

# *The* CENTER *for* SOCIAL POLICY

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

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## **Disclaimer**

Some of the forms found in the appendices may not be compliant with the HMIS Data and Technical Standards (Federal Register 4848-N-01) released in July 2004 herein referred to as the "Final Notice". Some of these forms were created prior to release of the Final Notice and should be reviewed by local decision-makers prior to being used to ensure compliance.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Homeless Management Information Systems (HMISs) are community-wide software solutions that are designed to capture client-level information over time on the characteristics and service needs of men, women, and children experiencing homelessness. In response to a Congressional directive, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has required all Continuums of Care (CoCs) across the country to implement HMIS at the local level. The primary goal of HMIS is to better understand the scope and dimensions of homelessness locally and nationally in order to address the problem more effectively. Through the implementation of advanced technology, HMIS also directly benefits service providers and homeless clients by providing more efficient and coordinated services.

The intent of this paper is to assist HMIS project managers by describing the primary tasks associated with managing an HMIS and providing sample documents to support those activities. This paper should be seen as a toolkit, and HMIS managers are urged to take the samples found in the Appendices and edit them to their particular needs. Editable versions of the samples will be available on the TA Resources: Project Management page at [www.hmis.info](http://www.hmis.info).

Much previous documentation, including a complete HMIS Implementation Guide and a Consumer Guide to HMIS software, has already been created to help communities bring their project from the initial phase to the implementing phase. As such, many communities assume that the HMIS mission is accomplished once providers are entering data. However, an HMIS never runs on autopilot. There are always software upgrades, staffing changes, data quality challenges, policies to be monitored and reviewed, new contracts to administer, and a multiplicity of other tasks and challenges to be addressed. Thus, the information in this paper picks up where the previous documents leave off—focusing on ongoing HMIS activities in the context of the continual challenges faced by homeless service providers.

Homeless service providers who are charged with entering data also face a number of ongoing challenges. These challenges are an integral part of the non-profit environment, and the HMIS project team must help homeless service providers address these issues. For example, agencies may have difficulty purchasing and maintaining needed equipment. Their current staff may be overstretched, and they may not have adequate funding to hire additional people to do data entry. They may have trouble collecting accurate data if they are working with clients with special needs. These pressures on the homeless service system make it particularly important for the project manager to concentrate on maintaining community support, and this document pays particular attention to the community as well as operational aspects of HMIS project management.

It is important to note that this document uses the terms “project management” and “project manager” liberally. Technically, the formal definition of project management would be more appropriately applied to the HMIS implementation or rollout, which has a finite end. However, in this document, as well as in the field, the term HMIS project management is used to refer to the management of the ongoing activities of the HMIS. As well, in the non-profit world people often take on multiple responsibilities, and many communities do not have the luxury of having a

staff person dedicated full time to managing the project. Many “project managers” may be the only person in the CoC dedicated to HMIS. Thus, this document describes in some detail the staff roles needed to accomplish various tasks associated beyond traditional management roles, including system administration, training, technical assistance, and data analysis—acknowledging that this work may be accomplished by a single individual or a team of people.

## Document Overview

Beyond this introduction, this document is organized into five chapters, which provide an overall picture of HMIS management followed by more detailed descriptions of specific tasks.

- **Chapter Two: Overview of HMIS Management Tasks** outlines the overall tasks that need to be managed as part of operating an HMIS.
- **Chapter Three: Staffing Models for HMIS Management** describes staff roles and overall staffing models that have been used around the country to manage the broad array of HMIS management tasks.
- **Chapter Four: Managing Project Operations** provides additional information on a subset of the project operations tasks, including managing the project plan, policies and procedures, agency management, and software provider relations.
- **Chapter Five: Managing the HMIS Community** provides additional information on the community management tasks, including communicating with stakeholders; working with HMIS committees, working groups, user groups, and homeless consumers; as well as maintaining relationships with the other HMIS implementers and the broader local community.
- **Appendices: Samples and Resources** includes numerous sample documents to illustrate the points discussed in this document. The documents can also be used as templates to simplify the process of developing forms for your community.

## Intended Audience

As mentioned above, there are many different ways of staffing an HMIS project. Some implementations have a full- or part-time HMIS project manager who hires other staff members, such as trainers or system administrators. Other implementations have a single HMIS administrator, overseeing all HMIS functions. Some implementations rely on contractual technical support and/or system hosting, which may involve a long-term relationship with the HMIS solution provider. Essentially, there is no single model to staff or manage an HMIS.

Thus, the audience for this document is not only people who hold the title “HMIS Project Manager.” Rather, it encompasses anyone who has professional responsibility for ensuring that an HMIS project is succeeding, staff is in place, service providers are using the system, policies and procedures are being followed, the software is running, clients’ privacy is protected, and the vision is being realized. This document also contains useful information and tools for persons in charge of hiring, supervising or contracting with HMIS project managers and for those who serve on HMIS committees or report to an HMIS project manager in a particular area.

## **Process of Developing This Document**

To create this document, the authors gathered information from HMIS implementations throughout the country through three primary methods. First, as part of the HUD National HMIS Technical Assistance (TA) Initiative, TA providers have been meeting and talking with staff members from around the country to understand the status of their HMIS implementations and specific strategies that have been employed in different areas of HMIS operation. This information has been aggregated into a database that was used to provide information for this document. In addition, the authors followed up with a number of communities to learn more about their specific operational strategies. Through this process, the authors were able to compile specific documents and examples on a range of topics, which can serve as examples for others. Finally, the information contained in the document is built upon the knowledge of the primary authors who have been operating the HMIS within the State of Massachusetts since 1996.

## Chapter 2: Overview of HMIS Management Tasks

### Project Operations vs. Community Aspects of HMIS Management

HMIS project management can be divided into two primary categories: Project operations and community management. Tasks associated with managing the software application, system infrastructure, training and technical support, and data are classified under the Project Operations heading. Tasks associated with managing the personal and organizational relationships of those involved in the HMIS are considered under the Community Management heading. The HMIS community begins with the staff and clients of homeless programs as well as local funders and advocates. The community can also extend to the general local community, researchers, and other HMIS implementers across the country.

Project operations tasks are more finite, clearly defined, and quantifiable. One can assign deadlines and allocate resources to them, build them into a project plan, and report on their status. By contrast, community management tasks are more qualitative and are never complete. While operations require rapid progress, community management requires time to build trust and consensus. Thus the two types of tasks are often in conflict; however, both are critical to a successful HMIS initiative and must be consciously balanced and managed. This document is organized using these two primary categories, recognizing that the two are intimately interrelated.

This chapter presents the various tasks of an HMIS project. Chapter Three explains common staffing models and staff positions that are used to manage these tasks.

### Project Operations Tasks

Primary project operations responsibilities are listed below. The first four items are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. Many of the other tasks, though overseen by the project manager, are often delegated primarily to another staff member. Thus, system administration, technical support, training, and data analysis are discussed in more depth in Chapter Three.

The remaining items, which are no less important, are not discussed further in this document. Some of these topics are addressed in previous HUD documents, a comprehensive list of which can be found in Appendix 1. In addition, separate white papers addressing several of these items are planned for 2005.

1. **Managing the project plan.** The project manager designs the project plan, oversees the progress of the plan, and steers the project clear of major risks.
2. **Maintaining policies and procedures.** The project manager ensures that the community has standard policies and procedures, that all parties are compliant with the procedures, and that the procedures themselves are up-to-date and reflect current regulations.



3. **Managing agency contracts and participation.** The project manager is responsible for contracting and working with agencies that are participating in the HMIS project and ensuring that all parties are fulfilling their obligations.
4. **Software provider relations.** The project manager is the liaison to the software provider and is responsible for negotiating contracts and ensuring that the provider fulfills its obligations and addresses software issues that are important to the project.
5. **System administration and information security.** Project staff are responsible for day-to-day system administration, including web, application, and database server administration; software maintenance and the overall security and privacy of the system (e.g. installing virus protection, operating the system, firewall updates); user account management; audit log maintenance; data integrity; hardware maintenance; and data back-up and disaster recovery processes. Many of these system administration tasks may be outsourced to the solution provider, a consultant, or a third-party vendor; however, some of the tasks will need to remain in-house and the project manager will need to supervise any contracted parties.
6. **Technical support.** The project manager ensures that HMIS end users have appropriate support to respond to questions or address problems with the HMIS software.
7. **Training.** The project manager determines the appropriate training models and topics for the community and ensures that the training is being carried out consistently and effectively.
8. **Data Analysis.** Data analysis may also fall to the project manager, be overseen by a member of the Continuum, or contracted out to a qualified data analyst (usually a professional researcher: a freelancer, private company, or a local university) to clean, aggregate, and analyze project data. Qualified researchers can help determine whether data are statistically valid and whether apparent trends or variations between sub-groups are statistically significant. They can also help interpret the data within the larger community and policy context.
9. **Budgeting.** Most HMIS projects rely on a mix of public and private dollars to operate the HMIS. To maximize the use of limited resources, project managers must continuously assess and justify the costs of operating the HMIS. Costs may include staff time, staff training, travel, equipment, software licensing fees, data analysis, conference fees, server maintenance, phone and printing. Project managers may also be involved in applying for and/or managing the revenue sources.
10. **Contract Compliance.** Depending on the requirements imposed by the HMIS's funding sources, the project manager may also need to understand the reporting requirements or other system requirements of its funders. For instance, the project manager will need to work with the software solution provider and agency users to comply with the recently released *Final Notice*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> HMIS Data and Technical Standards Final Notice, Federal Register 4848-N-01 (July 2004).

11. **Data Quality.** The project manager works with providers to ensure that the client data are valid. This involves reviewing the data for complete, accurate and consistent data entry. It should also involve following-up with agencies to improve data quality. The project manager may have to work with agencies to merge or delete individual client records entered in error.
12. **Data Integration.** If the homeless providers use more than one HMIS, the project manager may have to work on data integration, data migration issues, or development of a data warehouse.
13. **Reporting.** The project manager will most likely be responsible for generating system-wide reports for the Continuum including unduplicated counts and operational reports to audit shelter system utilization. If many agencies receive funding from the same funding sources, the project manager may be asked to program a series of community-wide funding reports and/or custom reports or queries for agency users.
14. **Evaluation.** The project manager should consider ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. This can be done by hiring a professional evaluator or by less expensive options, such as surveys to users, committee members, homeless consumers, and funders.

### **Community Management Tasks**

Community management responsibilities are listed below. All of these tasks are discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

1. **Communicating with stakeholders.** The project manager should constantly communicate with all project stakeholders to manage the community's expectations and build greater involvement. Stakeholders may include service providers, consumers, advocacy groups, local and state government officials, and researchers. Communicating with these groups often includes championing HMIS and taking a lead on ensuring the overall security of the system and need for privacy.
2. **Working with the HMIS committee.** Almost all HMIS projects have a central committee that governs or advises the project and can also support the project. Depending of the size and structure of the implementation, this committee may be related to or independent of the Continuum of Care governance structure. The project manager has to work with this committee in various ways.
3. **Interacting with working groups, user groups and consumers.** The project manager is responsible for overseeing the activities of working groups that are often established to work on particular tasks. In addition the project manager should provide a forum for working with user groups and homeless consumers.

4. **Working with state, regional, and national HMIS implementers.** The project manager represents the project to other HMIS implementing communities as well as to those involved in supporting the HMIS initiative nationally.
5. **Acting as a liaison to the general local community and the press.** A project manager represents the HMIS to local parties beyond those directly involved with the project. This may include government, press, advocacy groups, researchers, and the general public.

Another breakdown of tasks developed in Colorado, which provides a different categorization, can be found as Appendix 2.

In addition to all of these tasks, the project manager supervises other HMIS staff members, if applicable. Project staff will need to have a shared understanding of the overall goals of the project; procedures in place to reach them; guidelines as determined by HUD, state law and by localities; agreed upon responsibilities within the HMIS team and community; and project deadlines. Various models for staffing the HMIS project are discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 3: Staffing Models for HMIS Management**

As mentioned in earlier chapters, communities have widely varying needs, resources, and HMIS implementation structures. All of these will affect the HMIS staffing design. This chapter describes some of the common staff positions that are used as part of HMIS management and overall staffing combinations or models that have been successful in some communities.

While one person should be ultimately responsible for the management of the HMIS, a team of people may be used to manage the central operations. In addition to the central project staff, each agency and project partner will also need to assign staff to manage agency-level HMIS responsibilities. Please note that the agency-level HMIS staffing is not discussed in detail in this document.

### **Overview of Staffing**

The project manager oversees all the tasks and staff working on the HMIS project and is usually the contact person for stakeholder and external relations. In addition, the project manager clearly defines the path to achieve the project's goals, and adapts when the project goes off that path. The project manager is also responsible for ensuring that the project is operating within budget, that tasks are accomplished on time, that all activities achieve a high-level of quality, and that all HUD requirements are met by the project and by the subcontractors in service of the project. (The bulk of this document is devoted to further elucidating the job of the project manager.)

Four additional staff roles are frequently used to manage an HMIS. The additional roles are:

1. System Administrator
2. Technical Support
3. Trainer
4. Data Analyst

Various permutations of these roles are possible. Each of these positions may be staffed by a single person or by multiple people. Alternatively, one individual may be responsible for all of these duties as well as project management.

A sample job posting and description for a project manager that also incorporates many of the system administration, training and technical assistance functions can be found as Appendix 3. Another community's list of system administrator responsibilities that also incorporates some management functions is found in Appendix 4. These two samples illustrate how these functions can be combined and distributed in various ways. A description of each of these basic roles follows, along with discussion of issues relevant to each area that involve the project manager.

## **System Administrator**

The system administrator is responsible for technical aspects of the HMIS implementation.

These tasks include:

- Setting up, maintaining and monitoring the system;
- Ensuring information security;
- Configuring new programs and users; and
- Data management.

Communities that contract with the HMIS solution provider or a third party to host the system will generally receive services for most of the tasks under the first two categories. Tasks under the latter two categories are often retained by the lead agency.

### Set-up, Maintenance and Monitoring of the System

The system administrator oversees the purchasing, maintenance, and configuration of any hardware needed to run the system. This primarily includes the servers, but it may also include routers, switches, network hubs and peripherals such as printers, and storage equipment. The project manager will need to work with system administrator to keep these items within the project budget without compromising necessary equipment. The system administrator will also obtain, oversee the licenses for, and configure the server operating systems, the database management system (e.g., Oracle or Microsoft SQL Server), third party software such as virus protection or Virtual Private Networking tools, as well as the HMIS itself.

In addition to configuring the HMIS, the system administrator may also maintain a separate database for training purposes. Once the system is configured the administrator ensures that all of the hardware, networking, and software packages are performing at optimal capacity. He or she will install upgrades not only to the HMIS but to the other software as needed and will be aware of when it is time to replace or repair hardware. By monitoring system logs, the administrator can not only fine tune the software and database configuration to make sure that it is performing well, but can also optimize the configuration for the functions that it performs most frequently. For example, if users frequently search for clients based on date of birth, the system administrator can create an index to improve the speed of searches based on that field. The administrator can also use these logs to periodically check whether particular agencies are continuing to use the HMIS.

The system administrator gathers user feedback on technical problems and/or software enhancements, tracks requests, and relays them to the software solution provider. The project manager should work with the system administrator to prioritize requests that are most important to the overall project. While the project manager may be the primary contact for contractual issues with the software provider, the system administrator might have more day-to-day interaction.

### Information Security

The system administrator has primary responsibility for maintaining security of the system. Many security functions are specified by the *Final Notice*. The project manager should work with the system administrator to ensure that these protocols as well as any additional protocols mandated by the community's Standard Operating Procedures are being fulfilled. Baseline security standards mandated in the *Final Notice* that are applicable to the System Administrator include:

- Use of firewalls to protect the server;
- Maintaining virus protection on the server machines;
- Restricting physical access to the machines containing HMIS data;
- Implementing backup and disaster recovery procedures; and
- Ensuring proper destruction of data.

Security includes both making sure the system is available at all times as well as ensuring that confidential data is not compromised. Ensuring availability involves protecting the servers from system crashes and resolving hardware issues when they arise. This task also includes protecting the system from viruses or worms or other security issues that can harm the servers. It also involves backing up the data and sending the back up copies to a secure location. Finally, ensuring availability includes developing a disaster recovery plan so that the project can recover in the event that a fire, flood, earthquake or other calamitous event.

The other major category of security, protecting the confidentiality and privacy of the data, encompasses protecting the servers against hackers, overseeing security audits, reviewing audit logs, firewall logs and system logs in order to detect inappropriate access or use of the system, revoking privileges of users who misuse the data, establishing data encryption procedures and secure communication protocols, and properly destroying data when necessary.

### Configuring Programs and Users

When new programs are added to the system, the system administrator or the technical support person has a number of tasks to perform. First the software has to be loaded on the end user computers if the software is not web browser based. Even if the software is web-based, the *Final Notice* requires that use of the software be restricted in some manner to particular workstations. Thus digital certificates might have to be installed or the system has to be configured to accept information from the particular IP addresses used by the program.

In addition, when new programs are added, the system administrator also adds the program to the system. This may include configuring information about the program such as the number of units and beds available for the bed lists. It may also include developing custom screens or custom reports for the programs. Also, the administrator may have to configure the program to share all data or particular types of data with some programs and not others.

The administrator also creates accounts for each user, gives each user the appropriate level of access, and assigns initial passwords. The system administrator should work with the project manager to ensure that all of the appropriate paperwork is in place before allowing new programs or users on to the system.

### Data Management

The system administrator is often involved in the cleaning of data, monitoring data quality, seeking out and resolving duplicate records, creating datasets of unduplicated clients, and generating aggregate reports (sometimes in partnership with data analysts). The system administrator is also primarily responsible for overseeing local data integration efforts. A list of resources related to many of these complex topics can be found in Appendix 1.

### **Technical Support**

Technical support is a crucial aspect of any HMIS implementation. No matter how simple and user-friendly a system may be, there are bound to be questions. A technical support person may be used in medium or large implementations as the primary liaison to the end users for help with software bugs, assists with trainings, and provide assistance with generating reports, data entry and sharing. The technical support person tracks “Help Desk” issues and software bugs, tests upgrades, works closely with site staff and end users, and reports to the system administrator and/or project manager who reports bugs and software wish lists to the software solution provider or local programmer. Ideally, technical support staff will have a human service background so that they can relate to the end users, recognize difficulties and challenges that they may be facing and work with them on realistic and creative solutions.

### Technical Support Types

The project manager will need to decide upon the most cost effective and efficient technical assistance delivery plan. The project manager may choose one type listed below or may select several of these. If she or he selects several, the technical support staff will need very clear guidance about when and under what circumstances to use each type. For example, if the project manager decides to implement both phone and in-person technical assistance, the staff will need to know when it is appropriate to visit agencies as opposed to fielding questions over the phone.

The appropriate process for accessing technical support should be documented in a technical support policy that formally identifies the escalation process during and after business hours. These policies should be communicated to all users during training.

- **Paper and on-line documentation.** Most HMIS solutions will have paper and/or on-line documentation. Each user should have access to this documentation as well as training materials and should be trained to look up questions in available resources prior to accessing technical support. The project manager may want to develop supplemental “how to” resources that outline step-by-step procedures for completing common tasks. As well, the project manager may want to consider disseminating “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQs) or other tips to help communicate solutions to common software or user issues.

- **Help desk.** A help desk system provides users with a central resource to call or email to resolve questions and software issues. There are ‘Help Desk’ database tools that can be very helpful for logging help desk requests and their resolution in a way that builds an ongoing knowledge base about the software. The help desk information, however it is documented, can be used to ensure consistency when giving responses, to reduce duplication of effort in troubleshooting recurring problems, to facilitate learning by new technical support staff, to inform the project manager of software bugs and desired software enhancements, to indicate areas that require more training, and to inform the project manager of frequent problems and solutions that can be addressed through user FAQs or other communication strategies. Help desks are typically administered by HMIS staff or the solution provider.
- **Phone technical assistance.** If technical assistants have the ability (and permission) to remotely view and/or control (also known as shadowing) a user’s system while she or he is having difficulty, this will help immensely with resolving complicated issues. Remote access can be part of the HMIS solution or it can be implemented separately through shadowing a user’s entire operating system. If the technical assistant does not have use of shadow mode or if the project’s Policies and Procedures prohibit this, she or he may still be able to answer quick questions or resolve some problems that the user may be having. More complicated issues may require a site visit.
- **On-site technical assistance.** Many users prefer this type of technical assistance, but it is not always the most efficient delivery method. In large geographical areas, this method might be impossible. As stated above, if a project offers this type of technical assistance, the project manager will need to produce a very clear document indicating when and under what circumstances it is appropriate to conduct site visits. For example, the project manager along with the funder may decide that agencies get no more than three site visits per year. However, hands-on technical assistance may be warranted if the project manager discovers that an agency has significant data quality issues.

## **Trainer**

The trainer is responsible for training end users. This requires a thorough familiarity with the software tool, any additional features such as generating reports, an understanding of minimal data collection and entry requirements, as well as requirements and deadlines for reporting to HUD or to the local city or state. Some trainers also educate about ethics, privacy, confidentiality, and security protocols. The trainer must be able to follow a standard training format so that all users in the HMIS project have a common understanding and education in how the software works and the importance of the data collection—how the data will be used. Armed with that understanding, an effective trainer clearly communicates procedures for entering data and utilizing the software’s features. This usually requires patience in working with users of different levels of computer literacy.

Trainers with human service backgrounds will be able to add another dimension by drawing on their own experience. For example, they may be equipped to discuss techniques for gathering



data from clients who are reluctant or unable to provide information, or they may be able to provide realistic examples of how to use a case management module to track goals and outcome measures.

Project managers need to work with the trainers to ensure that software users are prepared to collect all required data and get the most out of the system's reporting and other features. In order to do that, project managers will need to assess their resources, explore cost effective and efficient models and types of training, and implement the most appropriate training plan. The plan should include targets, i.e., how many trainings will be held during the year and how many people will be trained. Training demands are ongoing, particularly in implementations that experience high agency staff turnover. Users may also need to be periodically retrained due to software upgrades, data quality issues, and advanced usage of the HMIS. Advanced trainings for staff that wish to take advantage of special features of the software can make the HMIS more useful to the end user.

