit data extract files, the Data Quality Standards apply to the entry of data into the programs' in-house client information system. The Standards also apply to all actions taken by providers leading up to the creation of their extract files; in other words, all information entered into the data systems used to create extract files must conform with the guidelines set out in this document.

## **Key Documents**

Key documents needed as supporting references to this document are listed below:

- a. Federal Register, Vol. 69, No. 146, Part II, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS); Data and Technical Standards Final Notice; Notice, July 30, 2004 ("HUD HMIS 2004 Final Notice");
- b. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), Data Standards, Revised Notice, March 2010 ("HUD HMIS 2010 Revised Notice"); and
- c. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as amended by S. 896 The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009.

## **Definitions**

**HMIS Participating Programs** ("Programs") refers to any program that collects client-level data on homeless clients for inclusion in HMIS, including programs that enter data directly into HMIS and programs that submit data extract files for upload into HMIS.

**HUD-required Data Elements** refers to the Universal Data Elements (UDE) and Program-Specific Data Elements (PDE) contained in the HUD HMIS 2010 Revised Notice as well as any subsequent revisions. Please see Appendix 1 for a complete listing of the UDEs and PDEs.

## **B. DATA QUALITY STANDARDS**

The Data Quality Standards for the Philadelphia CoC are split into six (6) categories: Timeliness, Completeness, Accuracy, Consistency, Monitoring, and Incentives. Unless otherwise noted, all HMIS participating programs, including those that provide data extract files for upload into HMIS, are expected to achieve and maintain the Data Quality Standards.

Training of HMIS system users is recognized to be important in assuring the completeness, accuracy, and consistency of data. To that end, data quality will be supported through timely and appropriate system training, including the utilization of methodologies such as: Train-the-Trainer and Computer Based Training (CBT).

### **1. Timeliness**

The purpose of this timeliness standard is to reduce human error that occurs when too much time has elapsed between data collection (or service transaction) and data entry into HMIS. The individual doing the data entry may be relying on handwritten notes or his/her own recall of a case management session, service transaction, or program exit date; therefore, the sooner the data is entered, the better chance the data will be correct. Timely data entry also ensures that data is as close to “real-time” as possible and accessible when it is needed – either pro-actively (for monitoring purposes, publishing information to increase awareness, or to meet reporting requirements) or reactively (in response to a request for information or to respond to inaccurate information).

#### **1a. Timeliness Standard**

All Programs will ensure that data elements for new clients, services, and entry/exits are entered in a timely manner into HMIS.

Data must be collected, at a minimum, at program entry, during program enrollment, and at program exit according to the baselines found in Appendix 1. All programs are encouraged to collect all of the HUD-required Data Elements as close to each client’s program entry and exit as possible. In addition:

- OHS-contracted Emergency Housing programs must collect the HUD-required Data Elements within the timeframes established in the Social Worker/Case Management Performance Standards and Homeless Management Information System Standards (HMIS) found in the OHS Emergency Housing Standards.
- Homelessness Prevention, Housing Retention, and Rapid Re-housing Programs must collect the HUD-required Data Elements in accordance with the timeframes set forth in the most recent Request for Proposals as well as the program’s most recent OHS contract documents.

Once collected, programs will enter the data in HMIS according to the following timeframes:

- i. OHS Contracted Emergency Housing Programs: All required UDEs and PDEs will be entered within 24 hours of the data collection.
- ii. Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing programs receiving funding through OHS and/or the McKinney-Vento Act: All required UDEs and PDEs will be entered within thirty (30) days of data collection.
- iii. OHS Centralized Intake Sites and After Hours Processing Sites: All required UDEs will be entered at time of data collection.

- iv. Homelessness Prevention, Housing Retention, and Rapid Re-housing Programs: All required UDEs and PDEs will be entered at time of data collection.
- v. OHS Emergency Assistance and Response Unit: All required UDEs and PDEs will be entered at time of data collection.
- vi. Non-Contracted Emergency Housing, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing Programs (Programs not receiving funding through OHS and/or the McKinney-Vento Act): All UDEs will be entered within thirty (30) days of data collection.

## **2. Completeness**

The purpose of completeness is to ensure sufficient demographic and service use data is collected to facilitate confident reporting and analysis on the extent and characteristics of persons experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia including:

- Unduplicated counts of clients served at the local level
- Patterns of use of people entering and exiting the homeless assistance system
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of homeless systems
- Systems planning for future housing and service needs

In effect, complete data tells the full “story” of homelessness.