### Training Models

HMIS Communities around the country use various training models including those listed below:

- **One-on-one training.** Using this model, trainers visit agencies and sit with each staff person to train them on the software and answer any questions that they might have. This model works well if resources are plentiful and if there are a limited number of software users.
- **Regularly scheduled group trainings.** This model requires a secure computer lab space where each user has hands-on access to a workstation. If the project is using a web-based application, there will need to be Internet connectivity. (Several communities have created mobile training labs with laptops and a wireless router to facilitate on-site training for users in large geographic locations.) In addition, if there are more than a handful of people who attend the trainings, it is advisable to have both a primary trainer and a back-up person (or people) who can work one-on-one with users in the classroom who need more help. This will prevent the trainer from needing to stop to attend to people individually.
- **Train the Trainer Model.** Trainers can visit agencies individually and train agency staff who will then be able to train all of their agency's users. Trainers can also train a group of trainers from various agencies at one time in a computer lab. This model is widely employed, and much more efficient than the models mentioned above. However, this model makes it difficult to ensure that end users receive a consistent message on either software or policy; thus it may require more frequent monitoring on data quality and policy issues. It is also important to keep in mind that if a trainer leaves an agency, the process needs to begin anew. Communities often employ this model upon initial implementation or a major software upgrade when a solution provider training comes on site to provide expert training.

- **Hiring a consultant or using the solution provider.** Of all HMIS responsibilities, training is probably the area that is most frequently outsourced to third parties. Projects may choose to hire a consultant or use the solution provider to conduct the training. This will free up staff time to focus on the other aspects of the project. This model may be more expensive, or may be less expensive if the contracting agency can achieve economies of scale with multiple implementations or related projects. This model should be accompanied by strong communication strategies with the agencies and the trainers to ensure that the project manager understands the day-to-day problems that users experience with the system and maintains strong agency relationships.

### Training Topics

Common training topics include those listed below.

- **Basic user training.** Beginners will need an overview of the software along with an explanation of required data elements and expectations. This training should also cover how to use the software's online Help features, if applicable. This training should also include the overall purpose of HMIS, an overview of the data collection requirements, client notification and consent policies, data sharing protocols, and other policies. Users should also be trained on the correct protocols to employ if a problem arises with the software.
- **Advanced user training or user group discussions.** Once people have started using the software, they are bound to have questions or run into problems. Holding periodic user group trainings can serve two purposes: 1) it may save staff time to answer common questions in a group setting; and 2) it may create some camaraderie or buy-in to the project. Users participating in these trainings often trade tips and techniques for system usage.
- **Report generation training.** Project managers should gauge whether or not the software's reporting features are complicated enough to warrant separate trainings in this area. In some cases two levels of training may be needed—basic and advanced. A basic training might cover how to use canned reports that come with the system. An advanced training might cover how to export data, build custom reports, run queries and manipulate the data. These trainings might be appropriate for agency executive and administrative staff that make use of the data for grant writing and funding reports.
- **Administrator training.** If a project manager has determined that each agency or local geographic area should have a dedicated administrator to ensure proper system implementation at a local level and act as a point person for all of the users, there should be periodic trainings to review the technical aspects of configuring agencies in the system, setting up bed registers (if applicable) and reviewing administrator roles and responsibilities.
- **Security, policy, and ethics training.** Staff at agencies will need to be aware of all of the security features of the HMIS that they have chosen. They will also need to be aware

of their responsibilities for keeping client information safe and confidential at the agency level as outlined in the *Final Notice*. A special security training can be provided to key agency staff or to all staff to ensure that they understand and adopt appropriate security protocols. Some communities have also incorporated broader ethics training touching on issues of confidentiality, disclosure, and grievance procedures.

For each of the training types listed above, trainers and project managers should work together to develop a standard curriculum and review and revise it periodically. They will also need to develop training materials to hand out to participants. These materials should also be updated as needed. The project manager should try to gauge the effectiveness of the training by creating a training evaluation form with numeric scales. Appendix 5 contains an Evaluation Form used in Massachusetts for its basic user training. Other communities actually administer a test before and after the training to measure how much the trainees learned. Those who fail the test do not receive passwords. The tests serve the dual purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the training and ensuring that everyone accessing the system understands the key concepts.

Each training session should also contain an inspirational segment for end users. This will remind end users that they have a stake in the project and will help with the long-term goal of collecting quality data. Trainers may want to begin each training by outlining some of the benefits of data collection or by asking end users who have been entering data to talk about benefits for them, their agencies and/or consumers.

### **Data Analyst**

Data analysts are sometimes part of the HMIS project team, especially in later stages. Effective data mining and data analysis can benefit the community by providing a competitive edge in grant applications, as well as advancing the overall HMIS goals of improving service planning, educating the community, and influencing policy.

A data analyst may help clean project data by eliminating or merging potential duplicate records. The analyst may also determine how data fields and categories should be combined, for example, whether income from selling a street newspaper should count as employment income. He or she may also help determine whether particular data should be considered as “outliers” and therefore not included in aggregate data. For example, a homeless client earning \$3,000 a month may or may not be considered valid. Ultimately, the analyst aggregates the data in order to present total counts and percentages in various categories, and helps determine which data is most critical for policy or research purposes.

If the community has less than 100% coverage, the analyst can use extrapolation methodologies to determine whether the results are skewed by data entry shortcomings or whether the data are statistically valid. He or she can also help determine whether apparent trends and variations between sub-groups are statistically significant. For example, if the percentage of homeless women entered in the HMIS was smaller in one year than the next, this may represent an actual trend or just a statistical “blip” within a margin of error. Analysts can also help interpret the data within the larger community and policy context, by comparing findings to similar studies in other communities or relating the results to changes in particular policies.

Some communities have found it beneficial to engage external research partners to help complete these tasks. A list of resources related to research partnerships, including a link to a list of potential partners can be found in Appendix 1.

## Staffing Models

Staffing models for an HMIS project are determined by many variables. They depend on the goals of the project; the number of agencies in the system, the size of those agencies; the type of software being implemented; whether integration of data from different software is required; the type of network; the HMIS budget; the project's political support; individual and agency skill sets; the nature of the lead HMIS organization; and the in-kind support available. Most HMIS implementations are under-resourced, and do not operate with an optimal staffing structure.

To make the decision about which staffing model to adopt and within each model which staff positions/services to hire/contract for, a community must think hard about the following questions:

- What do we *need* to achieve with an HMIS?
- What do we *hope* to achieve?
- What *resources* do we already *have*?
- What additional *resources* do we *need* to achieve our goals?
- How will our *efforts* help homeless people and the community?

Four common models for staffing an HMIS project are described below:

- Project Management and System Administration or Hosting by a Lead Organization
- Project Management by a Lead Organization and Hosting by Solution provider
- Contractual Project Management
- Project Management through a Non-Profit Solution Provider Partner

**Project Management and System Administration or Hosting by a Lead Organization.** In this model, there is a lead agency, typically with fiscal and operational responsibility for the project. The lead organization hires a project manager in-house to lead the implementation of HMIS. Depending on the many variables listed above, especially funding, the project manager may hire one or more people to be responsible for system administration, technical assistance, or training. In this model, the technical infrastructure is supported by the lead agency.

**Project Management by a Lead Organization and Hosting by HMIS Solution Provider.** In this model, the lead organization maintains local oversight of the project, but outsources the hosting functions to the solution provider. However, even in this model, some of the system administration tasks are often managed locally, such as user account management, certain database tasks, certain application adjustments, data integration and/or unduplication of system data. This model may be most appropriate given the technical capacity of many lead organizations and may also be the most cost-effective approach to technical system administration tasks, such as server and database administration, data back-up and recovery protocols, and maintaining firewalls.

In each of the above models, the solution provider may also be contracted to provide initial and/or ongoing software application training and technical support to users. Many communities contract with the solution provider to train the trainers. In these cases, communities must staff appropriately to ensure that there is sufficient ongoing local or contractual training and technical support to address staff turnover, data quality, and continuity across agencies. In all cases, if the solution provider is managing training or technical support, the project manager will need to be able to modify the training curriculum to address emerging data quality needs. The project manager will also need access to technical support requests to be able to remain aware of system issues and prioritize system enhancements.

The **Contractual Project Management** model is another alternative model for managing a HIMS project. In this model, the lead organization hires an individual or organization to come into a community and take over part or all of the management duties. By hiring a consultant, a community can bring in instant expertise in many areas of HMIS (or targeted expertise, such as training); limit the ‘learning curve’; and benefit from a neutral perspective. The downside is that consultants may not be able to respond immediately if they have other contracts and may not be cost-effective in the long-term. Contract models can be very effective and achieve economies of scale if the individual/firm is contracted for a specific task in which it already has expertise or comparable operations. Appendix 6 is an example of a contract agreement for an HMIS Project Director.

A final model that is becoming more commonplace is **Project Management through a Non-Profit Solution Provider Partner**. In this case, the model is operated very similarly to the Project Management and System Administration by a Lead Organization model; however, the primary mission of the lead organization is to implement and operate the HMIS. The organization that develops and maintains the HMIS software also manages the HMIS project for the community. Generally, they have the technical and development capacity similar to their for-profit peers; however, they provide an ongoing presence and act in partnership with their community sites. This model can be contracted at a Continuum-, community- or individual agency-level—with varying fee structures and accountability for each. One challenge with this model is that development of policies and procedures and local use of data to guide policy-making can get lost. To avoid this, communities must clearly define in advance how decisions will be made; how policies will be developed, adopted, and enforced; and how data will be controlled and used.

## Chapter 4: Managing Project Operations

This chapter provides more detailed information on a subset of the project operation tasks described in Chapter Two. Specific topics include:

- Managing the project plan;
- Maintaining policies and procedures;
- Managing agency contracts and participation; and
- Software provider relations.

Other operational tasks listed in Chapter Two are often outsourced or delegated to other staff members and were covered in the previous chapter. Although the tasks and relationships described in this chapter also involve managing community relationships, the topics are specific to operations. Chapter Five targets broader communication issues with these and other audiences.

### Managing the Project Plan

The project manager sets the course for the HMIS project by designing a project plan, overseeing progress, and identifying risks and steering clear of them. Moving from larger targets to smaller, the project manager defines the overall goals and activities of the project and breaks these down into distinct areas of work and specific tasks under each area. The manager also determines when each task needs to be done, in what order, and by whom.

Some might view managing the project plan as secondary to the other more direct tasks listed in the plan. However, creating, reviewing, adjusting and updating the project plan, reporting on the status of the plan, analyzing risks to the plan, and incorporating means of avoiding or mitigating the impact of these risks all take a significant amount of time. These activities should be viewed as central to the project manager's work.

Project managers have four primary system-level variables to work with when managing the plan. These are:

1. Time
2. Money/Resources
3. Scope/Tasks
4. Quality

These four variables, taken together, constitute the project manager's contractual obligations. Often, however, quality is not specifically defined. Changing any one of these variables will have an impact on one or more of the others. For example, suppose the timeframe for expanding the system to ten new agencies is cut in half from two months to one month and the process for rolling out software to new agencies includes training each new user in each agency one on one for four hours. In this case, the scope of the effort (ten agencies) is fixed but the time is reduced. The project manager has two main options. First, he or she can devote more resources to the effort by pulling staff off other tasks, demanding overtime work, or hiring extra staff – resulting

in increased costs or reduced output elsewhere. Second, she or he can compromise on the quality of the rollout procedures by training each person for only two hours or training in pairs. The manager might accept this compromise even though it may result in increased need for technical support later. Both options have advantages and disadvantages and implications on other system variables.

As is clear from the example above, the project manager often has control over one or two of these elements, while the other elements will be imposed from the outside. In the previous example, the deadlines and scope were imposed from the outside, but the project manager had more control over resources and quality. The more control the project manager has, the greater the likelihood of success. Without control of at least one of these variables, the project manager cannot manage the project effectively. It is generally not possible to do something faster or for less money, without adjusting the scope or quality of the work. Nor is it possible to increase the scope without draining resources, impacting deadlines, or sacrificing quality.

Once the plan is developed, a summary project scope document, such as Appendix 7, should be created. The purpose of this document is to make sure that the governing committee, funders, or other individuals with oversight agree to the plan and do not have expectations beyond the scope and the timeline established by the plan. Changes to any of the variables (e.g., budget cuts, unexpected expenses, additional tasks, shortened timeline) and the impact of these changes in terms of the other variables should be documented (see Appendix 8). The project manager should also periodically report on the status of the plan, including whether tasks are on schedule and in line with budget projections (see Appendix 9).

Determining whether the project is on track in terms of time, resources, and scope is relatively straightforward. It is more difficult to assess quality. The Metro Denver Homeless Initiative HMIS Task List (see Appendix 2, Task 1.3) includes the establishment and maintenance of Quality Plans. The quality plans include measurable goals and feedback mechanisms to help determine the effectiveness of each major area of work, including data quality, rollout processes, and training.

### **Managing Risk**

In addition to the day-to-day system and community management, it is equally important to plan for the unexpected. Risks abound on both the project operations and community management tracks. Given the complexity of HMIS, there are many possible risks that can potentially cripple the project. Some areas of risk include:

- Inadequate funding
- Staffing shortages
- Vendor business problems
- Software functional inadequacies
- Information security failures
- Community/political resistance
- Legal/compliance conflicts
- Data/participation shortcomings

The project manager can prepare for these risks in advance by developing a risk plan that details the potential risks, the likelihood of the risk occurring, the impact an occurrence would have, actions to avoid the risk, and contingency plans if the problem occurs (see Appendix 10). Proactive tasks to avoid risks that are deemed highly likely or highly damaging should be added to the project plan. Thus, if staff turnover is highly likely and will cause a high impact, then cross-training team members should be added to the project plan.

### **Tools for Managing a Project Plan**

There are a variety of software tools that help project managers manage time, resources, quality and scope. Most often, these software tools use Gantt charts to schedule tasks (scope), the anticipated length of each task (time), and staff and monetary resources. They can also enable users to indicate dependencies of one task on another. Quality is more difficult to quantify, but is often a function of the other three variables.

Microsoft Project is the most widely used project management software on the market and is used by several HMIS managers around the country. The software costs between \$600 and \$1500, depending on the version, and is full of features that may be very useful to advanced project managers and overwhelming and too complex for others.

A listing of alternative software tools, including several that are free, can be found at <http://www.columbia.edu/~jm2217/>. For example, Open Workbench (<http://www.openworkbench.org/>) advertises itself as an open source, free alternative to Microsoft Project. A brief description of about 13 software tools can be found at <http://commercial-solutions.com/pages/pmssoftware.html>. More in-depth reviews of these products, conducted by *Project Manager Today* magazine can viewed, for a nominal price, at [http://www.pmtoday.co.uk/pm\\_software.asp](http://www.pmtoday.co.uk/pm_software.asp).

Most HMIS project managers contacted for this document used Microsoft Excel to manage their basic tasks, budgets and staff assignments. They found Excel adequate for most of their activities, even though it does not have built-in project management features to manage task dependencies or indicate whether staff members are over-allocated. Some managers resorted to Excel even after training and experience with Microsoft Project. Others, however, have not been exposed to anything else and might not be aware of the potential benefits of off-the-shelf project management tools.

### **Maintaining Policies and Procedures**

It is critical for every HMIS implementation to develop, adopt, maintain, and enforce standard operating procedures (SOPs). Policies and procedures generally address privacy protection agreements, how data will be stored and protected, who is responsible for its protection, which data can/cannot be shared, and how it will be done. The *Final Notice* includes baseline privacy and security standards, and it also allows the options for communities to adopt stricter standards as necessary. Thus, SOPs should work within the framework provided by the *Final Notice* to incorporate optional requirements as necessary based on a community vision of how the HMIS should operate. A project manager may also need to create other documents such as a privacy



notice and/or Client Consent Form for clients that may wish to share data with another agency, an Interagency Sharing Agreement, and Data Release Forms. These should be created in accordance with the *Final Notice* as well as other federal and state privacy laws, and MIS best practices.

### Developing SOPs

The HMIS Implementation Guide (2002)<sup>2</sup> contains a chapter on Standard Operating Procedures and Protocols. The chapter on SOPs contains information on several important elements that should be included in a SOP manual. They include: privacy protection protocols to ensure the confidentiality and safety of sensitive information and to protect consumers, developing partner agreements in order to enforce compliance among system partners, and initial and ongoing training. The chapter also contains information about achieving data accuracy by conducting respectful client interviews, by outlining minimal data elements so that there is consistency in data collection and by training data entry staff. Other resources on developing standard operating procedures are listed in Appendix 1.

### Updating Policies and Procedures

Project managers should review SOPs at least once per year. More frequent revisions may be required based on regulatory, policy, software, technology, or other local changes. A prime example of a regulatory-prompted change is that project managers with previously adopted SOPs need to work with their communities to update them to meet the requirements of the *Final Notice*. The *Final Notice* contains baseline standards as well as more stringent optional standards. A reasonable first step for project managers with existing SOPs to ensure compliance is to create a spreadsheet of each of the specific minimal requirements described in the *Final Notice*, and a column to indicate the community's policy in that area, and whether the policy needs to be revised. For those that need to be revised, the project manager should suggest revisions and devise action steps for revising the SOPs and implementing the changes.

Figure 4.1 shows the beginning of a template for mapping SOPs to the standards in the *Final Notice*. Note that some sections include several rules. Also, policies only need revision if the current SOPs do not address the area or are more lenient than required by the *Final Notice*.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/implementation/implementation.cfm>

Figure 4.1: Template for Mapping SOPs to Mandated Privacy and Security Standards

Section	Baseline Standard	Current SOP	Needs Revision?	Suggested New SOP	Action Steps
4.2.1	Use fair means to collect personal data				
4.2.1	Knowledge or consent, where appropriate				
4.2.1	Sign posted at each intake desk				
4.2.2	Only relevant personal data collected				
4.2.2	Dispose of personal data after seven years				
4.2.3	Privacy notice must specify purpose of data collection and allowable disclosures				
Etc...					

A complete breakdown of all the rules in the *Final Notice* is beyond the scope of this document. The *Final Notice* itself is written in straightforward language, and resources for additional guidance related to the standards can be found in Appendix 1, under the “Data and Technical Standards” topic. But, among these requirements are that each agency must post a copy of an HMIS privacy notice by each workstation where HMIS client data are entered and that there must be a procedure in place for clients to file grievances. The documents that Metro Denver developed for client notice and grievance are included in Appendices 11 and 12.

As an example of non-regulatory reasons for modifying SOPs, Massachusetts had been using an encryption solution and many of the privacy policies referenced this solution when addressing safeguards. When the company providing this solution went out of business, the policies needed to be amended and sent to all participating sites.

The SOPs should document the process to amend a policy or procedure, including the types of changes that require governing committee approval versus those that can be amended administratively by the lead organization. Depending on the extent and impact of the revision, it may also be prudent to involve participating agencies in the revision process. Once revisions have been approved, agencies will need to be notified of the changes. Additional user training or revised user agreement forms may also need to be updated and amended. If the overall document is not substantially different, it may be appropriate to only send out the revised policies with a cover letter notifying agencies of changes asking them to replace old policies with revised ones. The cover letter should also include a summary of why these changes have been made. In general, the official SOPs should document all changes and include archived versions of old policies. Each individual policy should be dated and the amendment history should be tracked. It may also be helpful to provide a running log of amendments as part of the SOP title page or table of contents.

## **Managing Agency Contracts and Participation**

The project manager is responsible for contracting and working with agencies that are participating in the HMIS project. It is important to develop documents that clearly delineate the responsibilities of the lead agency and each individual agency. This can be accomplished by developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Scope of Services and/or Agreements with Agencies, a uniform Fee Structure, and regular communication. It is equally important to follow through on all contractual responsibilities and to ensure that agencies are following through on their responsibilities. Contractual accountability can be verified using a regular monitoring procedure or self-assessment or report. Appendix 13 is Michigan's comprehensive Agency Participation Agreement.

### Developing a Scope of Service for Agency Partners

Project managers along with fiscal staff will need to develop an HMIS Scope of Service or contract with agencies to outline the specific responsibilities and reasonable expectations for all parties. In some cases, agencies are required to pay to participate, in which case, the contract will define what the agency can expect for its payment. In other cases, the Continuum or lead HMIS organization subsidizes the participation of provider agencies, in which case, the contract defines what is expected in exchange for the opportunity to participate. In cases where participation is a condition of funding, the HMIS scope of services may be incorporated into a broader grant agreement.

Specific elements of a Scope of Services include:

- The types of services that will be provided by the central project staff;
- Dates of service;
- A listing of all programs within an agency that will participate and the number of licenses each will be assigned;
- The specific number and types of trainings that will be provided along with the timeframe;
- The total dollar amount to be paid (or received) by the agency and invoice information (when invoices will be sent, the dollar amount of each and due dates of each payment); and
- Any expectations of the agency (including baseline privacy and security requirements for participation).

### Developing a Fee Structure

Many communities have adopted a fee structure to subsidize all or a portion of the HMIS operational costs. Understanding per agency costs (or per unit costs) can be a valuable way to assess the value or level of services provided, and can be calculated to understand the cost-for-service regardless of whether the costs are passed on to participating agencies or used to justify HMIS grant requests.

In order to develop a fee structure for Continuums of Care and agencies, the project manager will need to understand the total project budget, including licensing, software support, hosting,

training, staffing, and overhead. Some of the operating costs are relatively straightforward and attributable to specific agencies, such as licensing costs. Other costs, like personnel costs, may be more difficult to pro-rate. One suggestion is to conduct a short-term or long-term time tracking system for existing agencies in order to determine, on average, how much time staff is spending with agencies. Once that is done, it may be helpful to note whether or not more time is spent with larger agencies and less time with smaller ones. If so, the cost structure could be divided according to agency size—small, medium, and large—with smaller agencies getting charged less for project management, technical assistance and training. Hosting costs for each agency can be determined by dividing the project’s total hosting costs by the number of active licenses and then allocating a cost to each agency based on the number of licenses being used. Central server hardware and software costs (including anticipated hardware and software costs) can be allocated in the same fashion. Overhead costs include items such as space and supplies. Administration costs, if you choose to include these, will vary. Many organizations have a standard rate that they charge.

Once the “per unit” costs have been documented, the Continuum can determine whether and how it should charge individual agency participants. Nationally, communities have adopted many different models including: flat agency fees, flat user fees, fees based on the number of users (typically using a scale), fees based on size of agency budgets, or fees based on the number of clients served nightly/annually. The fee structure should be uniform and incorporated into the scope of services and/or contract. Cincinnati’s fee schedule, which is based on the size of an Agency’s annual budget, is included in Appendix 14. This example also documents what the agencies receive in return.

#### Information to Collect and Track About Each Participating Provider

Project managers will need to maintain records about each program and agency participating in HMIS. Each participating provider file might include:

- Current, executed contract;
- An up-to-date document certifying that the program is complying with all of the privacy and security standards as well as data entry requirements (see next sub-section and related appendices on Site Monitoring);
- Current list of trained and authorized users that specifies names, positions, and access levels;
- Agency and Program Information Forms, including the type of programs and the number of beds or units;
- Verification of fee payment, if applicable;
- Documentation of hardware/software stipends, if applicable;
- Contact Log with documentation of significant communication, concerns, decisions, and monitoring results; and
- Copies of signed user agreements.

Before an agency or user joins an HMIS project, the project manager needs to make sure that all of the required documentation is in place. Project managers should set up a regular schedule for contacting sites to inquire whether or not any changes have occurred to the information that has

been provided. Appendix 15 contains Massachusetts’ Program Information form. Each agency is required to complete one for all programs that plan to participate.

Site Monitoring

Once agencies are online and users are entering data, the project manager needs to establish a way to monitor sites to ensure that they are in compliance with contract and statutory requirements. Project managers should begin by developing a chart that lists all agency requirements. These should include anything contained in written agreements, SOPs, and all of HUD’s required privacy and security standards. A project manager may be able to check compliance for some requirements remotely. Annual site visits are recommended to check compliance with other requirements including consent procedures, system security and user agreements.

Figure 4.2 Sample Monitoring Checklist

Requirements	Completed? Yes/no	If not checked, please explain
<b>Off-site Verification:</b>		
Are all participating programs actively using the system? (Was data entered within 1 month of initial authorization?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are all authorized users actively entering data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do audit trails suggest appropriate user access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are data being entered completely and accurately?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>On-site Verification:</b>		
Are data on all existing clients entered within 14 days of the encounter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are Client Consent Forms on file, when required?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the agency protected by a firewall?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is virus protection software installed and updated on each workstation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are PCs located in appropriate locations within the agency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do PCs have password protected screen savers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are HMIS Privacy Notices posted by each workstation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Columbus, Ohio incorporates HMIS compliance into a larger certification procedure designed to assess agency adherence to a wide range of legal, regulatory, and community-determined requirements and best practices. Appendix 16 is the HMIS component of this certification procedure.

A project manager also needs a plan of action in the event that participating agencies are non-compliant. If the HMIS project is not directly associated with a primary funder, the project manager should work with the Continuum and/or funder(s) to conduct monitoring. The relevant parties may need to agree upon areas of monitoring responsibilities (e.g., hardware/software compliance, application of all security features, access and use of the system, data entry and quality issues, compliance with behavioral policies, etc.). For example, the project manager may monitor system utilization and security compliance as part of its contract, but the funder may monitor data quality and client consent procedures as part of its contract.

Communities can also incorporate self-assessments as part of their monitoring processes. The self-assessment creates an atmosphere where agencies are more aware of their ongoing responsibilities and become more accountable without creating an antagonistic relationship. Michigan asks members to file a quarterly report on system access controls, training and technical support protocols/experience, technical performance of the system, data quality, aggregated reports, and audit issues (see Appendix 17). Since Michigan's statewide system incorporates multiple Continuums across a large geographic area, Michigan has also implemented a system where each Continuum also has periodic meetings and reports back to the central agency (see Appendix 18). Rockford, Illinois also uses a similar self-assessment survey process. After surveys are completed, site visits take place to follow-up on items that need attention (see Appendix 19).

## **Software Provider Relations**

This section covers various aspects of software provider relations, encompassing the contract phase, ongoing solution provider relations, documenting software issues, handling software upgrades, and challenges and strategies for switching solution providers, if necessary.

### Negotiating Contracts

As part of the first step in negotiating a contract with a software solution provider, ask the solution provider for a price list. Also, call other project managers using the same solution provider and ask them to share pricing information.

Clarity is crucial when negotiating contracts. The scope of services should cover all aspects of the relationship. Depending on the structure of the HMIS implementation, some of these responsibilities and costs may not be applicable, but the general universe includes:

- Configuration or implementation;
- Training;
- Data conversion;
- Licensing;
- Hosting, backup and disaster recovery;
- Off-site data storage;
- Assuring fast response time/little down time;
- Virus protection;
- Implementing security patches;
- Training;

- Technical support;
- Customization; and
- Documentation.

If the solution has optional modules or if the solution provider is expected to configure the system to local needs, the scope of services should also include detailed information on the functional requirements of the system so everyone shares an understanding of what is being purchased. It is a good idea to involve others who have contracts with vendors to help with areas where there is a lack of knowledge.

Engage an attorney to assist in reviewing the contract. Ask the attorney to be sure to include an ‘out clause’ or a section on customer termination rights. That is, if the solution provider does not meet expectations, the project manager will want to ensure that she or he can cancel the contract with impunity. The attorney will need to be very specific about the instances in which it is permissible to end the contract. If out clauses are included, a project manager may want to consider negotiating a multi-year contract in order to control price increases from year to year. This reduces the risk of locking in with a solution provider and then being unable to afford price increases over time. It gives the project manager the ability to more accurately budget resources during the life of the contract.

#### Ongoing Solution Provider Relations

Once the contract begins, the project manager should establish open lines of communication with the lead project contact for the solution provider. The project manager can reduce the chances of miscommunication by documenting conversations and decisions with the solution provider. After each conversation, the project manager should send an e-mail to the solution provider summarizing the discussion. Ask the solution provider to confirm, in writing, that the summary accurately captures each party’s understanding of the conversation. Be sure to include any timelines offered by the solution provider. This will help to maintain a positive working relationship with the solution provider by avoiding misunderstandings about promises regarding customizations, software fixes, price, etc.

#### Understanding and Documenting Software Issues

Inevitably, there will be software issues. Any software product will have bugs or will need to be customized to meet the needs of the community. Effective tools for identifying issues are user groups, training feedback, and the Help Desk request log. Issues should be documented in an issues log that can be used to prioritize requests for changes and track the status of changes.

Metro Denver runs reports on the following information to understand the effectiveness of the software and to help identify and prioritize software flaws and desired enhancements.

- Number of issues entered (per month, month to month);
  - Percent of issues closed (per month, month to month);
  - Issues by software area (per month, most frequent area month to month);
  - Issues by agency (per month, agencies with the most frequent issues month to month);
- and

- Methods of accessing technical support (per month, month to month).

Appendix 20 contains an example of an issue log created by Metro Denver. They have created a drop down box for the area column so that they are able to summarize issues by group area. They have also included a priority column so that they are able to group the spreadsheet according to priority level. Finally, they have a resolution notes section and a resolution date section so that they can track open and closed issues and report resolutions to users of the system. Note that some of the issues may be resolved by user training and communication, and may not involve system changes by the solution provider.

Even the most responsive of HMIS providers will not be able to handle a long, non-prioritized laundry list of bugs, enhancements and other issues in a timely way. The project manager should work with the team and with users of the system to determine priority levels. *High*: What needs to get done immediately in order to ensure that people are able to perform the most basic functions. *Medium*: What are the things that are really frustrating users to the point where they are not using the system as effectively as they otherwise might. *Low*: What might be improved and enhanced or added that would make noticeable, positive differences to the users. Official requests for software changes should be documented in a change management document that serves as an approval tool for all parties. The change management log should track who identified/requested the change (the solution provider may also initiate system changes), the priority level, the description, the cost (if any), the timeframe, and authorization date and personnel involved in the change.

### Using Solution Provider Support

A project manager or a designated staff person should have a primary solution provider contact. If that person is unavailable or unresponsive, the project manager or designee should have the solution provider's organizational chart with names and numbers so that someone can be contacted in short order. Also, the project manager should know whom to contact during off hours in case of emergency and a protocol should be written so that each party is clear about all of the steps involved. If a project is paying for solution provider support, the project manager should make sure that the assistance is readily accessible and used.

### Security and Confidentiality

The solution provider should be aware of all SOPs that address security and confidentiality. The solution provider is also responsible for complying with all applicable sections of the *Final Notice*. Some aspects of the baseline security standard that are best implemented by the solution provider are:

- Minimum password length and complexity;
- Disallowing simultaneous access by the same username at different workstations;
- Timing out of the system after a period of inactivity;
- Limiting access to the software to particular workstations based on digital certificates or IP addresses; and
- Encryption of data during transmission.



Many additional baseline standards in the *Final Notice* apply to the system host, and will therefore apply to the solution provider if they are also hosting the system. Some of these standards were discussed in Chapter 3, under the System Administrator role.

In addition, if staff members of the solution provider will have access to a community's HMIS data through their workstations—either through the software or by directly connecting to the backend database—then the baseline standards that relate to individual programs and user workstations apply to solution provider staff. These standards include maintaining virus protection on the workstations, using password protected screen savers, and maintenance of firewalls protecting the solution provider's network.

In addition to the baseline requirements, the community's SOPs may include stricter security measures. Some of these standards may require additional software or database features or hosting procedures. If the community has already contracted with a solution provider, it is important to work with that provider to ensure that the optional policies and protocols contemplated by the community are feasible. Some options may entail additional programming and added cost. If the community has not yet chosen an HMIS solution, the community should seek out an HMIS that will meet its security needs.

Communities that require end users to sign agreements regarding the proper handling of data should obtain agreements from staff of the solution provider as well. If the solution provider has its own non-disclosure regulations, obtain signed copies and keep them on file.

### Planning for Software Upgrades

Periodically, solution providers will need to upgrade their software in order to meet the needs of their customers. Some upgrades are relatively minor, but version upgrades are major and the project manager will need to have a plan in place to ensure that the upgrade occurs without too many disruptions or periods of downtime. The following are some suggested steps that a project manager may want to consider to minimize risks:

- Ask the solution provider for documentation regarding the upgrade. What changes are planned? What will remain the same?
- Communicate expectations very clearly and in writing with the solution provider. Make sure to include expected timelines, required customizations, and other expectations and assumptions.
- Communicate with the solution provider often to make sure that everything is proceeding according to the plan.
- Craft communications to users very carefully. Do not set expectations too high and make sure that any timelines communicated by the solution provider are real before sending them to the users.
- Find out how long the actual upgrade will take and then plan accordingly, particularly if the system will be down and unavailable for an extended period of time. If possible, plan the upgrade during a time when there will be the least disruption to users.
- Ensure there is an entire system backup available, which will enable rolling back to the previous version in case of major problems with the upgrade.

- If the solution provider is hosting the system, make sure that staff members are available to answer any questions that the solution provider may have or handle any problems that arise during the upgrade. Alternatively, if you are self-hosting, make sure that you have adequate solution provider support during the upgrade.
- Test! Ask at least a few people—staff and experienced users—to test before going live with the new version. Testing should consist of functionality testing (is the new version performing according to expectations?) and data migration testing (did the data transfer over in the way that it should have?) For major upgrades, testing should systematically cover every aspect of the software’s functionality and simulate end user conditions as much as possible.
- Train end users (or train the trainers) on the upgrade and potential impacts on the agency’s business process.
- Make sure that there is a formal mechanism in place for users to communicate upgrade problems and make sure that the communication is two way. That is, make sure that users receive a status report so that they know issues are being addressed or resolved.

### Switching Solution Providers

A project manager should consider switching solution providers if expectations consistently are not being met, the solution is not meeting the community’s needs, if cost is becoming too high, and if these factors are damaging the project’s reputation or success. This is not a decision that can be made lightly. Communities that are unhappy with their current software believe that new software will solve all of their problems; however, there are generally advantages and disadvantages to all software applications. For example, if the community is upset that its current software is slow, they might find a solution that is faster but does not have all of the security features that the current solution provides.

In considering whether to switch software, the project manager should revisit all of the community’s requirements. If a community decides to select an alternative solution, it should engage in a thorough process to do so. The HMIS Implementation Guide addresses software selection in depth. All initial HMIS implementation tasks will also apply when switching software. For instance, SOPs, consent forms and participation agreements may have to be revised if they refer directly to the software product or to features that exist only in that product and are handled differently in the new tool.

There are additional issues in switching software that are not encountered when selecting software for the first time. These issues involve community buy-in, financial cost, loss of data, and other concerns:

- The community’s expectations and buy-in for the new software may be very low after having been “burned before.” Alternatively they might be too high after a long build up, leading to inevitable disillusionment. Stakeholders may associate the entire project with the software rather than the goal of collecting data over time to improve services and inform decision-making around resources. If the software fails it may be seen as a failure of the entire project and buy-in may suffer.
- The old software forms the baseline expectations for the new software. There will be functions the old software performed that the new software does not perform. Users often

grow attached to seemingly insignificant features. For example, one user might like the ability to change screens by using keyboard commands rather than the mouse. For that user, the loss of this seemingly minor feature will govern his or her feelings about the new software.

- Switching solution providers may be expensive, as the community may need to pay for two systems at once during the process of rolling out the new application.
- The community will expect its data to be converted from the old software to the new software. The current software solution provider has minimal incentive to assist in this process.
- There is a danger of losing data. Data conversion from one system to another may not capture every piece of information entered in the original system, and migration from one system to another could result in a delay or lag time in ongoing data entry. If the delay is particularly long, there is a chance that the data from that period will never be entered.

For all of these reasons, communities may feel they are “locked in” to their current solution. In fact, there is a very good chance that the particular problem that is the impetus to switch software can be resolved much more quickly and cheaply than the community can switch software. Thus, the community should only consider switching software if there is a persistent pattern of problems over a long period of time, and if it is clear that the problem will not be resolved in six months or more.

In addition to the practical impediments to switching solution providers, communities may also be contractually obligated to continue with its provider. Communities considering switching solutions might consider waiting until the end of their contractual period. On the other hand, contracts should include an option to terminate the contract without cash penalty under particular conditions. Communities invoking this option and withholding payment should have ample documentation of the ways in which the solution provider failed to meet its contractual obligations. The project manager might need to seek legal advice regarding whether contract termination would be justifiable given the particular scenario and the terms of the contract.

It is absolutely critical to make sure that the problem is software specific and not related to other factors. One way to do this is to compare your experience with other communities using the same software. If other communities are not experiencing the same problems, the problem might be related to one of the following:

- Hardware (server or workstation);
- Networking issues;
- Database size and optimization;
- User errors;
- Inadequate training; or
- Special functionality requested by your community.

These problems will probably not be resolved by switching software.

If a community determines that switching solution providers might be the only way to fix a project or move it forward in reaching its goals, the following steps should be taken:

1. The project manager should negotiate specific deadlines for resolving persistent issues with its current solution provider. At the same time, the project manager should clarify contractual obligations and the solution provider's role in conversion processes if the community switches software. It is better to do this at this stage, before the decision to switch is made, while the solution provider has an interest in appeasing the community and keeping your business.
2. During this period prior to the deadline, the project manager should communicate with the community about these steps. The promises of the solution provider should be distinguished from promises of the project manager. The project manager should not promise that the problem will be resolved (which is not in his or her control). Rather the project manager should promise to begin seeking a new solution if the deadlines are not met.
3. The project manager should start gathering the community's requirements and researching alternative solution providers prior to the deadline. A request for proposal (RFP) or selection process should be finalized by the time the deadline with the current provider is reached. The RFP should include requirements about importing data from the current software.
4. If the deadline is not met, the project manager should proceed on parallel tracks:
  - a. Issue the RFP and begin the new software selection process, which should be comprehensive and inclusive of advisory boards and key stakeholders.
  - b. Continue working with the current provider to mitigate the problem. The current provider should also be invited to respond to the RFP.
5. The final decision to purchase new software should be made in consultation with the advisory or governing committee after weighing all of the responses and testing the solutions.
6. Once new software is chosen, it should be piloted and rolled out incrementally. Piloting communities may wish to do dual data entry for a limited period until they are comfortable with the new software. The HMIS team should be prepared to support two software applications at once for duration of the rollout period.

### CoC Secession from a Multi-CoC Implementation

Sometimes, one CoC within a multi-CoC HMIS implementation decides to secede from the larger implementation and choose another solution provider. This causes a number of problems. First, the original economy of scale will be diminished, and the money from the seceding CoC will no longer be available to the larger implementation. Thus, the secession could threaten the overall sustainability of the larger HMIS project. Second, the breakaway CoC will face all of the political, economic, and data migration challenges faced by entire implementations that wish to switch software. The original solution provider may have to devote resources toward data migration that could have been devoted to other areas. Third, there will likely be a time in the future when the CoC's will want to combine the data for statewide or regional analysis, this will entail additional integration costs. Depending on the size of the seceding CoC, the break off of one large CoC to a new solution provider might have a more detrimental effect than the entire multi-CoC implementation migrating to new software.

On account of these issues, project managers of multi-CoC implementation should make every effort to initially include only those CoCs that are fully committed to maintaining the multi-CoC partnership. Once the implementation is in place, the project manager should ensure that the needs of all CoCs are addressed and that the leadership of each CoC continues to see the benefits of the larger partnership.

## **Chapter 5: Managing the HMIS Community**

This chapter focuses on the community management tasks described in Chapter Two. More specific descriptions are provided for:

- Communicating with stakeholders;
- Working with the HMIS committee;
- Interacting with working groups, user groups, and consumers;
- Working with state, regional, and national HMIS implementers; and
- Acting as a liaison to the general local community and the press.

### **Communicating with Stakeholders**

The success of the project often depends on community building among various local HMIS stakeholder groups, and the project manager is responsible for supporting the local HMIS stakeholder community. Two primary stakeholder groups are:

- Executives and staff of agencies that use or will use the HMIS; and
- The leadership of the Continuum of Care and/or project funders.

These two groups will have contractual relationships with the HMIS project. The relationships and responsibilities of each of these groups along with those of the HMIS project staff should be defined formally. Fulfilling these obligations is the core of the project's operations as discussed in Chapter Four. Beyond these two core groups, the following other groups are often significant HMIS project stakeholders:

- Homeless or formerly homeless consumers;
- Homeless advocacy groups;
- Researchers studying homelessness;
- Local or state government agencies overseeing homeless or related programs; and
- Technology groups or solution providers concerned with assisting non-profits. In some communities, the HMIS solution provider falls in this category and is more akin to a non-profit technology partner than a software vendor.

These groups often do not have contractual relationships, but can play an important role in the life of the project by serving on committees, participating in workgroups, and advocating for the project. In various communities around the country, each of these groups (except homeless consumers) has taken on the role of lead agency for the HMIS.

### Managing Expectations

It is important to define reasonable expectations regarding what can be achieved through the HMIS within what timeframe, the level of support that will be provided by the HMIS staff, the roles and responsibilities of partner agencies, and the anticipated outcomes. If stakeholders have unreasonable expectations, they may become disillusioned early in the process and less likely to

work with the HMIS team to find solutions.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, if expectations are managed and stakeholders are given adequate ways to become involved in project operations or decision-making, communities report that the process of implementing and operating the HMIS can build trust and relationships among stakeholders that strengthen the homeless service delivery process.

The key to managing community expectations and buy-in is to establish clear and appropriate communication and to build opportunities for involvement. Communication can be broken down into two-way (or multi-way) and one-way communications. Two-way communications should be used with the community of HMIS stakeholders to provide them with opportunities to communicate with each other and with the project manager about their current concerns and level of satisfaction. Two-way communication can be done through meetings, regular phone calls, conference calls, or through emails, list serves, and interactive web casts. It can also include web-based forums or issues lists.

One-way communication from the manager to the community should be used to keep all stakeholders informed of milestones, setbacks, and any changes of plan. In addition to the formal documentation of the project's status, relating to the time, budget, scope, and quality issues discussed in Chapter 4, the larger community of HMIS users and stakeholders should receive regular updates through electronic or paper newsletters and a website. Some HMIS software solutions have means of conveying news to users within the solution itself.

Beyond mere communication, the community should be given opportunities to involve themselves in HMIS aside from simply entering data. Participation in HMIS committees and working groups (discussed later in this chapter) are ways to get more involved. But building connections to the project does not have to be all work. The community can also be built by jointly celebrating major milestones or through annual community-building events for the summer or holidays.

### Project Manager as HMIS Champion

Though managing the community's expectations demands a clear communication of timelines and reasonable promises of project scope, it does not mean forsaking the long-term vision. On the contrary, the project manager should be an HMIS champion and be eager to express the project's goals. These goals are usually broader than complying with a Federal mandate. Benefits of HMIS can extend to homeless clients, service providers, advocates, and policy makers. The goals include reduction of duplicate intakes, streamlined referrals, enhanced efficiency, coordinated case management, and simplified reporting. They also include a more complete understanding of homelessness and the homeless system on the local and Federal level, which can facilitate more enlightened policy. Some of the benefits the project manager might champion are outlined below:

- Potential benefits for consumers:

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<sup>3</sup> See O. Gutierrez and D.H. Friedman, "Managing Project Expectations in Human Services Information Systems Implementations: The Case of Homeless Management Information Systems," *International Journal of Project Management* (accepted for publication) and O. Gutierrez, "Project Guidelines for Managing Expectations and Deliverables in HMIS Implementations" posted at [www.hmis.info](http://www.hmis.info)

- Easier access to public resources;
- Privacy protections that ensure that no identifying information will leave the agency without their consent; and
- Improved service coordination and less duplicative intakes when data is shared amongst agencies.
- Potential benefits for front-line workers:
  - Uniform way to track client needs and history;
  - Ability to track client outcomes; and
  - Ability to monitor the status of referrals.
- Potential benefits for the agency and program managers:
  - Reporting features; and
  - Information can be used for funders, Boards of Directors, and advocacy purposes.
- Potential benefits for Continuums of Care and policy makers:
  - Programs have the capacity to generate APRs;
  - Continuums can access aggregate reports which can help with the HUD application; and
  - Aggregate data can be used to inform policy decisions aimed at addressing and ending homelessness at the local, state and federal levels.

A shared vision is an effective device to make sure stakeholders are on the same path. The vision should be created together for broad buy-in. If some stakeholders attempt to veer the project in other directions the shared vision serves as a compass to keep stakeholders heading in the same (agreed upon) direction. This will help facilitate all communication and expectations. If the community has developed a local vision statement, the project manager should post a copy of the vision in a prominent place and remind people of that vision whenever necessary. For example, the project manager might include the vision statement at the bottom of every meeting agenda, on the project website, or as part of his or her email signature. The vision should be included in all documentation related to the project. It could also be included along with the HMIS privacy posting at every workstation where data are entered.

The project manager should also collect and share information about how the HMIS is having an impact locally or benefiting other communities around the country. These benefits can accrue even before full participation is achieved and can occur in both anticipated and unanticipated ways. For example,

- In Tulsa, there was a case of tuberculosis in a large shelter. Using HMIS, the shelter was able to determine who was exposed and notify them within two days. Prior to HMIS, this process took 90 days.
- In Columbus, the HMIS was used to discern the distinct utilization patterns of long-term and short-term clients. This informed the city's planning process and led to establishing a goal of developing 800 new units of permanent supportive housing as well as refocusing the shelter system and related services.
- In Kansas City, the HMIS has been used to determine the geographical area that has the greatest need for a particular service. This data has then been used to inform people interested in starting the service about where their work will be most effective.



- On a smaller scale, also in Kansas City, a school bus dropped a homeless child off at a homeless shelter after the family had moved to a different shelter. The HMIS was used to reunite the child with his family.

Sharing this information can help motivate the community when it becomes disillusioned with the project, where participation in meetings or use of the software declines, or where political or fiscal challenges threaten the project's future. Reminding the community of the long-term vision, goals, and benefits of HMIS can help keep the project on the path to success, even if the short-term expectations are kept at a reasonable level.