### **2a. Completeness Standard**

All Programs will ensure each of their HUD-required Data Elements is entered into HMIS for all clients served by the program. Therefore, the percentage of data elements with missing/blank entries for all clients served will be zero (0). Please refer to Appendix 1 for a detailed listing of the HUD-required Data Elements by program type. In addition, all Programs will make reasonable efforts to limit the percentage of don't know/refused entries. While a specific standard for don't know/refused entries has not been set, these entries will also be included in the data monitoring process.

## **3. Accuracy**

The purpose of accuracy is to ensure that the data housed in HMIS is the best possible representation of reality as it relates to people who are homeless and the programs in which they participate.

### **3a. Accuracy Standard**

All Programs will ensure that data entered in HMIS accurately reflects the information provided by the client. Program staff will not knowingly enter into HMIS inaccurate or false information. To the extent that clients and other agencies supplying information have provided accurate data, HMIS users are responsible for the accuracy of the data they enter into the HMIS. Immediately upon discovery, inaccurate or out-dated data will be updated by the program. In addition, responses of “Don't Know” and “Refused” will be updated immediately once the information is known.

## **4. Consistency**

The purpose of consistency is to ensure a common interpretation of questions, answers, and which fields need completion in HMIS.

#### **4a. Consistency Standard**

All data required to be in HMIS will be collected and entered in a common and consistent manner across all Programs. To that end, all HMIS users will complete an initial orientation before accessing the HMIS. As part of the orientation, all new HMIS users will review Sections 3 and 4 of the HUD HMIS 2010 Revised Notice, which outlines the Universal and Program-Specific Data Elements, including their response categories, rationale, and definitions. All existing HMIS users are encouraged to review this document on a quarterly basis.

#### **5. Monitoring**

The purpose of monitoring is to ensure that the Data Quality Standards are met to the greatest possible extent and that data quality issues are quickly identified and resolved.

##### **5a. Monitoring Standard**

All Programs are expected to meet the Data Quality Standards described in this document. Each Program will be responsible for monitoring its own data and will establish internal data quality control procedures. Programs are encouraged to utilize all applicable reports that can be generated directly from HMIS. In addition, the HMIS Lead Agency will monitor HMIS data on the program and system levels in accordance with the Data Quality Monitoring Plan to be developed by the HMIS HEARTH Data Subcommittee and will report results by program and by overall totals at appropriate times throughout the year. Programs that fail to meet the data standards will be asked by the HMIS Lead Agency to submit a written plan that details how they will take corrective action and the timeline for doing so. The plan will be submitted to, and monitored by, the McKinney Public/Private Strategic Planning Committee.

#### **6. Incentives**

The purpose of incentives is to provide positive re-enforcement to Philadelphia CoC service providers who achieve and maintain the level of data quality outlined in this Data Quality Plan.

##### **6a. Incentives Standard**

Programs with the best performance with regards to the Data Quality Standards will be recognized by the McKinney Public/Private Strategic Planning Committee.

Programs that receive McKinney-Vento Act funding will submit data quality statistics in their annual renewal application to the Office of Homeless Services. One of the criteria on which the program's renewal application will be scored will be the program's achievement of the Data Quality Standards.

Programs are encouraged to develop their own internal incentives.

#### **7. Duration**

This plan must be reviewed annually and updated as needed by the Philadelphia Continuum of Care.

This plan was originally approved by the Philadelphia CoC on August 8, 2011 and was last approved on January 21, 2014.

## Appendix 1: Data Collection Requirements

### Universal Data Elements

Applicable Programs:

All HMIS Participating Programs, including but not limited to:

- Emergency, Transitional, and Permanent Supportive Housing
- Homelessness Prevention
- Rapid Re-Housing
- OHS Centralized Intake Sites
- After Hours Processing Sites
- Emergency Assistance and Response Unit

2010 HUD Standard	Data Standard	Subjects			When Collected		% Missing / Blank
		All Clients (Adults + Children)	All Adults	All Adults & Unaccompanied Youth	Program Entry (Intake)	Program Exit	
3.1	Name	X			X		0%
3.2	Social Security Number	X			X		0%
3.3	Date of Birth	X			X		0%
3.4	Race	X			X		0%
3.5	Ethnicity	X			X		0%
3.6	Gender	X			X		0%
3.7	Veteran Status		X		X		0%
3.8	Disabling Condition	X			X		0%
3.9	Residence Prior to Program Entry			X	X		0%