### Communications Tools

Formal communications documents to governing committees and funders are discussed in Chapter 4, and examples of such documents appear as Appendices 6 and 8.

For communicating with the larger HMIS community, a number of companies provide e-newsletter services that make creating a professional looking e-newsletter easy. Some of these services are even geared toward non-profit organizations. The services generally include e-mail list management, and counts of who opened the mail and what articles they read. They also enable one click removal from the mailing lists. Some additional non-profit tools include fundraising, web site hosting, web forums, web surveys, and other components. Many of these services including the e-newsletter can be purchased together as part of a single package. Costs for these services range from a few hundred to thousands of dollars per year. However, some organizations might consider purchasing the service not only for the HMIS implementation but also for other aspects of their work.

Depending upon the size of your HMIS implementation there may also be a number of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software tools right for your community. A CRM software tool allows an HMIS project manager to systematically track interactions with end users, funders, agency directors, HMIS solution providers, vendors, and third party vendors. Most CRM solution providers are geared toward tracking, integrating and maintaining business relationships to maintain a profit. Although the end goal is slightly different the functionality can be vital for an HMIS project manager. However, he or she needs to avoid products that have extra features not suitable for HMIS. CRM tools are available at various prices and models.

Needs for different HMIS initiatives vary. However most HMIS projects may benefit from tracking and logging reported bugs, calls to support desks, and help with advanced features. A CRM can help a project manager:

- Better ensure technical support to end users is being provided in a timely efficient manner by tracking status and nature of calls;
- Track bugs to send to the HMIS solutions provider;
- Run reports to analyze where the greatest need for support is and modify trainings as needed;
- Run reports to analyze where support staff time is best used;
- Coordinate interaction with other stakeholders (media, funders, government, advocates, homeless consumers, etc.) beyond end users; and

- Track general satisfaction of HMIS agencies.

When shopping for a CRM, a project manager should make sure that the product chosen is easy to use, affordable, and does not create needless work. If full-scale CRM solutions are not feasible, project managers using Microsoft Outlook can try using the contact management features of Outlook to achieve some of the benefits. Alternatively, a simple Access database might be created for the purpose.

Figure 5.1 is a partial list of vendors and websites for both e-newsletter and CRM solutions.

Figure 5.1: A Partial List of Communications Tools

Type	Solution	Website
E-newsletter, etc.	Constant Contact	<a href="http://www.constantcontact.com/">www.constantcontact.com/</a>
	Convio	<a href="http://www.convio.com/">www.convio.com/</a>
	Exact Target	<a href="http://email.exacttarget.com/">http://email.exacttarget.com/</a>
	Get Active	<a href="http://www.getactive.com/">www.getactive.com/</a>
	IMN	<a href="http://www.imninc.com/">www.imninc.com/</a>
CRM	Accpac CRM	<a href="http://www.accpac.com/products/crmsfa">www.accpac.com/products/crmsfa</a>
	ACT!	<a href="http://www.act.com/">www.act.com/</a>
	Goldmine	<a href="http://www.frontrange.com/goldmine">www.frontrange.com/goldmine</a>
	Maximizer	<a href="http://www.maximizer.com/">www.maximizer.com/</a>
	Maximizer Enterprise	<a href="http://www.maximizer.com/">www.maximizer.com/</a>
	Microsoft CRM	<a href="http://www.microsoft.com/businesssolutions/crm">www.microsoft.com/businesssolutions/crm</a>
	NetSuite	<a href="http://www.netcrm.com/">www.netcrm.com/</a>
	Onyx	<a href="http://www.onyx.com/">www.onyx.com/</a>
	Pivotal	<a href="http://www.2020software.com/products/Pivotal_CRM.asp">www.2020software.com/products/Pivotal_CRM.asp</a>
	Salesforce.com	<a href="http://www.salesforce.com/">www.salesforce.com/</a>
	SalesLogix	<a href="http://www.saleslogix.com/">www.saleslogix.com/</a>
	Siebel	<a href="http://www.siebel.com/crm">www.siebel.com/crm</a>
	Telemation	<a href="http://www.databasesystemscorp.com/">www.databasesystemscorp.com/</a>

### Working With the HMIS Committee

Almost all HMIS implementations are overseen by a lead agency and a committee of stakeholders. According to the Status Assessments and Evaluations recently conducted by HUD HMIS technical assistance contractor, 91% of the 54 implementations for which data were available at the time of this writing had a formal community HMIS committee. Almost all projects included homeless providers in their committees. The large majority included local government, mental health providers, substance abuse providers, domestic violence providers, and outreach providers. It is clear from these proportions, that communities across the country have found it beneficial to include the input of “special population” providers in their decision-making process. Figure 5.2 shows the percentage of communities whose HMIS structures include different types of representation.

Figure 5.2: Representation in HMIS Governance Structures

<b>Type of Organization</b>	<b>% of Communities</b>
Community homeless providers	89%
Local government	72%
Mental health providers	70%
Substance abuse providers	65%
Domestic violence providers	63%
Outreach providers	59%
Advocacy organizations	46%
HIV/AIDS providers	44%
Youth providers	44%
State government	41%
Other	30%
Federal government	19%
No formal HMIS governance structure	9%

Governing and Advising

It is important to clarify the exact role of the HMIS committee in order to help avert power struggles and confusion. Across the country, HMIS committees vary immensely in terms of their power, roles and responsibilities. Some committees have final decision-making powers for the HMIS, others exist in an advisory capacity and the actual decision-making authority rests with the lead agency, the project manager, or the funder. In some cases, advisory committees are delegated decision-making authority in particular areas. Some communities have both a governing committee and an advisory committee.

Committees that have governing power should have a clearly delineated membership representing a balance of interests and clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Advisory committees should strive for inclusion, but have more informal memberships. Balance is less critical than the inclusion of as many voices as possible.

Project managers can face political trouble if the members of their advisory committee think that they have governing power. A document should be drawn up establishing the scope of committee responsibilities. This document can stand alone or can be incorporated into the overall policies and procedures of the project. Appendices 21, 22, and 23 are examples of committee mandates with varying degrees of governing authority. All members of the committee should receive a copy of this committee mandate. An organizational chart can also help clarify the role of various committees. Appendix 24 shows an HMIS organizational structure that includes both a governing committee and an advisory committee.

Clearly defining roles and decision-making authority will help to avoid confusion and will aid in trust building. If committee members are acting in an advisory role and the project manager is charged with making final decisions, the project manager should emphasize this in an ongoing but not overbearing way by reminding members that he or she will listen to input and then get

back to them with any decisions that need to be made. It is important that the project manager establish clear timetables for decision making to maintain the trust of advisory members.

### Content of Committee Input

Whatever power the committee has, it is impractical for it to weigh in on every decision. As the person most knowledgeable about the project, the project manager sets the agenda for the committee meetings. Thus, the project manager actually has a lot of control over what the community weighs in on and what is up to his or her discretion. This power should be used, but wisely. Members of the governing or advisory committee do expect to provide input in important matters.

One useful distinction is between permanent matters that are difficult to reverse and transient or reversible matters. The community should have input on permanent matters, such as what software to use, whether to require written consent, what security precautions to implement, or protocols to release data. The community has to live with these decisions for a long time, and the project manager does not want to bear total responsibility for the decision. The community should be informed and advise, but have less control over day-to-day matters, such as how many trainings to conduct, when to schedule an upgrade, and which programs should be rolled out to first.

Put another way, the community should provide input on aspects of the project that it will have to own, regardless of who is running the project. As shown in the previously referenced examples, the content areas for input by the committee can be delineated in the Mandate Document. If committee members attempt to micromanage by focusing too strongly on the day to day aspects of the project, the project manager or committee chair will need to be firm in steering the committee back to the broader issues. The project manager will want to affirm that input is valuable, but that that she will make the final decisions regarding day-to-day issues.

### Committee Support

In addition to advising or deciding on key issues, the HMIS Committee can support the project manager by taking on various responsibilities. The support of the committee can be useful in helping to persuade reluctant providers to participate. Committee members can be assigned to engage particular providers. Committee members should also be asked to support the project if it encounters political resistance or negative press coverage. The homeless providers that support the project are ideal candidates to speak up on behalf of the HMIS's benefits to homeless persons and the homeless community at large. Supportive homeless and formerly homeless consumers should also be tapped to for their perspective and to potentially tout the benefits of the system to skeptical consumers, reluctant service providers and local press.

### **Working groups, User groups and Consumers**

Many communities have working groups or sub-committees in addition to the primary HMIS committee. Some of these working groups are ongoing such as homeless consumer involvement and user issues. Other working groups are delegated finite tasks such as selecting software or

drafting policies and procedures. Frequently the time-limited groups evolve into ongoing operational committees. Thus a group originally formed to draft policies and procedures could help monitor compliance. The project manager should ensure that every working group has a chairperson who can report on progress, a delineated task, a deliverable and a timeline. The chair might be another HMIS staff member or governing board or committee member. The project manager should also be copied on working group correspondence. The project manager should review decision making rules with any new or existing working group.

According to the Status Assessments, of the 43 communities that provided data on working groups, the most frequently cited type of group is charged with developing policies and procedures. Many communities also had Technology and User Issues Groups. On average, communities had 3 working groups.

Figure 5.3: Prevalence of Various Types of Working Groups

<b>Type of Committee</b>	<b>Percent of Communities</b>
Policies and procedures	72%
Technology issues	51%
User issues (user group)	51%
Data analysis, release, access	42%
Policy & advocacy (using data)	28%
Consumer involvement	21%
Other	28%

Twenty-eight percent of communities had working groups in other areas. These included:

- Training
- Expanding Participation
- Performance Measurement
- Fiscal/Contracts
- Fundraising/Financial Support/Sustainability
- Data Conversion
- Data Elements
- Data Quality Control
- Data Standards Compliance
- Visioning
- Privacy
- Government Liaison
- Marketing and Public Perception
- Software Selection
- Domestic Violence

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

### User Groups

User groups are a special kind of working group. User groups can serve similar working functions as other groups: for example, they can help determine the most convenient data input screens. But they also serve to provide mutual support among users. They can answer each other's software questions and advise each other on "tips and tricks" for getting the most out of the software. Users will benefit by hearing about best practices and shared problems and are less likely to get frustrated with the system if a problem is shared and a solution is in the works. The HMIS initiative will benefit from greater data quality, hearing what is/is not working, and identifying users' trouble with the system in a proactive manner. Regular user group meetings can also be used to address critical topics and to help those users that are uncomfortable with computers and the Internet. User groups also are a time effective way to help advanced users to maximize system functionality and effective use of data. Such groups can help relieve the project staff of help desk burdens and contributes to a sense of HMIS community. Appendix 25 is Chicago's user group mandate.

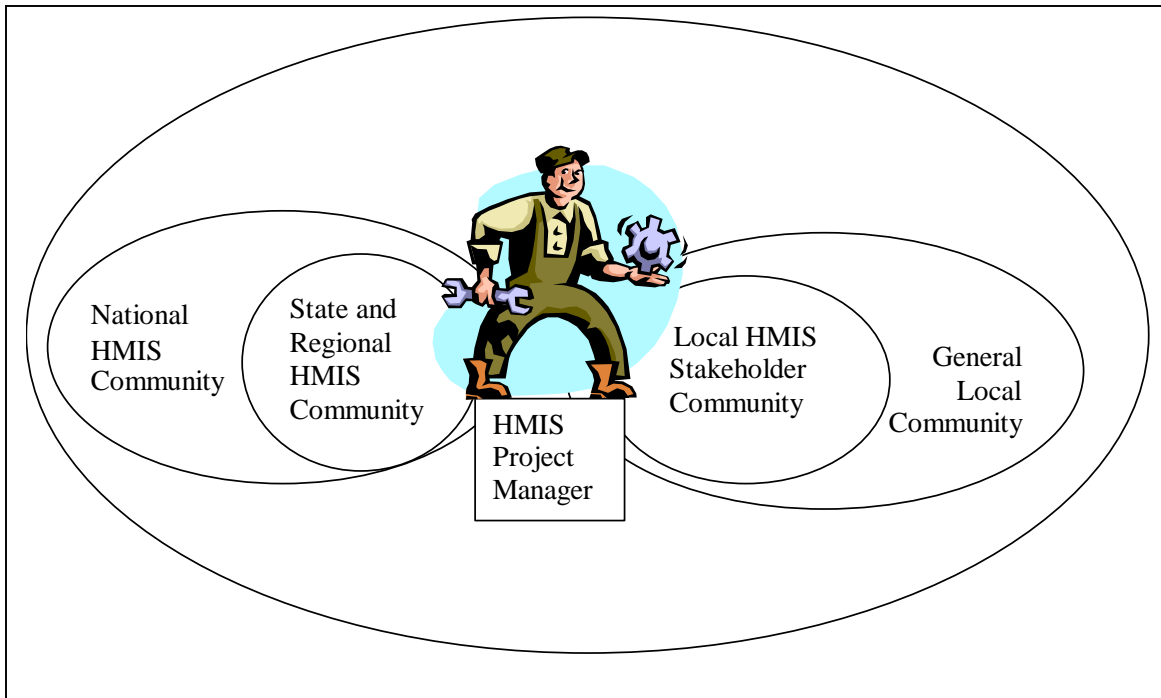
### Consumer Involvement

Homeless and formerly homeless consumers should provide input to the planning, implementation, and operation of the HMIS. Consumers provide valuable insight about acceptable policies and practice and can help build a better solution and buy-in for that solution. If homeless consumers are educated about HMIS and realize its benefits, the HMIS implementation has a much greater chance of success. Consumers are often asked to help word the questions that are asked and to help draft and respond to policies and procedures. Consumers might also be charged with creating a brochure that explains the HMIS to their peers. In the long-run, consumers can provide insight into the meaning of data that are produced from the HMIS. Some communities have established consumer working groups, and others include places for consumers in their advisory and governing boards or in other working groups. Another approach is to hire consumers on the HMIS project staff. For communities that have had no consumer involvement, planning a consumer focus group could be an effective first step.

### **State, Regional, and National HMIS Implementers**

Beyond the primary HMIS stakeholders, the project manager will also need to manage communication and relationships with other local, regional, and national HMIS groups. As shown in Figure 5.4, the HMIS project staff has a foot in the broader group of HMIS implementers as well as the general local community, and serves as a liaison between them. This section focuses on working with other HMIS implementers, the following section focuses on interacting with the general local community.

Figure 5.4: Project Manager as Liaison to Multiple Communities



### State and Regional HMIS Community

The HMIS project manager represents the local implementation in the regional and statewide HMIS community. While many states have implemented statewide HMIS systems, other states have multiple implementations within a state. Almost inevitably, and with good reason, someone will be interested in consolidating the HMIS information in order to produce statewide information. The project manager should certainly participate in these efforts. However, the project manager is also responsible for ensuring the data release policies are not violated, and that the project stays on track while efforts to consolidate the information are underway. Attempts to integrate the data across implementations are always harder than they appear and can drain more resources than initially anticipated. If feasible, it may be more appropriate for a statewide report to incorporate aggregate data from each community, as the potential for duplicate data across wide geographic areas is less of an issue than within a Continuum. This is the process in the State of Washington, where each implementation contributes aggregate data.

Other HMIS implementations within a region can also be a source of support. The six New England States, for example have formed the New England Regional HMIS (NERHMIS) group that meets on a regular basis to discuss various HMIS related issues. Among other benefits, this organization helps provide a more effective use of technical assistance to the six states and multiple Continuums of Care (CoCs) therein. In Illinois, the “Regional Roundtable on Homelessness,” comprised of representatives from nine different CoCs, facilitates information sharing on homelessness, including HMIS. Even without the formal structure, it is beneficial for HMIS project managers across a region to share ideas and information. In some regions, such as those near Dallas, Texas, more advanced implementations have provided technical assistance to

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

neighboring communities. In a region with a number of small implementations employing a single HMIS staff person in each jurisdiction, these staffers of individual implementations can form a particularly valuable support network.

### National HMIS Community

HMIS is a national initiative and interacting with the National HMIS community is a small but integral part of the project manager's job description. The National HMIS community can be an invaluable resource, both officially through HUD-Sponsored National Technical Assistance efforts and unofficially through organizations like the National Human Services Data Consortium ([www.nhsdc.org/](http://www.nhsdc.org/)). However, the national HMIS community also makes demands on a project manager.

HUD may invite HMIS project managers to participate in status assessments, trainings, and national conferences. HMIS project managers are also often asked to provide feedback or contribute to documents such as this one or to review and adjust their policies to evolving national standards. Some communities have been asked to participate as an Annual Homeless Assessment Report sample community, in which case, the project manager will be asked to prepare and provide aggregate client data. Eventually, all communities will be contributing data for national reports. Responses of local project managers benefit all local implementations. They also enable HUD to understand and report back to Congress about the status of HMIS and homelessness nationally.

### **General Local Community and the Press**

A major goal of HMIS in most communities is to gather data at the local level to inform the public and policymakers. Thus, releasing aggregate data collected in HMIS is essential to achieving the goals of the project. The data can be released as a report, which can be mailed to policymakers and stakeholders. Data can also be made available for researchers and the general public on a website. One such website was developed by the CSPTech project in Massachusetts. It allows users to dynamically create a custom report and generate a limited de-identified dataset that has been extracted and cleaned from the HMIS.<sup>4</sup> In addition, HMIS project managers are occasionally approached by students and researchers for access to a dataset for research. Decisions about the circumstances under which the data can be released are generally made by the advisory or governing committee if a policy is not already in place. Appendix 26 is an example of a data release policy.

In order for the valuable information about homelessness to make an impact on the general public, the project manager will want to disseminate findings to the press. Having a press strategy should not be limited to the release of a report. Generating public good will toward HMIS can be very useful for sustaining the project financially and politically. Employing a proactive press strategy can be a useful tool to further this end. Also, HMIS is sometimes controversial, particularly with regard to privacy concerns. Framing in advance how HMIS is perceived is preferable to allowing opponents of HMIS to shape perceptions in the press.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.csp.umb.edu/Massshelter/>



## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

A project manager will want to work with the community and involved staff to discuss the system using a common message. To assist in this goal, the project manager may want to develop an HMIS Fact Sheet, FAQs, or talking points. As well, the community may want to designate a spokesperson to manage communication with the press.

When releasing a report, the information about homelessness should rightfully be the focus. However, other opportunities for positive press about the HMIS itself can help raise public awareness. Potentially newsworthy events include:

- The system is implemented at a large agency or in a new town;
- A coverage threshold is reached;
- Software is chosen;
- A large training or conference is held;
- A new high-tech feature or advanced intake method is piloted;
- A new grant is received;
- A particular homeless person is demonstrably helped through HMIS;
- A new project manager is hired; or
- New programs are funded based on the need for services demonstrated by HMIS data.

When one of these events occurs the project manager can write a press release and distribute it via fax/e-mail to local news organizations or particular reporters. A press release should be followed up with a phone call. The project manager should consider which news organizations are most likely to cover what kind of story. For example, local community newspapers are always seeking stories that have an angle related to the town. Thus, such a publication might be very interested in a story about HMIS being implemented in the one shelter in the town; but they may be uninterested in a statewide report that cannot be filtered down to the local level. Homeless street newspapers are often receptive outlets for any HMIS information.

An example of a press release can be seen in Appendix 27. The following are standard components of a press release.<sup>5</sup>

- The release should be on letterhead, or if in email, feature the name of your organization.
- The top should contain “For Immediate Release, the date, and contact information by phone. Contacts should be easily reachable. For email releases, contact information may be on the bottom.
- The headline should be catchy but not overblown. If using email, the headline should be the subject line.
- The release should be terse, written like a news story with the most important information first, and should answer “who, what, where, when, why and how”.
- The organization should be *briefly* described in the last paragraph of the release. A website link should appear here or along with the contact information.
- End the release with “###,” which indicates the end of copy.

The idea of generating press is to present the project positively. Depending on the particular circumstances, the following are some positive ways of framing HMIS:

- HMIS is an effort to better understand the many dimensions of homelessness on the national and local level in order to more properly address the problem.

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Salzman, J. Making the News. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2003) 105.

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- HMIS is a long-term investment in improving the technological infrastructure of homeless shelters, which until recently had been mostly using only pen and paper files to manage complex operations affecting thousands of people.
- HMIS helps agencies serve their clients better by using advance technology to make shelters more efficient and coordinating case management within or across programs.
- HMIS is a joint effort of a coalition of partners including service providers, government officials, advocates, researchers and homeless individuals. All of these groups worked together to develop a system that will best serve the needs of homeless people and safeguard their privacy, while providing important information to inform public policy and advocacy.
- Local and national policy prevents anyone from being denied a bed or services because of refusal to provide personal information.

At times, the project manager may be approached by a reporter and asked to respond to arguments that frame HMIS in a negative way. Thus, the project manager should have “talking points” ready for such circumstances. The goals and positive benefits of HMIS should also be posted prominently on a website, so that reporters or other interested parties can better understand the project. The website should also have a press contact number, if this is different from other contact numbers posted.

It is important to be aware of the type of challenges that may be raised against HMIS. Reporters are generally looking for a one or two sentence quote to respond. However, no response can substitute for a proactive press strategy. A reporter acting on an anti-HMIS press release would be calling the HMIS project for balance. In this circumstance, no matter what the HMIS project manager says the thrust of the piece is likely to be neutral, if not negative. The HMIS project manager should write a letter to the editor to respond to any article that casts HMIS in an unfair, negative light. It is far better to engage the media in positive milestones, which can raise awareness in the community about the many benefits of HMIS.

## Appendices: Samples and Resources

The appendices consist of 27 samples and resources to help the project manager in various tasks. Sources of the original document are provided. Specific project names, solution provider names, and names of individuals have been replaced with either blanks or generic terms. Some documents have also been reformatted and edited for length. In some cases the details might provide convenient boilerplate materials for project managers facing similar needs. These resources, especially legal documents, should not be adopted without a process of review and adaptation to local community needs.

### Disclaimer

Some of the forms found in the appendices may not be compliant with the HMIS Data and Technical Standards (Federal Register 4848-N-01) released in July 2004 herein referred to as the “Final Notice”. Some of these forms were created prior to release of the *Final Notice* and should be reviewed by local decision-makers prior to being used to ensure compliance.

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## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

### 1. Additional HUD Sponsored Resources on Various HMIS Topics

**Source:** Created for this document.

**Description:** This table compiles all of the HMIS resources that are currently available from HUD, including documents prepared for the HMIS conference in September 2004. The content of these documents are the products of the authors and do not necessarily reflect official positions of HUD. Additional resources are available at a number of websites created by individual HMIS projects. (Last Updated 11-15-04)

Topic	Title	Date	Resource Type	Source	URL
10 Year Plan	Using HMIS Data to Benchmark Plans to End Homelessness	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
10 Year Plan	Using HMIS Data to Benchmark Plans to End Homelessness - (Sujata)	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
10 Year Plan	A Plan Not A Dream: How to End Homelessness in 10 Years	Sep-04	White Paper	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
211 and Eligibility	HMIS, 211 & Benefits Eligibility	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
211 and Eligibility	State-By-State 211 Status	Sep-04	Status Sheet	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
AHAR	Annual Homeless Assessment Report Update	Oct-04	Bulletin	HUD/Abt/UPenn	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/standards/aharupdate1.pdf">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/standards/aharupdate1.pdf</a>
AHAR	Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) Frequently Asked Questions	Sep-04	FAQ		<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/standards/hmisfaq.pdf">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/standards/hmisfaq.pdf</a>
AHAR	AHAR Reporting Framework	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Consumer Involvement	Involving Consumers in HMIS	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Data and Technical Standards	HMIS Data and Technical Standards Final Notice	Jul-04	Regulations	HUD	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/rulesandregs/fr4848-n-02.pdf">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/rulesandregs/fr4848-n-02.pdf</a>
Data and Technical Standards	HMIS Data and Technical Standards Final Notice; Clarification and Additional Guidance on Special Provisions for Domestic Violence Provider Shelters	Oct--04	Regulations	HUD	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/rulesandregs/fr4848-n-02.pdf">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/rulesandregs/fr4848-n-02.pdf</a>

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Topic	Title	Date	Resource Type	Source	URL
Data and Technical Standards	Close Encounters with the Data Standards	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Data and Technical Standards	HMIS Data and Technical Standards Webcast	Oct-04	Webcast and PowerPoint	HUD/QED Webcast	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/index.cfm">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/index.cfm</a>
Data Integration	Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Integration Strategies and Solutions	Sep-03	White Paper	HUD/UMass Boston	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/assistance/dataintegration.pdf">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/assistance/dataintegration.pdf</a>
Data Integration/Unduplication	Understanding Unduplication & Data Integration	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Data Quality	Quality Assurance & Data Quality	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Domestic Violence	Clarification and Additional Guidance on Special Provisions for Domestic Violence Provider Shelters	Oct-04	Regulations	HUD	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/rulesandregs/fr4848-n-03.pdf">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/rulesandregs/fr4848-n-03.pdf</a>
Funding/Budget	Guidelines and Strategies for Estimating and Controlling HMIS Costs	Sep-04	White Paper	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Funding/Budget	HMIS Costs, Staffing, & Funding	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Funding/Budget	HMIS Cost Estimation Guidelines	Jan-02	Guide	HUD/UMass Boston	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/assistance/costguidelines.pdf">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/assistance/costguidelines.pdf</a>
Funding/Budget	2002 Technical Submission Guidance for HMIS Dedicated Projects		Guide	HUD	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/assistance/techsub2002.pdf">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/assistance/techsub2002.pdf</a>
HMIS Basics	Introduction to HMIS for Policy Academies	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Homelessness Generally	Beyond HMIS Understanding Homelessness - (Dennis Culhane)	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Homelessness Generally	Beyond HMIS Understanding Homelessness - (Martha Burt)	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Implementation	Homeless Management Information Systems: Implementation Guide	Sep-02	Guide	HUD/UMass Boston	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/implementation/implementation.cfm">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/implementation/implementation.cfm</a>

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Topic	Title	Date	Resource Type	Source	URL
Implementation	Wisconsin HMIS Implementation	Jan-02	Overview	HUD/Wisconsin	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/implementation/models/wi-hmis.cfm">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/implementation/models/wi-hmis.cfm</a>
Information Security	Information Security for Emerging Communities	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Local Implementation	Michigan Statewide HMIS	Sep-04	FAQ	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
National HMIS Strategy	Progress Reports to Congress on HUD's Strategy	Mar-04	Report to Congress	HUD	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/strategy/index.cfm">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/strategy/index.cfm</a>
National HMIS Strategy	Report to Congress: HUD's Strategy for Homeless Data Collection, Reporting and Analysis.	Aug-01	Report to Congress	HUD	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/strategy/index.cfm">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/strategy/index.cfm</a>
Operations	Operational Uses of HMIS	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Partnerships	What Works in Partnership Building for HMIS: A Guide for the Los Angeles/Orange County Collaborative	Aug-03	Guide	HUD/Aspen	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/implementation/whatworks.pdf">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/implementation/whatworks.pdf</a>
Performance Measurement	Using HMIS to Measure Performance & Efficacy	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Performance Measurement	Using HMIS to Measure Performance & Efficacy Logic Model	Sep-04	Logic Model	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Policies and Procedures	Developing & Maintaining Policies and Procedures	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Policies and Procedures	Checklist of Policy Decisions, Technical Specifications, and Documents	Sep-04	Checklist	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Policies and Procedures	Sample Standard Operating Procedures Contents	Sep-04	Sample	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Privacy/Ethics	Addressing Emerging Ethical Dilemmas	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Privacy/Ethics	Privacy, Ethics, And Best Practices Resources	Sep-04	Resource List	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Privacy/HIPAA	Implementing HMIS with HIPAA	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>

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Topic	Title	Date	Resource Type	Source	URL
Programs and Outcomes	Sample: Fiscal Year 2005 Program Models	Sep-04	Template	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Programs and Outcomes	State of the Continuum Indicators	Sep-04	Template	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Project Management	Gantt Chart Sample	Sep-04	Template	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Project Management	Project Guidelines for Managing Expectations and Deliverables in HMIS Implementations	Sep-04	White Paper	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Project Management	Project Management for HMIS Implementation and Operations:	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Project Management	Safe Harbors Project Team Agenda	Sep-04	Template	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Project Planning	Safe Harbors Design Project	Feb-01	Design Document	Seattle/King County	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/implementation/seattledesign.pdf">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/implementation/seattledesign.pdf</a>
Reporting (Non-HUD)	Using HMIS to Produce Non HUD Reports	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Research	A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People	Nov-04	Guide	HUD/Abt Associates	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/library/countinghomeless/index.cfm">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/library/countinghomeless/index.cfm</a>
Research	Bridging the Research Provider Gap	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Research	Potential HMIS Research Partners	Sep-04	Resource List	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Research Questions	Methods to Answer Research Questions - (Martha Burt)	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Research Questions	Methods to Answer Research Questions - (TM)	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Software Selection	Electronic Consumer Guide	May-03	Software	HUD/UMass Boston	<a href="http://www.mccormack.umb.edu/csp/csp_hmis.jsp">http://www.mccormack.umb.edu/csp/csp_hmis.jsp</a>
Software Selection	Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Consumer Guide: A Review of Available HMIS Solutions	Jan-03	Guide	HUD/UMass Boston	<a href="http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/assistance/consumerguide/index.cfm">http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/assistance/consumerguide/index.cfm</a>
Special Populations	Case Studies in the Implementation of HMIS by HOPWA Providers	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Special Populations	Engaging Special Populations & Provider Types	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Resource Type</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>URL</b>
Technology	Advanced Technologies for Intake	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>
Visioning and Progress	Where is HMIS taking Us	Sep-04	PowerPoint	HMIS Conference	<a href="http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp">http://www.hmis.info/HMISConference.asp</a>



## 2. Task List

**Source:** *Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, Colorado*

**Description:** *This document includes a very comprehensive list of activities required of an HMIS team in six key target areas. The document was written for a large metropolitan Continuum, encompassing 7 counties, 14 jurisdictions and approximately 120 agencies. The HMIS staff consists of 2.5 full-time equivalent employees.*

### HMIS 2004-2005 Activities Plan

The purpose of this document is to outline the HMIS team's activities as they directly relate to the HMIS system. In addition to the implementation and rollout of the HMIS system, there are a significant amount of on-going activities to track. This document can be shared with other organizations, CoCs, and committees with the understanding that this is what our team is doing to support the HMIS initiative. This is not intended, however, to denote all of the activities our team undertakes in relation to the issue of homelessness.

This plan is organized into 6 sections related to HMIS:

1. HMIS Implementation & Rollout
2. HMIS Support Activities
3. Community Involvement
4. Data Analysis & Reporting
5. Vendor Management
6. Legacy System

Each section is discussed in great detail, and additional reference information has been included in the appendices as noted. This is a living document, meaning that as changes in the environment occur or additional tasks are identified this activity plan will be adapted to those new circumstances.

### 1. HMIS Implementation & Rollout

This section focuses on the overall rollout of the HMIS to agencies across the Continuum. As part of the implementation process, many internal mechanisms must be created anew. There are several external mechanisms that also need to be developed. It is the combination of the work required to develop the internal/external items and the availability of the HMIS software that will drive timelines.

#### HMIS rollout mechanisms

- 1.1. Manage Feedback / Scope: In conjunction with other CoCs, agencies, and HMIS solution provider, a list of feedback points was compiled. This feedback document will be updated on a regular basis based on user feedback, new development points, etc. It will be used to prioritize development requests for software upgrades. A subset of the feedback points will be included into a scope document for the solution provider to monitor progress on items that are important for the HMIS. The scope document for each release will include how the solution providers address the functional need of our stakeholders.
- 1.2. Develop Training: System administrators must receive the necessary software training, not only to perform those duties, but to also train others (receive train-the-trainer training). Beyond receiving software training, each system administrator, site administrator, and end user must attend privacy/confidentiality training as well. An entire training program must be developed to address training site administrators, end users, and the various HMIS policies and procedures.
- 1.3. Set up Quality Plans: In order to continuously improve upon the HMIS data quality, rollout processes, and training effectiveness, a quality plan must be established. For major activities, measurable goals must exist, and feedback mechanisms should be instilled to correct or improve on

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those goals. Without a quality plan, the results of the overall program cannot be easily measured, and it will be difficult to determine successes/failures.

- 1.4. Create Helpdesk: To provide effective and efficient support to agencies using HMIS, it is necessary to establish an HMIS helpdesk. External helpdesk policies and procedures must be developed, communicated, and continually reinforced. Internal helpdesk policies are needed to coordinate actions amongst other system administrators and software provider. Tracking helpdesk/support calls and reporting on that information is key to the overall quality plan. It will help identify areas of improvement in many aspects such as the software itself, training, and support.
- 1.5. Write Informed Consent Agreement: To collect the client data for HMIS, each client must sign an informed consent document. This agreement needs to be created in accordance with laws, guidelines, and best practices.
- 1.6. Write Agency Agreements: HMIS participating agencies must also sign an agreement to use the HMIS software and comply with the established policies and procedures.
- 1.7. Write End User Agreements: Within each agency, individual users of the HMIS software must sign an agreement too. This agreement is a commitment to utilize the HMIS software appropriately within the realm of the policies and procedures.
- 1.8. Write Privacy Notice: At each workstation computer used for HMIS data collection purposes, a privacy notice poster must be displayed. This notice must include all the necessary information to effectively communicate privacy policies and assist in obtaining informed consent.
- 1.9. Develop Policies& Procedures: Effective use of the HMIS involves the incorporation of standard policies and procedures that agencies should follow. This document details agency operating procedures for acquiring the software, meeting their responsibilities, entering data, adhering to security guidelines, and requesting support. Many of the other documents created are incorporated into the policies & procedures manual. It can be considered the process guide for the overall HMIS implementation, as opposed to the how to use the software.
- 1.10. Modify Users Manual: The initial Users Manual will be developed in cooperation with HMIS solution provider. The manual will need some amount of customization to comply with the policies and procedures established by the community. In certain cases, there are specific steps/tasks that agencies should follow based on those policies, and those steps might be different from what is stated in the Users Manual.
- 1.11. Manage Project Issues: As various questions arise regarding the project implementation, a tracking document must be developed to ensure that issues are resolved in a timely manner. Identifying and monitoring issue resolution will lead to a higher quality implementation in the actual HMIS software, documentation, and satisfaction.
- 1.12. Manage Project Risks: Risk management and contingency planning are very important to the development of the HMIS system. Risks are different from issues, in that risks are what could happen as opposed to issues being what is or did occur. The overall purpose is to mitigate the risks as much as possible. By identifying risks early, plans can be made to address those risks if they come to fruition.
- 1.13. Create Project Plans: The actions/steps required for the implementation of the HMIS software are contained within a project plan. The first project plan focuses exclusively on the agencies included in the AHAR group for the HUD study. Most of the documents identified in this section are included in the project plan. Toward the conclusion of the first project plan (AHAR group), additional project plans will be created to organize the rollout of the HMIS to other agencies. Project plans will be used to set realistic timelines, track progress, and measure outcomes.

Beyond creating the necessary plans, supporting manuals, and project documentation, there are specific activities related to each agency's implementation. Although these tasks can be found in the AHAR project plan, the following information describes the overall process:

- 1.14. Agency Readiness: Each agency that will participate in HMIS must meet basic requirements to move forward with implementation. Each agency must complete a technology and skills survey to

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- determine if it has the hardware/software required and if additional training might be in order for the eventual end users. Based on that information, HMIS System Administrators will work with the agency to get the hardware or software needed and to point the agency to programs for basic computer skills training. At this time, it is important to see if data migration is needed or not.
- 1.15. Agency Agreements: Agencies must return a signed agreement to the HMIS System Administrator indicating their willingness to adhere to policies, procedures, and software use.
  - 1.16. Set Up Agency: Once the agency agreement is in place, the system administrator will take the necessary steps to set up the agency in the software on the training site. Depending upon the agency requirements, data conversion planning can occur.
  - 1.17. Site Administrator Training: Each agency will have a site administrator. This individual will be responsible for creating/maintaining program and agency profile information. Site administrators are the first level of support for end users as well. Site administrators go through additional training beyond the initial end user training.
  - 1.18. End User Training: End user training is the training of the individuals that will be responsible for entering data into the HMIS system. Training covers not only how to use the software, but also policies, procedures, privacy, and security. End user training can only occur for agencies that have completed their production site agency/program profiles.
  - 1.19. Agency Production Set Up: The system administrator will also set up agencies on the live production site. After agencies receive site administrator training, site administrators can go into production and configure profiles. The system administrator will check each agency's profiles to ensure that they are set up correctly. Any customized fields will also be added at this time. End users will be set up as needed.

## 2. HMIS Support:

This section focuses on the activities required to effectively support HMIS after implementation. These are on-going activities that will continue for the life of the system. Each item is briefly explained.

- 2.1. Manage Helpdesk: Responding to users' requests for assistance is one of the primary means of support given for HMIS. System administrators will be responsible for resolving user's issues and requests. They are expected to communicate issues with other system administrators when it is discovered that an issue affects everyone (e.g. server down, bug, etc.) System administrators also communicate to the vendor's helpdesk issues that they are not able to resolve amongst themselves first. System administrators are expected to provide backup support for system administrators in the other Continuums of Care.
- 2.2. Provide On-Going Training: Training will be needed on a regular basis in order to train current staff in new agencies, new staff in current HMIS agencies, and all staff for software updates. A training plan will be created to organize this effort. Training may include monthly end user sessions, agency-specific training for new implementations, self-paced computer-based training, seminars, etc.
- 2.3. Monitor Message Boards/Forums: System administrators will be requested to actively participate in message boards and user forums for HMIS. As questions and discussions arise, assistance can be provided to groups of users all at one time. This is certainly one source of feedback on the overall HMIS implementation. System administrators can also post best practices, tips and tricks in using the software.
- 2.4. Publish Newsletter: Regularly communicating with users and agencies is important in establishing an effective HMIS. Through a regularly published newsletter, (at least quarterly), information regarding upcoming regulatory changes, software upgrades, current HMIS news, training, etc. can be communicated to all agencies.
- 2.5. Regulate Data Quality: The quality of data entered into HMIS directly affects the quality of the reports. System administrators must monitor the data to ensure that it is complete, consistent, and accurate based on regulations and internal policies. Adhering to the quality plans set forth in the implementation the system administrator will identify data quality issues within the HMIS, agency-specific, and possibly user-specific. The system administrator will assist the agencies with data

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correction from both a technical (modifying records) and process (stopping it from occurring) standpoint.

- 2.6. Audit Agencies: Due to the sensitive nature of the information being collected, agencies must meet strict policies regarding privacy and security. System administrators will schedule visits to ensure that agencies are in full compliance with these policies. They will work the agencies to rectify any deficiencies in the agencies practices. This is also a time that system administrators can give one-on-one attention to an agency's end users.
- 2.7. Organize User Meetings: User meetings can be an effective way to gather additional feedback and to discuss hot topics that may be affecting multiple agencies. For example, special user meetings can be organized for agencies focused on domestic violence to discuss security and privacy concerns. Best practices can be shared amongst agencies in this format too. The system administrator will organize and conduct user meetings on a regular basis. Any notes, issues, solutions, or recommendations would then be communicated to the end users.
- 2.8. Assist Agencies' Information Needs: Each agency will have specific information needs either from exporting data, importing data, and/or reporting on data stored within HMIS Software. System administrators will assist agencies with filling their information requests. They may perform this assistance through normal support means, or if no other way is possible, create the report/export themselves. Until data sharing across agencies is built into the software agencies operating in multiple Continuums may require more assistance in this area. Some agencies have a requirement to port over their current HMIS data to the new system. System administrators will also assist agencies in their data conversion activities to meet this requirement.
- 2.9. Conduct HMIS Survey: As a method of continuous improvement, an HMIS survey will be conducted at least annually. The purpose of the survey is to measure the most important points of HMIS: communication, software, support, and processes. The goal is to survey all stakeholders to get their feedback in these key areas. The results of the survey would be shared. Goals for the following year could be set to improve upon those results.
- 2.10. Manage Feedback: Given the wide variety of feedback mechanisms for end users and stakeholders it will be important to keep this information in an organized fashion. The purpose of collecting this information is to improve the overall HMIS implementation whether its software, training, support, communication, policies, etc. This feedback will help set new goals, direct software development, and modify policies and/or procedures. Feedback will be coordinated between the HMIS and 211 systems, to ensure a consistent message for system related activities is delivered.
- 2.11. Recommend Policies & Procedures: In conjunction with other activities related to HMIS, work with agencies to further develop policies and procedures. There is an immediate need to begin discussions related to data sharing between agencies. As HMIS matures, policies and procedures will mature with it.

### 3. Community Involvement

This section focuses on the activities related to engaging the overall HMIS community. Community involvement activities go beyond agencies that have implemented HMIS by looking at a broader view of stakeholders in the homeless service provider community. A portion of these activities is directly related to increasing agency HMIS participation. Other areas of community involvement include integration with other related systems, coordinated services, and establishment of policies/procedures.

- 3.1. Educate Community on HMIS: There is an on-going need in the near-term to educate the community beyond service providers on HMIS. Conducting public presentations on CO HMIS in conjunction with developing educational/marketing tools will partly address these educational needs. Circulating newsletters or other publications, in addition to responding to requests for information might supplement those educational activities.
- 3.2. Increase Agency Participation in HMIS: Enrolling additional service providers to the HMIS software will be an on-going process. The process of getting new agencies signed up for the software will typically involve conducting software demonstrations, discussing their issues and

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- concerns, analyze and resolve technological capacity issues. The new agency would then follow the normal implementation activities outlined in a project plan (set up, training, data migration).
- 3.3. Participation in Committees and Initiatives: There are several areas of involvement with community including committees, the Governance Board, and various workgroups. The HMIS team works closely with CoC to report on HMIS compliance levels and other activities.
  - 3.4. Monitor HMIS Regulations: As changes in HMIS Regulations are made, these changes must be brought back to the community. Impacts of these changes should be reviewed within the community to keep them engaged.
  - 3.5. System Integration/Development Initiatives: With the implementation of HMIS new opportunities for integration/development are available. Currently, further integration of Shelter Helpline, 211, and HMIS is a large opportunity. As a result of integration, new functionality could further enhance coordinated access to services. Examples include referral to automated unit reservations system and integration with benefits acquisition systems. This will be an on-going assessment of how to make the overall HMIS system better.
  - 3.6. Consumer Forum: On a regular basis (semi-annual perhaps), a forum for homeless consumers will be held to collect their feedback. It is important to understand the consumer perspective as to what is/is not working, buy-in to the system to collect more accurate information, integration with other services. The goal is to utilize this feedback to develop a better HMIS program.

### 4. Data Analysis & Reporting

This section focuses on the analysis of the data resulting from the HMIS implementation. At various points in time throughout the year, data will be analyzed to produce required reports as well as ad hoc reporting.

- 4.1. Cleanse Data: Beyond regular quality controls, data must be scrutinized/cleansed across agencies to get a more accurate view of the data. This activity must be done before it has been aggregated together to ensure each agency has the highest quality of data available. In the near-term this could be rather lengthy, as processes for data cleansing are established.
- 4.2. Aggregate Data: Once data is cleansed, agency information can be combined together in one main source for reporting needs. Data may be aggregated to metropolitan area, statewide, or jurisdictional levels depending on the desired reports' data requirements.
- 4.3. Standard Reports: The AHAR table shells as required by HUD must be completed in Spring 2005, reviewing a period of February 1 – April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Adhering to the guidelines set forth by HUD, only agencies operating in Adams County with emergency shelter or transitional housing beds are eligible for AHAR. However, other communities with at least 75% bed coverage for emergency shelter or transitional housing may submit their data as non-sample site. Over time, the AHAR reporting needs should expand to different communities and to different service provider types (permanent housing, outreach, services, etc). The SuperNOFA, Consolidated Plans, and APR reports must be completed on an annual basis as well.
- 4.4. Ad-hoc Reporting: Various groups or stakeholders might request information out of HMIS. In an aggregated format (no personally identifying information), SHHP should provide this information.

### 5. Vendor Management

This section focuses on the interaction with the HMIS vendor, on its software. As the vendor provides the critical software piece to HMIS, there are additional communication areas that must be addressed on an on-going basis.

- 5.1. Communicate Prioritized Feedback: With all of the feedback collection occurring from HMIS support, HMIS team will route this feedback in an organized, prioritized fashion to HMIS software provider. Software provider should address these feedback items as soon as possible. HMIS team

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will track which items are completed and when. HMIS team will work in conjunction with other major stakeholders to prioritize these requirements.

- 5.2. Participate in Software Design: HMIS team will be represented on the vendor's national HMIS design team to ensure its interests are properly covered. This will include working with the vendor to determine scope of each new release, bug fixes, user-friendliness of page designs, adherence to HUD data standards and agency data collection requirements.
- 5.3. Receive On-Going Training: With every major software version upgrade, solution provider must provide system administrators training. New or modification to existing features must be covered. In addition, since system administrators are the trainers to the end users, any changes to training should be pointed out too.
- 5.4. Test Each Release: Before a new version of the software is released to the production site, system administrators will test the software on the training site. New and old functionally must be tested to ensure it is in compliance with HUD standards, agency requirements, and CoC requirements. Any issues discovered during this point will be immediately communicated back to the solution provider. Software upgrades will not be released to production until the training site is bug-free.
- 5.5. Perform Security Audits: On a regular basis, system administrators will work with solution provider to perform a security audit. This audit will attempt to ensure that Software provider is maintaining the system using proper security configuration including firewalls, audit trails, database encryption, and unauthorized access to sensitive information. Software provider must adhere to all privacy/security policies as noted by HUD regulations, HIPAA, and other regulations as appropriate. Any discrepancies must be resolved immediately.