2010 HUD Standard	Data Standard	Subjects			When Collected		% Missing / Blank
		All Clients (Adults + Children)	All Adults	All Adults & Unaccompanied Youth	Program Entry (Intake)	Program Exit	
3.9	Length of Stay at Prior Residence			X	X		0%
3.10	Zip Code of Last Permanent Address			X	X		0%
3.11	Housing status at Entry	X			X		0%
3.11	Housing status at Exit	X				X	0%
3.12	Program Entry Date	X			X		0%
3.13	Program Exit Date	X				X	0%

## Program - Specific Data Elements

Applicable Programs:

- All Emergency, Transitional, and Permanent Supportive Housing Programs receiving funding through OHS and/or the McKinney-Vento Act

2010 HUD Standard	Data Standard	Subjects		When Collected*			% Missing / Blanks
		All Clients (Adults + Children)	All Adults & Unaccompanied Youth	Program Entry (Intake)	At least once a Year	Program Exit	
4.1	Income Received	X		X	X	X	0%
4.1	Income Sources	X		X	X	X	0%
4.2	Non-Cash Benefits Received	X		X	X	X	0%
4.2	Non-Cash Benefit Sources	X		X	X	X	0%
4.3	Physical Disability Status	X		X	X	X	0%
4.3	Physical Disability Receiving Services	X		X	X	X	0%
4.4	Developmental Disability status	X		X	X	X	0%
4.4	Developmental Disability Receiving Services	X		X	X	X	0%

2010 HUD Standard	Data Standard	Subjects		When Collected*			% Missing / Blanks
		All Clients (Adults + Children)	All Adults & Unaccompanied Youth	Program Entry (Intake)	At least once a Year	Program Exit	
4.5	Chronic Health Condition Status	X		X	X	X	0%
4.5	Chronic Health Condition Receiving Services	X		X	X	X	0%
4.6	HIV/AIDS Status	X		X	X	X	0%
4.6	HIV/ AIDS Receiving Services	X		X	X	X	0%
4.7	Mental Health Status	X		X	X	X	0%
4.7	Mental Health Receiving Services	X		X	X	X	0%
4.7	Mental Health Duration	X		X	X	X	0%
4.8	Substance Abuse Status	X		X	X	X	0%
4.8	Substance Abuse Receiving Services	X		X	X	X	0%
4.9	Substance Abuse Duration	X		X	X	X	0%

2010 HUD Standard	Data Standard	Subjects		When Collected*			% Missing / Blanks
		All Clients (Adults + Children)	All Adults & Unaccompanied Youth	Program Entry (Intake)	At least once a Year	Program Exit	
4.9	Domestic Violence History		X	X			0%
4.9	Domestic Violence - When Occurred		X	X			0%
4.10	Destination	X				X	0%

\* These are the minimum data collection standards as established by HUD. OHS Emergency Housing contractual requirements supersede these baseline standards, if applicable.

**Program - Specific Data Elements**

Applicable Programs:

- Homelessness Prevention, Housing Retention, and Rapid Re-housing Programs

2010 HUD Standard	Data Standard	Subjects	When Collected*				Each Instance of Financial Assistance	% Missing / Blank
			Program Entry (Intake)	At least Once Every 3 Months	At least once a Year	Program Exit		
4.1	Income Received	X	X		X	X		0%
4.1	Income and Sources	X	X		X	X		0%
4.2	Non-Cash Benefits Received	X	X		X	X		0%
4.2	Non-Cash Benefit Sources	X	X		X	X		0%
4.10	Destination	X				X		0%
4.13	Start Date of Financial Assistance	X		X			X	0%
4.13	End Date of Financial Assistance	X		X			X	0%
4.13	Financial Assistance Type	X		X			X	0%

2010 HUD Standard	Data Standard	Subjects	When Collected*					% Missing / Blank
			Program Entry (Intake)	At least Once Every 3 Months	At least once a Year	Program Exit	Each Instance of Financial Assistance	
4.13	Financial Assistance Amount	X		X			X	0%
4.14	Start Date of Service	X		X		X		0%
4.14	End Date of Service			X		X		0%
4.14	Type of Service (s)			X		X		0%

\* These are the minimum data collection standards as established by HUD. OHS contractual requirements supersede these baseline standards, if applicable.