### 6. Legacy System

This section focuses on the future/near-term work for the legacy system. As the legacy system is being replaced by the new HMIS software, it will need to be phased out gradually. After all agencies have converted from the legacy system to a new HMIS –HUD compliant system, the legacy system can be retired. In the meantime, these activities will be needed to support users.

- 6.1. Legacy system Data Conversion: If agencies using the legacy system are moving to the new HMIS, and the agency desires to capture its older data, a data migration may be needed. The HMIS team will work with the new HMIS solution provider to ensure that this process happens in a timely, accurate manner. It will be up to the HMIS team to provide the technical support on how to migrate data over as it relates to the database structure and proper mapping to the new HMIS.
- 6.2. Legacy System Technical Assistance: System administrators will be required to provide helpdesk/technical assistance to agencies using the legacy system. However, once the legacy system is retired then this activity disappears.
- 6.3. Post Final Legacy System: The final version of the legacy system, its documentation, manuals, and instructions should be posted on the HMIS project's site. At some point in time, this can be removed. However, this would be the last activity related to the legacy system support. Agencies still utilizing the legacy system at this time will be notified of support termination, and pointed to this web site to get the last piece of information they might want.

### 3. HMIS Project Manager Job Announcement and Full Description

*Source: Housing & Community Services-Info Link, Orange County, California*

*Description: This document contains a job announcement and project description for a project manager of a relatively large implementation. This implementation chose to seek a project manager with strong technical as well as management skills.*

#### JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

##### Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) Project Manager, HMIS

The Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) Project Manager is a newly created position that will oversee the implementation and ongoing management of \_\_\_CoC Name's\_\_\_ first HMIS program. The HMIS Project Manager will work collaboratively with a team of non-profit and government agencies and will report to the Executive Director of HMIS lead agency...

##### Background

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Congress has directed the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to implement a system for determining the unduplicated number of persons using homeless services across the country. Each jurisdiction receiving homeless funding from HUD must have a system in place by 2004. HUD has left the decision over which software to use to each jurisdiction.

\_\_\_CoC Name\_\_\_ is participating in a collaborative planning process with adjoining jurisdictions, including the Cities of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_. The goal of the planning effort is to select the same or compatible software so that data can be shared across jurisdictions. The level of data to be shared will depend on outcomes of the planning process currently underway.

##### Position

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The HMIS Project Manager will be responsible for leading the implementation planning, installation and continuing operations of a system located at 75 agencies and serving 150 users. Agencies range from small to large nonprofit organizations and several government agencies. New staff will be hired for the HMIS project within six months of the Project Manager's hire. This position will be based in [City], [State]

A detailed job description is attached. Please send cover letter and resume to:

[Contact Name]  
[Address]

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[Lead Agency]  
[HMIS Project Name }

HMIS Project Manager

### **Title: Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) Project Manager**

**Classification Standards:** Under the direction of the Executive Director, this position has responsibility for a broad range of activities related to the implementation and operation of a countywide computerized data collection system for the \_\_\_\_\_ Continuum of Care. Position will work collaboratively with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and with similar systems in the Cities of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, and with the \_\_\_\_\_ Housing Services Authority.

**Minimum Requirements:** B.A. (or educational equivalent) *and* at least five years' of progressive experience in the Information Technology field. Experience in relational database management and administration. Experience with implementation and support of scalable and secure web based applications. Requirements also include the management of multiple projects and timelines; includes outside consulting firms, cooperative organizations, and internal staff. Must be self-motivated and require minimal supervision with the ability to meet broad objectives with 'built-in' expertise. Requires professional writing skills, and the ability to communicate with all levels of management, staff and external clients, especially those who are not well versed in computer technology. Organizational skills, attention to detail and the ability to work with tight deadlines in an ever-changing environment are critical. Expertise in qualitative and quantitative analysis and strategic planning required.

**Training and Experience:** BA or BS in Computer Science or Business. Microsoft MCDBA or equivalent experience. PMP Certification, or equivalent Project Management certification/demonstrated experience. Strong Knowledge of database architecture, design and implementation in a Microsoft environment. Familiarity with Microsoft SQL, IIS, Visual Studio, and ASP platforms. Must also have proficiency with Microsoft Office suite, Visio and MS Project. Familiar with large-scale web enabled database structure, project management standards, and staff supervision required. Ability to design and document lay training documentation and operational standards for database systems also required.

**Additional desirable qualifications:** MA degree, and experience working with nonprofit organizations. Demonstrated ability to work with diverse community and organizational groups. Interdepartmental or interagency database networking strongly desired. Familiarity with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) highly desirable. Academic work in computer science, business, project management, public administration or Computer Information Systems preferred. MCT certification desirable.

### **Essential Job Functions:**

#### Program Initiation

- Software Selection: Provide technical information guidance needed to select web-based HMIS software
- Assist Executive Director and HMIS subcontractor agencies with contract negotiations and/or proposals for hardware, software, service contracts, and internet access for HMIS
- Develop, document and implement the plan to install selected data management software across up to 75 agencies and 150 users.



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### HMIS Implementation

- Ensure timely installation of HMIS
- Ensure that HMIS software and security incorporates the technical standards determined by HUD, the leadership team, the cross-county Collaborative, clients and provider agencies
- Coordinate system integration, conversion and programming modifications with participating agencies and programmers
- Manage security and audit functions for HMIS and provide feedback to the leadership team regarding changes or modifications to enhance database system
- Analyze HMIS system use and process audit reports
- Maintain quality, accessibility and functionality of HMIS
- Maintain ongoing communication and collaboration with the selected software vendor
- Assist Executive Director and leadership team members in monitoring and approving dissemination of data, subject to guidelines of the HMIS project
- Supervise HMIS staff (data analyst and trainers)
- Serve as point of contact between HMIS affiliated agencies and HMIS software vendor

### Technical Assistance Outreach and Communications

- Provide administration for implemented software, including agency account set-up, system monitoring and testing, problem diagnosis and resolution, routine software and information maintenance,
- Provide input to agencies for network hardware, software, computer and Internet installation standards,
- Lead the technical workgroup meetings – uses information gathered to design and/or modify system and security requirements, policies and protocols and provides recommendations to the leadership team
- Provide administration by phone, e-mail or at client site when necessary
- Provide and/or oversee HMIS training for user agencies in individual and group settings
- Support interagency use of system and documents system best practices for dissemination
- Represent the HMIS project at technology-related meetings, including, but not limited to, long-term planning for information systems management and interagency networking
- Provide technical assistance on HUD Technical Submissions and APR reports for HMIS
- Participate in community coalitions and coordinating councils
- Ensure that HMIS updates are posted to all HMIS project websites (lead agency and two subcontracting agencies)
- Perform other duties that may be assigned by the Executive Director

### Administration and Management

- Submit reports to HUD in accordance with contract requirements
- Prepare reports to the HMIS project leadership team and Leadership Cabinet as needed
- Provide staff leadership and input on HMIS policy as needed
- Oversee HMIS-related files, records and documents
- Assess and coordinate staff development activities for HMIS as assigned
- Requires local travel throughout \_\_\_\_\_, primarily \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. Job Description: Lead Agency and Local System Administrator

*Source: Michigan Statewide Homeless Management Information System, Michigan*  
*Description: A large statewide implementation with multiple CoCs has a system administrator for each Continuum and a system administrator at the lead agency. This document describes those jobs.*

All participating CoCs must identify a Lead Agency as well as at least one individual who will manage the process locally. Those involved in the local administration of the system will hold System Administrator I access levels. To optimize your HMIS outcomes (participant buy-in, ongoing user support, data quality, and routine reporting), it is very important for leadership at the local level to implement local users. Tasks completed by System Administrator I include: training and support for local agencies, routine monitoring of data quality, formal report preparation, and routine mining of the database to respond to information requests. Local access to help is especially important to those organizations that are less comfortable and/or skilled at automation. A local advisory committee provides guidance with regard to implementation and reporting issues. Each Continuum will be assigned an HMIS trainer and will have on-going access to the HMIS Help Desk. However, HMIS staff time will be spread across 50 plus continua and the support protocol requires all questions pass through local staff.

All Systems Administrators necessarily have access to all agency records within their continua (but not other continua). It is therefore important to address and resolve the local trust issues inherent in identifying these individuals/organizations. Policies and agreements have been developed to guide individuals in this position and to assure protection of all record level data. Some of the issues addressed in these policies and agreements include:

1. Lead Agencies will sign a QSOBAA (Qualified Service Organization Business Associates Agreement) that will assure that all organizations involved in the administration of the System may not re-release record level/identified data. That agreement also requires that the Lead Organization resist subpoenas in the same manner that a service organization would, and to maintain the data in a secure manner, meeting all confidentiality requirements.
2. The HMIS Participation Agreement restricts and specifies the use of aggregate data. Issues addressed include the fact that only the organization or continua may approve publication of data specific to that organization or continua, and that analysis and publication of community-wide numbers will be guided by a local CoC designated committee.
3. Anyone with System Administration Access must be willing to sign individual agency Confidentiality Oaths as desired.

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4. All System Administrators will also sign the HMIS User Agreement, which further details access, accountability and use of the data.
5. Queries or downloads from the System for analysis purposes will use the system applied Client ID – that is these subsets of data will not include individual identifiers such as name, DOB or SS# or the agency name. All downloads will be stored in a locked secure environment and will be de-identified in terms of individuals and agencies prior to storage.
6. Finally, the System provides a tracking of all individuals who have "touched" a record within the system, assuring personal accountability regarding what is done in the System with regard to agency records.

A brief “job description” for the Lead Agency and the local System Administrator follows.

### Lead Agency Task List:

1. Act as the fiduciary for the local SHP Grant.
2. Contracts with software vendor for local licenses, hosting fees, and training beyond that provided through HMIS project.
3. House the System Administration I position. With the support of the HMIS project assigned training staff, that person will:
  - a. Guide the HMIS process locally.
  - b. Complete required trainings with regard to Privacy and System Use.
  - c. Respond to questions from the assigned Agency Administrators (HMIS Lead Person at each agency) and provide on-site help as needed.
  - d. Convene/coordinate Community User Meetings and local group trainings.
  - e. Report database problems/successes to HMIS project committee
  - f. Attend System Administration User Meetings to share and benefit from the lessons learned across the State.
  - g. With the help of HMIS committee and a local “reporting” subcommittee, mine the database for Continuum-wide numbers. The degree to which this activity occurs at a local level will be determined at the local level. The more the database is mined, the better. Benefits to the community accrue through the mining process and the database can be a powerful tool in competing for grants, conducting community education, and planning your services.

## 5. HMIS Training Evaluation Form

**Source:** CSPTech (Connection, Service, Partnership through Technology), Massachusetts  
**Description:** This form can be used for evaluating HMIS training sessions.

**DATE:**

1. Is this your first time attending an HMIS User training? (check one)

Yes       No

2. How frequently do you use a computer at home or at work? (check one)

daily       once a week       less often       never

3. Please rate your overall knowledge/skill level on HMIS Software (*circle one in each category*):

<b>BEFORE</b> attending this session/event: (Low) 0 1 2 3 (Moderate) 4 5 6 7 (High) 8 9 10
<b>AFTER</b> attending this session/event: (Low) 0 1 2 3 (Moderate) 4 5 6 7 (High) 8 9 10

4. What did you hope to gain from the session? (Please check all that apply)

- How to enter a client record
- How to look up resources
- How to check a client into a bed
- Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. How well did this session meet its stated objectives? (*circle one*): (low) 1 2 3 4 5 (high)

Please explain:

6. Was the content organized and presented well? (*circle one*): (low) 1 2 3 4 5 (high)

7. How would you rate the delivery of the content? (*circle one*): (low) 1 2 3 4 5 (high)

8. How would you rate the handouts? (*circle one*): (low) 1 2 3 4 5 (high)

9. Please rate your comfort level with the following:

entering a client record (*circle one*): (low) 1 2 3 4 5 (high)

assessing a client (*circle one*): (low) 1 2 3 4 5 (high)

looking up resources (*circle one*): (low) 1 2 3 4 5 (high)

checking a client into a bed (*circle one*): (low) 1 2 3 4 5 (high)

looking up a client (*circle one*): (low) 1 2 3 4 5 (high)

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10. How will this training help you in your day to day work?

I would like to attend additional training on (please check all that apply):

- Another User training     Administration training     Basic Report Writing  
 Advanced Report Writing     User Group (interactive group with other users)  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What other HMIS trainings have you participated in? (Please check all that apply)

- User Group     APR Group  
 Administration training     Report Writer I     Report Writer II  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Comments:

Optional:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Job/Role (please circle):

Case Manager    Program Manager    Administrator    Director  
Volunteer    Other \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Contract Agreement for HMIS Project Director

**Source:** *Spartanburg County, South Carolina*

**Description:** *This is a contract to serve as an HMIS Project Director representing the consultant model of managing HMIS. This is a non-technical position, as the county has an IT department to meet that need. This job description represents the need of a relatively small CoC made up of 16 counties.*

*The purpose of this Agreement is to enable Contractor to provide long-term services to \_\_\_\_\_ for implementation and administration of the HMIS, a web-based database application to capture client information for participating social service agencies.*

The major responsibilities of the Contractor under this Agreement are as follows:

Task Area 1: Assist Agency in the planning, coordination and management of the HMIS in the following areas:

- Planning, scheduling and meeting project objectives as outlined by the Agency Executive Director, including issues related to funding, budgeting, grant writing and project reporting;
- Determining guiding principles for implementation and administration of the HMIS;
- Identifying and orienting Partner Agencies as participants in the HMIS
- Selecting minimum data requirements, defining criteria, standards and parameters for the release of aggregate data;
- Ensuring adequate privacy protection provisions in project implementation and administration;
- Planning and oversight of relevant technical infrastructure and services to implement and administer the HMIS;

Task Area 2: Assume primary responsibilities for daily operations of the HMIS, including:

- Managing contractual agreements between \_\_\_\_\_ and Partner Agencies participating in the HMIS;
- Providing technical assistance to \_\_\_\_\_ and Partner Agencies in the use of the HMIS, including on-site training and support;
- Developing training procedures and materials to support use of the HMIS;
- Monitoring technical aspects of system functioning, speed, and database back-up procedures of the HMIS;
- Auditing access to and use of the HMIS to ensure full participation and compliance by Partner Agencies authorized to use the system;
- Providing technical assistance to ensure that all Partner Agencies using the HMIS adhere to the governing principles related to its use;
- Developing standard reports and queries on HMIS usage and data for interested parties;
- Developing strategies to ensure that Resource information contained in the HMIS is expanded and updated regularly;
- Monitoring issues related to contractual performance of the HMIS software vendor pertaining to software development, system upgrades, hosting and data protection services.

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

Task Area 3: Development and Management of Resources for Implementation, Operation and/or Expansion of the HMIS, including:

- Researching, interpreting and preparation of information for grant applications and other funding sources as needed;
- Determination of cost estimates and budgets;
- Submittal of grant applications and funding proposals;
- Coordination of applications and/or proposals with Agency and representatives of other public and private agencies;
- Management of activities to ensure compliance with funding requirements, regulations, and policies.

## 7. Project Scope Document

**Source:** Safe Harbors Project, Seattle, Washington

**Description:** This is an example of a fully documented project scope that was agreed upon by the project manager, the project team, and an executive committee. Changes are tracked at the top with version numbers. This project was divided into two main phases. For each phase, there is a table that specifies Entrance Criteria, Objectives, Agencies included, Requirements, Length, Deliverables, Success Factors, Scope Boundaries, and Open Issues.

### Document History

Author	Date	Version	Notes
XXX	1/27/03	Original 1	Created to begin review process
XXX	1/28/03	V1	Changed some fields and added notes
XXX	1/28/03	V1 a	Added success criteria
XXX	2/5/03	V1 b	Updated Objectives to move HUD 50% reporting to Phase 2
XXX	2/7/03	V2	Accepted Ops, Project Team & updates
XXX	3/4/03	V2 b	Add EC changes and show final Exec Comm. approved Project Scope

Team	Version #	Review	Notes	Approved	Completed
Operational	V1 a	2/7/03	Review document & give input	2/7/03	√
Project Team	V1 b	2/7/03	Review document & give input	2/7/03	√
Operational	V 2	2/10/03	Review document & approve	2/10/03	√
Exec. Comm.	V 2 b	2/26/03	Approve Document	2/26/03	√

### Review Cycle

#### **Overall Project Scope**

The purpose of this section is to define the scope of the HMIS project. This scope includes only the planned budget timeframe – 2003 and 2004. It is reflected in two phases: Phase 1 and Phase 2. Those items which have been discussed by various stakeholders as potentially part of the project, but which cannot be included in the budgeted timeframe, are listed under “Future Phase Deliverables”. A separate scope, project plan and budget will be established for those.

<b>PHASE I</b>	
<b>PHASE I ENTRANCE CRITERIA</b>	Phase I will begin when the following criteria are met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pilot Phase is complete.</li> <li>▪ Final Pilot Deliverables have all been delivered.</li> <li>▪ Pilot Acceptance Criteria have been met.</li> <li>▪ All system functionality delivered in Pilot Phase is available to agencies participating in Phase I.</li> </ul>



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<b>PHASE I</b>	
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement program modifications which were determined as requirements out of the pilot phase.</li> <li>▪ Rollout of modified HMIS software to specified agency locations.</li> <li>▪ Collect standardized data from specified agencies throughout the county which are not HMIS users.</li> <li>▪ Provide ad hoc reporting capability to enable response to new HUD reporting requirements.</li> <li>▪ Provide ability for agencies to produce internal and management reports for their organization.</li> <li>▪ Plan the long-term structure (owner/sponsor, location, funding, and administration) of HMIS Team — to be implemented after Phase 2 when City of Seattle management/ownership is completed.</li> </ul>
<b>TYPE/PROFILE OF AGENCIES AND / OR PROGRAMS</b>	<p>Definition of program/agency is meant to specify a single program within an agency or an agency that is comprised of only a single program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The agencies participating in Phase I will be shelters and transitional housing, in order to meet the HUD 10/04 mandate.</li> <li>▪ Between 15-20 programs/agencies will be included in this phase. This number may be modified based on what is learned in the Pilot phase.</li> <li>▪ Both HMIS users and agencies with existing systems (legacy) will be included in this Phase. The number of each type will be determined at the end of the Pilot phase.</li> <li>▪ Create geographical spread if possible among the agencies implemented this phase</li> </ul>
<b>REQUIREMENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All requirements defined in “Level 2 Functional Requirements Specifications”.</li> <li>▪ Modifications to HMIS software as defined in pilot phase must be completed &amp; tested.</li> <li>▪ Agency locations must provide assistance with data mapping for export to Aggregate Data Mart. HMIS staff will provide technical support as necessary, but cannot fund agency staff time.</li> <li>▪ Client de-identification mechanism proven in pilot will be implemented for Aggregate Data Mart.</li> </ul>
<b>ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Agencies are able to perform all Level 2 functions.</li> <li>▪ Ad hoc reporting capability used successfully for 10 new reports.</li> <li>▪ Agencies are able to produce all reports developed/tested in Pilot Phase.</li> <li>▪ Survey of participants conducted at end of Phase I shows high level of agency satisfaction with the system.</li> <li>▪ Agencies with existing systems (legacy) are successfully exporting data to aggregate data system.</li> </ul>
<b>LENGTH OF PHASE 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 6 months</li> <li>▪ Begins at completion of modifications required by pilot phase.</li> </ul>

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

<b>PHASE I</b>	
<b>FINAL PHASE 1 DELIVERABLES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lessons learned are defined</li> <li>▪ Plan developed for next phase</li> <li>▪ All Phase I agencies are submitting standardized data to aggregate data system</li> <li>▪ HMIS software operating successfully at participating agencies.</li> <li>▪ Agency satisfaction survey completed by at least 75% of participating agencies.</li> <li>▪ Planning document for project’s long-term structure is completed and approved.</li> <li>▪ A plan for integration with 211 system to address Level 1 Functional Requirements must be put in place...</li> <li>▪ A briefing report on the status of coordination between our HMIS and the State HMIS</li> </ul>
<b>EXEC. COMM. SUCCESS FACTORS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transparency in our dealings with the stakeholders</li> <li>2. Acceptance/peace with the advocacy community regarding the validity of the entire project concept and practice</li> <li>3. Sustainable relationship around data collection</li> <li>4. Data management and data sharing between and among two local counties</li> <li>5. Development of common report criteria between funding entities</li> </ol>
<b>SCOPE BOUNDARIES — WHAT’S IN AND WHAT’S OUT</b>	<p><b>Exclude from Phase I</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Level 1 functionality excluded</li> <li>▪ Level 3 (<u>Inter</u>-Agency Case Management Sharing) functionality excluded, however, case management note capturing and sharing within an agency is included.</li> <li>▪ Agencies/programs without existing systems are excluded unless they are using HMIS — this exclusion will be formally documented as a ‘Project Risk’.</li> </ul>

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

<b>PHASE I</b>	
<b>OPEN ISSUES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Level 1 Functionality may be duplicated by 211 system.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Planning for Phase 2 may or may not include the addition of Level 1 Functionality based on a <i>decision to be made regarding 211.....</i></li> <li>b) Level 1 Functionality &amp; related 211 coordination will be documented as a formal 'Project Risk'.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Level 3 (<u>Inter</u>-Agency Case Management Sharing) functionality is dependent upon the profile of the user community; i.e., how many agencies are using case management tools, and are willing to share data? The decision on when to implement Level 3 (<u>Inter</u>-Agency Case Management Sharing) functionality will be made after Phase 1 is complete.</li> <li>3) A pilot of Level 3 Functionality (<u>Inter</u>-Agency Case Management Sharing) may be an option that could be run concurrently with Phase 2.</li> <li>4) Lack of policy for replacement of current 3 sponsors/partners with a defined, self-supporting, HMIS Project entity poses a risk to the ongoing funding, planning, and community support of the overall HMIS Project.</li> <li>5) Agencies without systems who do not accept HMIS implementation being excluded from project scope is being documented as a formal 'Project Risk'.</li> </ol>

<b>PHASE II</b>	
<b>PHASE II ENTRANCE CRITERIA</b>	<p>Phase II will begin when the following criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Phase I is complete.</li> <li>▪ Final Phase I Deliverables have all been delivered.</li> <li>▪ Phase I Acceptance Criteria have been met.</li> <li>▪ All system functionality delivered in Pilot Phase and Phase I is available to agencies participating in Phase II.</li> </ul>
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rollout of modified HMIS software to additional specified agency locations.</li> <li>▪ Collect standardized data from additional specified agencies throughout the county which are not HMIS users.</li> <li>▪ Aggregate data system includes sufficient coverage to do meaningful analysis on the regional homeless service system.</li> <li>▪ Provide HUD unduplicated count reports for a minimum of 50% of the homeless population <i>served</i>. (<i>see Acceptance Criteria Note</i>)</li> <li>▪ Include agency participation from a minimum of 60% of agency types contained in the Homeless CofC.</li> <li>▪ Test Level 3 functionality.</li> <li>▪ Complete all transition activities to turn over management of HMIS to new structure (approved in Phase 1) at the end of 2004.</li> </ul>
<b>TYPE &amp; PROFILE OF AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS</b>	<p>Definition of program/agency is meant to specify a single program within an agency or an agency that is comprised of only a single program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A minimum of 20 agencies will be included in this phase. More can be added based on available resources and time</li> <li>▪ The agencies participating in Phase II will still be shelters and transitional housing, in order to meet the HUD 10/04 mandate.</li> </ul>

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

<b>PHASE II</b>	
<b>REQUIREMENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All requirements defined in “Level 2 Functional Requirements Specifications”.</li> <li>▪ Agency locations must provide assistance with data mapping for export to Aggregate Data Mart. HMIS team will provide technical support as necessary, but cannot fund agency staff time.</li> </ul>
<b>ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Agencies are able to perform all Level 2 functions.</li> <li>▪ HUD unduplicated count report provided for a minimum of 50% of population. <i>If HUD criteria is not defined, the Our target is defined as “50% of the homeless population served by shelter and transitional housing agencies participating in the One Night Count”</i></li> </ul>
<b>LENGTH OF PHASE 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 6 months <b>minimum</b>.</li> <li>▪ Begins at completion of Phase 1 closure period and continues through the end of 2004.</li> </ul>
<b>FINAL PHASE 2 DELIVERABLES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lessons learned are defined</li> <li>▪ Open Issues for Future system growth are resolved.</li> <li>▪ All Phase I and II agencies are submitting standardized data to Aggregate Data Mart</li> <li>▪ Basic Level 3 functionality has been tested and is available for future phases.</li> <li>▪ Transition to the CSE is complete, and Maintenance and Operations Plan for existing network is complete and in use.</li> <li>▪ Plan, proposed budget and proposed funding for future addition of agencies to the HMIS network.</li> </ul>
<b>EC SUCCESS FACTORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meet HUD 50% reporting requirement by 10/04 (<i>see Acceptance Criteria note</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>SCOPE BOUNDARIES — WHAT’S IN AND WHAT’S OUT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Level 3 (<u>Inter</u>-Agency Case Management Sharing) functionality beyond testing the ability to share among agencies participating in Phase 1 and Phase 2 is excluded from Phase 2.</li> </ul>
<b>OPEN ISSUES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discuss/determine status of agencies with no system.</li> <li>2. Level 1 functionality needs to addressed in one of two methods during Phase 2:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. planned and implemented via 211 or</li> <li>b. if the coordination with 211 will not produce the desired results, a plan will be developed during Phase 2 to support Level 1 in future phases.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

<b>FUTURE PHASE DELIVERABLES — 2005</b>	
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Addition of remaining agencies to HMIS network</li> <li>▪ Addition of agencies with no computer system</li> <li>▪ Provision for Level 3 (<u>Inter</u>-Agency Case Management Sharing) functionality</li> <li>▪ Address new HUD requirements (possibly)</li> <li>▪ work with the State toward supporting state-wide integration</li> </ul>
<b>OPEN ISSUES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> </ol>

## 8. Calculating the Budget and Schedule Impact of Scope Changes

*Source: Safe Harbors, Seattle, Washington*

*Description: This document displays the relationship between budget, time, and scope. "Change requests" indicate a change in one of these areas. Changes in scope impact the budget and schedule.*

	Budget Impact				Schedule Impact			
	2003	2004	2005	2006				
<b>Approved Budget</b>								
<b>Total Expenses</b>	(500,000)	(300,000)	(250,000)	(250,000)				
<b>Total Revenue</b>	600,000	250,000	250,000	250,000				
<b>Carry Over Prior Yr</b>	50,000	150,000	100,000	100,000				
<b>End of Year Balance</b>	150,000	100,000	100,000	100,000				
<b>(1) Change Requests (CR) Summary</b>					<b>Add Weeks</b>	<b>Original Finish</b>	<b>Revised Finish</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Change Program Users to 6 from 4 (CR #11)		(1,644)	(64,384)		na			
Programs have 1st two years free (CR #12)		0	0	14,320	na			
Increase Funder Reports by 5 (CR #19)		(2,200)			13	8/17/04	12/7/04	Delays Legacy DB
2004 Staff Salary Adjustments (CR #21)		(17,488)			na			
Transfer in-kind work to core team (CR # 22)		(4,400)			3	8/17/04	9/7/04	Delays Legacy DB
McKinney Grant (CR 23)		0	30,000	30,000	na			
<b>Change Request Total</b>		(25,732)	(34,384)	44,320	16			
<b>Revised Approved Budget</b>								
<b>Total Expenses</b>	(500,000)	(325,732)	(314,384)	(250,000)				
<b>Total Revenue</b>	600,000	250,000	280,000	294,320				
<b>Carry Over Prior Yr</b>	50,000	150,000	74,268	39,884				
<b>End of Year Balance</b>	150,000	74,268	39,884	84,204				

## 9. Status Report to Governing Committee

*Source: Safe Harbors, Seattle, Washington*

*Description: A project manager can use a status report such as this one to communicate with a governing committee or other stakeholders. Many stakeholders may only be interested in the Executive Summary on page one. Green, Yellow, Red “vital signs” are an effective way of quickly conveying status. Later pages have details on highlights, schedule, risks, dependencies, and decisions needed.*

### Executive Summary

#### Pilot / Start Up Phase Update

- Training scheduled for March — all four Start Up Programs have filed for and received their PKI Certificates

#### Key January Highlights Include:

- Legal review of all documents required for Start Up are completed
- SLAs with State of WA — DIS (Department of Information Systems) are negotiated and being routed for signatures
- DIS hosting equipment installed at State DIS location
- State Collaboration meeting held at Olympia with CTED managers. Tentative agreement among the attendees with follow-up tasks defined. Tasks to be completed prior to meeting in early March with Deputy Director CTED, IT Manager CTED and other required attendees

#### Project Vital Signs —

Overall Project Posture	Client Satisfaction	Schedule (1)	Cost (2)
<b>G</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>Y ↑</b>	<b>Y</b>

Project Budget Variance	% Work Complete	% Schedule Completed	# High Impact, High Probability Risks	Scope (+,-, =)
+ <b>35,000</b> (2)	<b>80 %</b> (1)	90 %	3	+ <b>(3)</b>

- (Note 1) Critical path items are still being completed prior to administrative work. Variance gap between work completed and schedule remaining is decreasing as more development and testing is being completed.
- (Note 2) \$ 95,000 carryover from 2003 Budget is being used to cover the extended schedule & related staff salaries. \$35,000 remains from 2003 after January.
- (Note 3) Change Orders Approved 1) State Collaboration 2) Moving from City to State Hosting 3) Adding Operation Night Watch & ProYouth DB

#### Annual Budget Variance

Annual Budget Variance	
<b>NA)</b>	2004 Budget will be presented to Executive Committee for their approval following final Security Requirements

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

### Schedule Summary

	Original Finish (Note 1)	Projected / Actual Finish	Status	% Work Complete	Completed Hours	Remaining Hours	Risk / Issue
<b>Planning to Beginning of Start Up</b>	5/5/2004	5/5/04	<b>Y</b>	80%	4,196	1,040	
Deployment Activities	4/7/2004	4/7/04	<b>G</b>	91%	304	32	
Analysis & Design	2/12/2004	2/12/04	<b>G</b>	91%	1,062	107	
Security & Architecture	2/9/2004	2/15/04	<b>Y</b>	80%	171	44	R-027
I & R Analysis	1/8/2004	3/30/04	<b>R</b>	35%	6	11	
Development	2/10/2004	2/12/04	<b>G</b>	87%	873	136	
Testing	2/12/2004	3/4/04	<b>G</b>	66%	156	81	
Host Site Location	2/24/2004	3/5/04	<b>G *</b>	60%	90	60	
Startup Agencies Setup & Testing	2/26/2004	2/24/04	<b>G *</b>	43%	11	14	
End-user Training	2/5/2004	3/22/04	<b>G *</b>	12%	7	51	
Added Activities	2/12/2004	2/12/04	<b>Y</b>	87%	269	39	
HMIS Deployment	2/12/2004	3/30/04	<b>NA</b>	0%	0	84	I-10,12,13
Project Control & Communications	5/1/04	5/1/04	<b>G</b>	85%	1,248	226	
Phase Completion/Transition	5/5/2004	5/5/04	<b>NA</b>	0%	0	156	

Note 1 — Change orders and Project lags added 1 month plus to original finish projected (see Page 1 Note 3 for actual change orders)

\* Note: Several of the schedule items show low % work complete numbers, yet are rated Green. This is because those efforts are just beginning due to planned timing of the tasks. They are actually on schedule.

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

### **Detail Section**

#### Accomplishments for January:

##### Pilot / Start Up Phase Update

- PKI Certificate & Security Training completed for Start Up Agencies
- HMIS design completed: final development and testing for Start Up begun.

#### Key January Highlights Include:

- State collaboration meeting held. Next planned meeting early March with Deputy Director CTED
- Cybercrime liability insurance applications completed, now awaiting quote from underwriter
- Security Policy approved by Legal
- SLAs with State approved by legal: SLAs being routed for signatures
- Hosting equipment installed at DIS
- System Design completed
- Conducted Start Up Lab for users to apply for certificates. Notary came to session to complete paperwork for agency users

#### Planned Accomplishments Not Completed January 2004:

- I & R Analysis requires 11 additional hours. Advised Executive Committee this is not a critical path item for HMIS implementation & has been delayed until critical path items are completed.
- Development & testing of mandatory features still underway
- Training Manual held for screen prints and development of mandatory features with UI (User Interface) “locked down”
- Security meetings to balance system security with ease of use by agencies with the costs associated the security provisions. Meetings will include City CTO & CISO and related stakeholders. On Hold for next EC meeting 2/26/04

#### Key Issues:

ID #	Issue	Priority	Status	Target Date	Assigned To
1.	Draft a responsibility statement for Start Up Agencies describing a single point of contact for any public statements during the Start Up Phase.	<b>Med</b>	Open	1/15/04	XXX
7.	Develop Oral Explanation to Clients / Can we use the HUD wording provided in the Federal Registry?	<b>Med</b>	Closed	Closed	XXX
10., 12., & 13.	Need to begin Legal review of the documents being changed due to Security, HIPAA, and privacy concerns 12/03 Legal approval of Security, HIPAA and Agency Partner Agreement underway 1/04 Security & Agency Partner Agreement completed, legal approved, awaiting EC approval	<b>High</b>	Open	2/26/04	XXX



## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

### Key Risks (High Impact, High Probability)

ID#	Risk	12/03 Revised Status	November Status	EC Action Required?
016	Ongoing Funding not available 11/03 Mitigation plan of private grants, state collaboration, McKinney Grant increase underway 12/03 McKinney Grant increase approved	Mitigation Underway	Mitigation Underway	EC study underway
027	Security Vulnerabilities 11/03 Defining increased costs and schedule impacts to create Change Order for EC approval 12/03 Security costing impacts being gathered for EC review 1/04 Waiting for the insurance quote to be presented by underwriter	Mitigation Underway	Mitigation Underway	Not at this time

### Critical Dependencies/Needs (From Where or Who)

Date Identified	Need/Dependency	Owner	Steps to Address
9/2003	Establish hosting agreement with State	XXX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>√ 1. Define service, networking &amp; equipment requirements</li> <li>√ 2. Legal approval of SLA by City of Seattle</li> <li>√ 3. Negotiate &amp; sign SLA (Began routing of document)</li> <li>√ 4. Move application &amp; database to DIS</li> <li>5. Test application, database &amp; PKI server prior to Start Up —</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>2/04 testing underway</b></p>

### Decisions Required (From Whom and by When)

Date Required	Date Decided	Decision Maker(s)	Decision and Final Disposition
2/26/04			Final Approval of Agency Partner Agreement and Security Policy following email review by EC
2/26/04			Determine what security provisions need to be implemented. This decision will be made by balancing the cost of the provision, with the level of security, use by the agencies and risk mitigation achieved. This meeting needs to occur before the beginning of Start Up training.
2/26/04			Approve HMIS acceptance criteria prior to beginning implementation and going live with Safe Harbors HMIS
2/26/04			Approve Project Budget for 2004

## 10. Risk Management Plan

**Source:** Created for this document.

**Description:** This risk management plan specifies risks in all areas of HMIS. Communities will differ in their assessment of probability and impact of risks and what should be done about them. Risks that have a combination of at least one “high” and one “medium” are highlighted for immediate preventive action.

Risk	Description/ Remarks	Probability	Impact	Preventive/ Mitigation Measures	Actions If Occurs
<b>FUNDING</b>					
Funding Cuts (<20%)	Loss of supplementary grant	High	Med	Foster additional funding, create rainy day fund	Limit scope, extend timelines
Funding Cuts (>20%)	Loss or severe cuts of a primary grants	Low	High	Maintain strong relationships with funders, meet deliverables	Implement agency fee structure model; staff cut back
<b>STAFFING</b>					
Key Staff Loss or Long Absence	PM or Database Admin. (New Job, Maternity, Military)	High	Med	Cross-train staff in each other’s jobs; document all activities; maintain job descriptions	Immediate job posting; knowledge transfer; redistribute work (limit scope, extend timelines)
<b>VENDORS</b>					
HMIS Vendor Out of Business	Lack of business, or boom/bust pattern	Low	High	Keep software code in escrow; maintain alternate access to database	Communicate with community and other vendor clients, prioritize new software selection
Third Party Vendor Out of Business	E.g., Encryption, Hosting, Reporting, Off-site Backup Storage	Med	Low	Maintain lists of alternate vendors; avoid tying community policies to specific vendor services; establish temporary workarounds	Implement temporary workarounds; seek alternative vendor (or set timeline for primary vendor to find solution)
Long-term compounded problems with HMIS Vendor	Continuing problems with e.g., speed, reporting, and access over a year plus	Low	High	Document issues and speed and success of responses; maintain clear public distinction between HMIS project and software; establish vendor obligations and procedures for changing vendors in original contract (e.g., access to data; conversion assistance; contract termination rights)	Issue specific deadline to vendors; explore options prior to deadline to be ready for failure. Outline complete timetable of software selection, training and rollout process; expect roadblocks. Gather input from Advisory/Governing committee on decision of whether to seek new software.

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

Risk	Description/ Remarks	Probability	Impact	Preventive/ Mitigation Measures	Actions If Occurs
<b>SOFTWARE</b>					
Software Page Load Consistently Longer Than One Minute	Consistently slow, or slowing as more users records added	High	Med	Test under “load” conditions; add new users incrementally; monitor speed regularly; upgrade hardware periodically	Inform vendor immediately; determine if problem local or system-wide; if applicable, curtail use and timing of high-resource functions, inform users of best times to use.
Software Functionality Impacts Goals	Promised functionality not delivered: community disillusioned, goal not achieved	Med	Med	Manage community expectations; tie software contract to functionality; prioritize mission-critical issues	Determine with community highest-priority issues, negotiate with vendor strict deadlines for fixes tied to payments; publish timelines. Train community on “tricks” and workarounds.
<b>INFORMATION SECURITY</b>					
Hardware Failure/ Disasters	Server crash; natural disasters (hurricane, blackout, fire, etc.)	High	High	Invest in backup, off-site storage, and server replication services	Implement backup plan, inform community as necessary
External Security Breach	Unauthorized user hacks into system	Low	Med	Audit security protocols regularly; establish relationship with security expert to be on-call emergency	Shut down all access points to database; determine how the breach occurred, and fix immediately
Breach by Authorized User	Client level data used or given out inappropriately	Low	Med	Audit privacy procedures regularly; emphasize privacy issues in user training; establish clear job-related consequences for breach culminating with termination.	Determine responsible party; remove system access to party and begin job action.
<b>COMMUNITY/POLITICAL</b>					
CoC Executive Level Changes to Non-supporter	CoC Execs no longer actively supports PM, project	Med	Med	Keep executives aware of project status, benefits, and national mandates; publicize successes broadly; meet with any new executives soon after start date.	Mobilize support from project allies, including Executive Directors, and HUD regional and national officials. Emphasize local benefits, federal funding, momentum to date

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description/ Remarks</b>	<b>Probability</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Preventive/ Mitigation Measures</b>	<b>Actions If Occurs</b>
Resistance at Caseworker or Agency Levels	Unwillingness to enter date	High	High	Emphasize long-term operational advantages; use executive champion	Re-prioritize rollout to other agencies that are most enthusiastic; build record of success.
Domestic Violence Political Challenges	Anti-HMIS interest groups (e.g., DV) protest, generate negative press	High	Med	Review and document security protocols; keep potentially negative groups involved in decision-making; proactive press strategy; know talking points for press	Do not threaten to cut funding (generates more negative press); hold meetings with all interested parties; take full advantage of leniencies offered by HUD Regulations
<b>LEGAL/COMPLIANCE</b>					
New HUD Requirements	New data collection, reporting, or security rules	High	Low	Build HUD compliance into vendor contracts	Distinguish rules applicable to vendor, community, agency; determine actual HUD-compliance deadlines and consequences; change scope and timelines to compensate
HIPAA Challenges	HIPAA covered agencies refuse participation	Low	Med	Learn about basics of who is covered by HIPAA, and relationship between HIPAA and HMIS regs.	Engage legal consultant; ensure documents are appropriately drafted
<b>DATA/PARTICIPATION</b>					
Data Quality or Coverage Problems	Inability to report on data or data not reliable	High	High	Establish community-wide standards for data release; consider data quality and coverage potential in roll out; monitor data quality regularly and report back to agencies and users; acknowledge data quality leaders in community	Inform users and supervisors of consistent data quality problems; review ways to improve input process (e.g., better screens); acknowledge limitations of all data released

## 11. HMIS Privacy Posting/Notice

*Source: Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, Colorado*

*Description: This privacy notice is posted at each workstation that uses HMIS. It spells out privacy controls, restrictions on the use of data, and how clients can access and change the data. It also emphasizes the clients' right to receive services even if they choose not to participate in HMIS.*

### HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM



**THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW INFORMATION ABOUT YOU  
MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND  
HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION.**

**PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY.**

**Effective Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Our Duty to Safeguard Your Protected Information**

(Agency Name) collects information about who accesses our services. When we meet with you we will ask you for information about you and your family and enter it into a computer program called the \_\_\_\_\_ Homeless Management Information System (\_\_\_\_\_ HMIS). Although \_\_\_\_\_ HMIS helps us to keep track of your information, individually identifiable information about you is considered "Protected Information". We are required to protect the privacy of your identifying information and to give you notice about how, when, and why we may use or disclose any information you may give us.

We are also required to follow the privacy practices described in this Notice, although (Agency Name) reserves the right to change our privacy practices and the terms of this Notice at any time. You may request a copy of the new notice from any \_\_\_\_\_ HMIS Agency.

#### **How We May Use and Disclose Your Information**

We use and disclose collective information for a variety of reports. We have a limited right to include some of your information for reports on homelessness and services needed by those who are homeless. Information that could be used to tell who you are will never be used for these reports. We will not turn your information over to a national database. For uses beyond reports, we must have your written consent unless the law permits or requires us to make the use or disclosure without your consent. **Please review the Client Informed Consent/Release of Information Authorization for details. You must sign this form before we can use your information, but you do not have to sign the form in order to receive services.**

**Your Rights Regarding Your Information**

- You have the right to get services even if you choose **NOT** to participate in HMIS.
- You have the right to ask for information about who has seen your information.
- You have the right to see your information and change it if it isn't correct.

## 12. Grievance Filing

*Source: Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, Colorado*

*Description: This document is used for filing a grievance. It promises freedom from retaliation and a thirty-day response time. In this case, grievances are accepted only in writing, but the procedure allows the client to choose the best way to be contacted back. The form includes a space for the lead agency to make a recommendation.*

### Homeless Management Information System How to File a Grievance about out Privacy Practices

If you think we may have violated your privacy rights or you disagree with a decision we made about access to your “Protected Information” you may complete this form.

**It is against the law for any agency to take retaliatory action against you if you file this grievance. You can expect a response within 30 days via the method of your choice.**

Grievances must be submitted in writing to:

[Address Here]

Date of offense \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Individual who violated  
your privacy rights \_\_\_\_\_

Name of agency who violated your  
privacy rights \_\_\_\_\_

Brief description of grievance (what happened):

Best way to Contact you:

Your Name:

Your phone:

Your mailing address:

Review Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation to Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

### 13. Participation Agreement

*Source: Michigan Statewide Homeless Management Information System, Michigan  
Description: This participation agreement between the lead agency and participating agencies specifies the rights and responsibilities of each party. The final page of the document is a checklist, listing each document that the agency must execute and keep on file.*

**Participation Agreement  
Between  
[HMIS Lead Agency Name]  
and  
[Agency Name]**

This agreement is entered into on \_\_\_\_\_ (dd/mm/yy) between the [HMIS Lead Agency Name], hereafter known as "HLA," and \_\_\_\_\_ (agency name), hereafter known as "Agency," regarding access and use of the [Homeless Management Information System Project ], hereafter known as "HMISP."

#### I. Introduction

The HMISP, a shared human services database, allows authorized personnel at homeless and human service provider agencies throughout [Geographic Region], to enter, track, and report on information concerning their own clients and to share information, subject to appropriate inter-agency agreements, on common clients.

HMIS's goals are to:

- Improve coordinated care for and services to homeless persons in the [Geographic Region],
- Provide a user-friendly and high quality automated records system that expedites client intake procedures, improves referral accuracy, and supports the collection of quality information that can be used for program improvement and service-planning, and
- Meet the reporting requirements of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Housing Development Authority (HDA) and other funders as needed.

In compliance with all state and federal requirements regarding client/consumer confidentiality and data security, the HMIS is designed to collect and deliver timely, credible, quality data about services and homeless persons or persons at risk for being homeless. The Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (HLA) administers the HMISP through a subcontract with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (HDA).

#### II. HLA Responsibilities

1. HLA will provide the Agency 24-hour access to the HMISP data-gathering system, via internet connection.
2. HLA will provide model Privacy Notices, Client Release forms and other templates for agreements that may be adopted or adapted in local implementation of HMISP functions.



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3. HLA will provide both initial training and periodic updates to that training for core Agency Staff regarding the use of the HMISP, with the expectation that the Agency will take responsibility for conveying this information to all Agency Staff using the system.
4. HLA will provide basic user support and technical assistance (i.e., general trouble-shooting and assistance with standard report generation). Access to this basic technical assistance will normally be available from 9:00 AM. to 5:00 PM. on Monday through Friday (with the exclusion of holidays). HMISP staff will also be accessible during non-standard operating hours in accord with procedures that will be published and periodically updated by HLA.
5. HLA will not publish reports on client data that identify specific agencies or persons, without prior agency (and where necessary, client) permission. Public reports otherwise published will be limited to presentation of aggregated data within the HMISP database.
6. HLA's publication practice will be governed by policies established by relevant committees operating at the HMISP level for statewide analysis and will include qualifiers such as coverage levels or other issues necessary to clarify the meaning of published findings.

### III. Privacy and Confidentiality

#### A. Protection of Client Privacy

1. The Agency will comply with all applicable federal and state laws regarding protection of client privacy.
2. The Agency will comply specifically with Federal confidentiality regulations as contained in the *Code of Federal Regulations, 42 CFR Part 2*, regarding disclosure of alcohol and/or drug abuse records.
3. The Agency will comply specifically with the *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, 45 C.F.R., Parts 160 & 164*, and corresponding regulations established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
4. The Agency will comply with all privacy rules specified in

[Listing of Applicable Law]

5. The Agency will comply with all policies and procedures established by HMISP pertaining to protection of client privacy.

#### B. Client Confidentiality

1. The Agency agrees to provide a copy of HMISP's *Privacy Notice* (or an acceptable Agency-specific alternative) to each consumer. The Agency will provide a verbal explanation of the HMISP and arrange for a qualified interpreter/translator in the event that an individual is not literate in English or has difficulty understanding the *Privacy Notice* or associated Consent Form(s).
2. The Agency will not solicit or enter information from clients into the HMISP database unless it is essential to provide services or conduct evaluation or research.
3. The Agency will not divulge any confidential information received from the HMISP to any organization or individual without proper written consent by the client, unless otherwise permitted by applicable regulations or laws.
4. The Agency will ensure that all persons who are issued a User Identification and Password to the HMISP abide by this *Participation Agreement*, including all associated

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

- confidentiality provisions. The Agency will be responsible for oversight of its own related confidentiality requirements.
5. The Agency agrees that it will ensure that all persons issued a User ID and Password will complete a formal training on privacy and confidentiality and demonstrate mastery of that information, prior to activation of their User License.
  6. The Agency agrees that those granted Agency Administrator systems access must first become a Certified HMISP Agency Administrator through training provided by [HMIS Solution Provider Name], HLA or HLA-designated trainers.
  7. The Agency acknowledges that ensuring the confidentiality, security and privacy of any information downloaded from the system by the Agency is strictly the responsibility of the Agency.

### C. Inter-Agency Sharing of Information

1. The Agency acknowledges that all forms provided by HMISP regarding client privacy and confidentiality are shared with the Agency as generally applicable models that may require specific modification in accord with Agency-specific rules. The Agency will review and revise (as necessary) all forms provided by HMISP to assure that they are in compliance with the laws, rules and regulations that govern its organization.
2. The Agency agrees to develop a plan for all routine sharing practices with partnering Agencies and document that plan through a fully executed *Qualified Service Organization Business Associate Agreement*, hereafter known as *QSOBA(s)*.
3. The Agency acknowledges that informed client consent is required before any basic identifying client information is shared with other **Agency's in the System**. The Agency will document client consent on the *HMISP Client Release of Information Form*.<sup>6</sup>
4. If the client has given approval through a completed *HMISP Client Release of Information Form*, the Agency may elect to share information according to *QSOBA(s)* that the Agency has negotiated with other partnering agencies in HMISP.
5. The Agency will incorporate an HMISP release clause into its existing *Agency Authorization for Release of Information Form(s)* if the Agency intends to share restricted client data within the HMISP. Restricted information, including progress notes and psychotherapy notes, about the diagnosis, treatment, or referrals related to a mental health disorder, drug or alcohol disorder, HIV/AIDS, and domestic violence concerns shall not be shared with other participating Agencies without the client's written, informed consent as documented on the Agency-modified *Authorization for Release Form*. Sharing of restricted information is not covered under the general *HMISP Client Release of Information*. Sharing of restricted information must also be planned and documented through a fully executed *QSOBA*.
6. Agencies with whom information is shared are each responsible for obtaining appropriate consent(s) before allowing further sharing of client records.
7. The Agency acknowledges that the Agency, itself, bears primary responsibility for oversight for all sharing of data it has collected via the HMISP.
8. The Agency agrees to place all *Client Authorization for Release of Information* forms related to the HMISP in a file to be located at the Agency's business address and that such forms will be made available to the HLA for periodic audits. The Agency will retain these HMISP-related *Authorization for Release of Information* forms for a period of 7 years, after which time the forms will be discarded in a manner that ensures client confidentiality is not compromised.

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<sup>6</sup> HMISP *Client Release of Information Form* provided by the HLA.

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9. The Agency acknowledges that clients who choose not to authorize sharing of information cannot be denied services for which they would otherwise be eligible.

### D. Custody of Data

1. The Agency acknowledges, and HLA agrees, that the Agency retains ownership over all information it enters into the HMISP.
2. In the event that the HMISP Project ceases to exist, Member Agencies will be notified and provided reasonable time to access and save client data on those served by the agency, as well as statistical and frequency data from the entire system. Thereafter, the information collected by the centralized server will be purged or appropriately stored.
3. In the event that HLA ceases to exist, the custodianship of the data within HMISP will be transferred by HDA to another organization for continuing administration, and all HMISP Member Agencies will be informed in a timely manner.

### IV. Data Entry and Regular Use of HMISP

1. The Agency will not permit User ID's and Passwords to be shared among users.
2. If a client has previously given the Agency permission to share information with multiple agencies, beyond basic identifying information and non-restricted service transactions, and then chooses to revoke that permission with regard to one or more of these agencies, the Agency will contact its partner agency/agencies and explain that, at the client's request, portions of that client record will no longer be shared. The Agency will then "lock" those portions of the record, impacted by the revocation, to the other agency or agencies.
3. If the Agency receives information that necessitates a client's information be entirely removed from the HMISP, the Agency will work with the client to complete a brief *Delete Request Form*,<sup>7</sup> which will be sent to the HMISP for de-activation of the client record.
4. The Agency will enter all minimum required data elements as defined for all persons who are participating in services funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Supportive Housing Program, Shelter + Care Program, or HDA/HUD Emergency Shelter Grant Program..
5. The Agency will enter data in a consistent manner, and will strive for real-time, or close to real-time, data entry.
6. The Agency will routinely review records it has entered in the HMISP for completeness and data accuracy. The review and data correction process will be made according to HMISP' published *Policies and Procedures*.
7. The Agency will not knowingly enter inaccurate information into HMISP.
8. The Agency acknowledges that with a current standard HMISP *Client Release of Information* form on file, it can update, edit, and print out a client's information. Once the HMISP *Client Release of Information* expires, the Agency can no longer edit or print the record.
9. The Agency acknowledges that once that *Client Release of Information* expires, any new information entered into the database will be closed to sharing. Information entered before the date of the expired release will continue to be available to the sharing partners.
10. The Agency acknowledges that a modified agency *Authorization to Release Information* form, with an HMISP clause, permits it to share restricted client information with select agencies in compliance with the Agency's approved Confidentiality Policies and Procedures.

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<sup>7</sup> HMISP *Client Delete Request Form* provided by HLA.

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11. The Agency acknowledges that assessment screens can only be edited by the individual that originally enters the data. The Agency will create a separate assessment, as needed, to indicate a change in a client's status, enter updates, or edit incorrect information.
12. The Agency will prohibit anyone with an Agency-assigned User ID and Password from entering offensive language, profanity, or discriminatory comments based on race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, handicap, age, sex, and sexual orientation.
13. The Agency will utilize the HMISP for business purposes only.
14. The Agency will keep updated virus protection software on Agency computers that access the HMISP.
15. Transmission of material in violation of any United States Federal or State regulations is prohibited.
16. The Agency will not use the HMISP with intent to defraud the Federal, State, or local government, or an individual entity, or to conduct any illegal activity.
17. The Agency agrees that the HMISP or the local Continuum of Care Planning Committee may convene local or regional User Meetings to discuss procedures, updates, policy and practice guidelines, data analysis, and software/ hardware upgrades. The Agency will designate at least one specific Staff member to regularly attend User Meetings.
18. The Agency agrees to conduct a Performance Improvement Meeting (PIM) quarterly using the *Structured Minutes/Agenda* provided by HMISP. At minimum, attendees must include the assigned Agency Administrator and those staff with access to the system. The intent of these meetings is to discuss system usage within the Agency, identify and resolve any related problems or concerns, and provide a formal communication process and feedback mechanism with for HLA in implementing the HMISP. A copy of the minutes from this PIM must be submitted to HMISP within 15 days of the meeting.
19. The Agency will incorporate procedures for responding to client concerns regarding use of HMISP into its existing Grievance Policy. While appeals to the HMISP should not be considered part of the formal process, a copy of any HMIS-related grievance, and the Agency's response, must be submitted to the HLA Project Manager quarterly with a copy of the *Structured Minutes/Agenda* form from quarterly Performance Improvement Meetings.
20. Notwithstanding any other provision of this *Participation Agreement*, the Agency agrees to abide by all policies and procedures relevant to the use of HMISP that HLA publishes from time to time.

### **V. Publication of Reports**

1. The Agency agrees that it may only release aggregated information generated by the HMISP that is specific to its own services.
2. The Agency acknowledges that the release of aggregated information will be governed through policies established by relevant committees operating at the HMISP level for statewide analysis and at the Continuum of Care level for community-level analysis. Such information will include qualifiers such as coverage levels or other issues necessary to fully explain the published findings.

### **VI. Database Integrity**

1. The Agency will not share assigned User ID's and Passwords to access the HMISP with any other organization, governmental entity, business, or individual.
2. The Agency will not intentionally cause corruption of the HMISP in any manner. Any unauthorized access or unauthorized modification to computer system information, or interference

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with normal system operations, will result in immediate suspension of services, and, where appropriate, legal action against the offending entities.

### **VII. Hold Harmless**

1. The HLA and HDA make no warranties, expressed or implied. The Agency, at all times, will indemnify and hold HLA/HDA harmless from any damages, liabilities, claims, and expenses that may be claimed against the Agency; or for injuries or damages to the Agency or another party arising from participation in the HMISP; or arising from any acts, omissions, neglect, or fault of the Agency or its agents, employees, licensees, or clients; or arising from the Agency's failure to comply with laws, statutes, ordinances, or regulations applicable to it or the conduct of its business. This Agency will also hold HLA/HDA harmless for loss or damage resulting in the loss of data due to delays, non-deliveries, mis-deliveries, or service interruption caused by Bowman Information Systems, by the Agency's or other member agency's negligence or errors or omissions, as well as natural disasters, technological difficulties, and/ or acts of God. HLA/HDA shall not be liable to the Agency for damages, losses, or injuries to the Agency or another party other than if such is the result of gross negligence or willful misconduct of HLA/HDA. HLA and HDA agree to hold the Agency harmless from any damages, liabilities, claims or expenses caused solely by the negligence or misconduct of HLA or HDA.
2. The Agency agrees to keep in force a comprehensive general liability insurance policy with combined single limit coverage of not less than five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000). Said insurance policy shall include coverage for theft or damage of the Agency's HMISP-related hardware and software, as well as coverage of Agency's indemnification obligations under this agreement.
3. Provisions of Section VII shall survive any termination of the Participation Agreement.

### **VIII. Terms and Conditions**

1. The parties hereto agree that this agreement is the complete and exclusive statement of the agreement between parties and supersedes all prior proposals and understandings, oral and written, relating to the subject matter of this agreement.
2. The Agency shall not transfer or assign any rights or obligations under the *Participation Agreement* without the written consent of HLA.
3. This agreement shall remain in force until revoked in writing by either party, with 30 days advance written notice. The exception to this term is if allegations or actual incidences arise regarding possible or actual breeches of this agreement. Should such situations arise, the HMISP may immediately suspend access to the HMISP until the allegations are resolved in order to protect the integrity of the system.
4. This agreement may be modified or amended by written agreement executed by both parties with 30 days advance written notice.
5. The parties agree that the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (HDA) is a third-party beneficiary of this contract and may enforce the terms and provisions of this contract as applicable. Further, the terms, conditions and agreements contained in this *Participation Agreement* may not be changed without the express written consent of HDA.
6. HLA may assign this *Participation Agreement*, or HDA may cause HLA to assign this *Participation Agreement*, upon due notice to the Agency.

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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have entered into this Agreement:

**AGENCY:**

\_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**HLA:**

HMISP \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
[Name of Project Director]

Title: HMISP Project Director

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Homeless Management Information System**

**ASSURANCE**

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Agency) assures that the following fully executed documents will be on file and available for review.

- The Agency's Board Approved Confidentiality Policy.
- The Agency's Grievance Policy, including a procedure for external review.
- The Agency's official *Privacy Notice* for HMISP clients.
- Executed HMISP *Client Release of Information* forms.
- Executed Agency *Authorizations for Release of Information* as needed.
- Certificates of Completion* for required training for all HMISP System Users.
- A fully executed *User Agreement* for all HMISP System Users.
- A copy of any HMISP *Qualified Service Organization Business Associate Agreement* -- or Coordinated Services Agreements -- that define sharing agreements between partnering agencies.
- A copy of the *Qualified Service Organization Business Associate Agreement* between HMISP, HDA and the Agency.
- A current Agency-Specific HMISP *Policy and Procedure Manual*.

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 14. HMIS Fees and Scholarships

**Source:** Cincinnati-Hamilton County Continuum of Care, Ohio

**Description:** This document describes a fee schedule for HMIS participation based on the agency's annual budget. (Other options might include basing fees on number of users or clients). The document also describes what the agency receives in return. A procedure for applying for scholarships is also included.

Fees are established to divide the community cost of HMIS fairly among all the participating agencies. The HMIS Advisory Committee has committed to a development campaign to cover as much of the costs as possible, and will provide this in the form of financial assistance, rebates to agencies, or lowered fees. To the extent that funds are raised, agencies' costs will be lowered.

### 1. Fee Scale

Fees are calculated based on each agency's IRS Form 990 for the previous year.

AGENCY ANNUAL BUDGET	Annual Fee
<\$250,000	\$500
<\$1,000,000	\$2,000
<\$5,000,000	\$3,000
>=\$5,000,000	\$5,000

### 2. Invoicing and Due Dates:

- a. Fees will be invoiced annually by HMIS and received by \_\_\_\_\_. Agencies may make arrangements to pay quarterly if preferred.
- b. Fees are due at the end of the quarter after HMIS was installed for any users at that agency. *For example, if one program of the agency begins using HMIS in January, fees for the agency will be invoiced in March, due at the end of March and each March thereafter.*
- c. Late notices will be sent monthly by HMIS. Agencies whose fees are over 3 months late will have their access to HMIS terminated.

### 3. Financial Assistance:

Agencies who have carefully considered their ability to pay and cannot afford to pay the assessed fee may apply to the HMIS Advisory Committee for **financial assistance**. We do not expect to be able to provide financial assistance to all agencies each year.

In considering financial assistance requests, the committee will look at amount of SHP grant, program budget as a proportion of agency budget, agency cash reserves, and total amount of community requests received.

*See reverse for details on filing a financial assistance request.*

### 4. Participating agencies receive:

- a. HMIS client tracking software licenses for an unlimited numbers of users in the agency's eligible homeless service programs.
- b. Information and Referral software licenses for all users.
- c. One-on-one and classroom training.
- d. Ongoing data quality assurance.
- e. Reporting: Agencies will be able to produce individual program APR and ESG, client face sheet and other reports at any interval. Agencies can export agency data for additional reporting.



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- f. Telephone user support on use of HMIS software.
- g. Offsite, secure data backup.
- h. One-time technology purchase stipend of up to \$1200 (see [www.hmis-cincinnati.org](http://www.hmis-cincinnati.org)).

### HMIS Agency Fees Financial Assistance:

**Deadlines:** January 31 or June 30 of each year.

**Address:** Send a letter to:  
[ADDRESS]

**Content:** The letter should include the following:

- a. Name of agency and list of all HMIS participating programs.
- b. Documentation of agency budget such as form 990 or audit, including amount of cash reserves available.
- c. Agency bed capacity (if shelter or residential program) \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Amount invoiced: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Amount the agency can pay - \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Amount of financial assistance requested; = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Year(s) for which financial assistance is requested. \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Written narrative explaining rationale for the request (less than one page).

**Signatures:** The financial assistance request must be signed by the Agency Executive Director and Agency Board Chair.

**Consideration:** The County Continuum of Care HMIS committee will review requests at its February and July meetings, and will notify agencies within a week after meeting.

In considering financial assistance requests, the HMIS committee will look at amount of SHP grant, program budget as a proportion of agency budget, agency cash reserves, and the total amount of community requests received.

The HMIS committee may accept, deny or ask for further clarifications after its deliberations.

## 15. Program Information Sheet

**Source:** CSPTech (Connection, Service and Partnership Through Technology), Massachusetts  
**Description:** This sheet is completed for each new program participating in HMIS. It is used as the basis for configuring the program in the HMIS with the correct program information and number of beds or family units. It is also used for calculating coverage rates.

### [HMIS Project Name]

#### Program Information

Please complete for each program in the agency that will be using HMIS Software.

**Agency Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Program Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Completed by:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Program:**  Emergency Shelter  Transitional Housing  Permanent Supportive Housing

Supportive Services Only:  Outreach  Other: specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Population:**  Individuals  Families  Both

**Target Population (ex. Youth, Elders):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Capacity Information:** Please use the following categories to identify the number of beds/slots in your program. Select only **one** category per bed(s)/slot(s).

<i># Individual Beds:</i>	<i># Beds to be entered into HMIS:</i>
<b>Regular:</b> _____	_____
<b>Winter:</b> _____	_____
<b>Overflow:</b> _____	_____
<b>HUD Funded:</b> _____	_____
Operating Year: From ___/___/___ To ___/___/___	_____
<b>Additional:</b> _____	_____
Explain: _____	_____

<b># Family Units:</b>	
<b>DTA Funded:</b> _____	_____
<b>Community Beds:</b> _____	_____
<b>Additional:</b> _____	_____
Explain: _____	_____

<b>Service Programs</b>	
<b># Slots:</b> _____	_____
<b>HUD Funded:</b> _____	_____
Operating Year: From ___/___/___ To ___/___/___	_____
<b>Other:</b> _____	_____
Explain: _____	_____

## 16. Review of Agency Compliance with HMIS Policies

*Source: Community Shelter Board, Columbus, Ohio*

*Description: These guidelines and standards were used as the basis of a process to certify agency compliance with HMIS standards as part of a broader assessment on community priorities. Agencies are tested for data quality, as it relates to client files and the HMIS, as well as for appropriate policies and procedures for ensuring data integrity and ethical practices in handling confidential client data.*

### Data Collection and HMIS

**Standard F1: The agency has provided [LEAD AGENCY] with a list of all other [Lead Agency] affiliated agencies with which it shares HMIS data; and the type of HMIS data that are shared.**

Guideline F1: The up-to-date list is available for review and is on file with [Lead Agency].

**Standard F2: The agency does not share HMIS data with any agency that has not entered into an HMIS agreement with [Lead Agency].**

Guideline F2: The agency has a policy that precludes unauthorized data sharing. The policy is available for review.

**Standard F3: The agency collects, enters and extracts only HMIS data that are relevant to the delivery of homeless services.**

Guideline F3: The agency has a policy that precludes unauthorized data sharing. The policy is available for review.

**Standard F4: The agency accurately enters all the required HMIS data elements, as specified in the Master Provider Agreement, by the 4<sup>th</sup> working day of the month.**

Guideline F4: The agency has a Quality Assurance plan in place and a monthly verification that data was entered accurately and by the 4<sup>th</sup> working day. The plan is available for review. The program can provide verification that the QA Supervisor implements the plan on a monthly basis.

**Standard F5: The agency has completed a Columbus HMIS User Agreement for each authorized system use and has provided a copy to [Lead Agency].**

Guideline F5: User agreements are up-to-date and on file at agency for each user. Agency user agreements are available for review and match the [Lead Agency] user list.

**Standard F6: The agency limits access to information provided by the HMIS database to its own employees specifically for verifying eligibility for service or entering records into the system of service provided.**

Guideline F6: The agency has a policy regarding access to the HMIS database that is available for review. The policy should prohibit employees from using HMIS data in an unethical or unprofessional manner.

**Standard F7: All staff entering/viewing HMIS data in the HMIS system must be appropriately trained and have an individual user license with a unique user name and password.**

Guideline F7: The Site Administrator can describe training provided to staff and the process for ensuring that each user has a license with a unique name and password. Relevant documentation or tracking system is available for review.

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

**Standard F8: As staff members leave the employ of the agency, their HMIS user accounts are immediately inactivated or changed to accommodate a new user. The agency must contact the [Lead Agency] Systems Administrator to make these changes.**

Guideline F8: The agency has a written procedure for handling HMIS account activation and deactivation as employees are hired or leave the agency that is available for review.

**Standard F9: Technical assistance requests and training issues should be limited to one point of contact with the [Lead Agency] systems administrator, typically the Agency Administrator.**

Guideline F9: The Site Administrator can describe how technical assistance requests are handled internally and how technical assistance and training needs are communicated to [Lead Agency].

**Standard F10: Signed “Client Consent for Data Collection” and “Client Consent for Data Release” forms from clients are kept on file.**

Guideline F10: The agency has a Quality Assurance Plan in place and monthly process that verifies that consents were obtained. Relevant documentation is available for review.

**Standard F11: Service Items and/or Worksheets added to the HMIS database have entry and exit dates that accurately reflect the paper files or intake packets.**

Guideline F11: The agency has a Quality Assurance Plan in place and a process for verifying that entry and exit dates in the files match the HMIS. The agency can produce actual files that contain information that matches the data entered into the HMIS.

## 17. Agency User Meeting Report Form

**Source:** Michigan State Homeless Management Information System, Michigan  
**Description:** This form is used by each agency to structure quarterly meetings on HMIS issues and report back to the lead agency.

### Agency User Meeting Report Form Report Quarter (circle one): 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Agency Structured Minutes

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ CoC: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendees:


- Coverage** – the percent of homeless consumers participating in the database.  
Coverage Month 1: \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Total Unduplicated Consumers Entered: \_\_\_\_\_.  
(B) Total Unduplicated Homeless Consumers: \_\_\_\_\_.  
Coverage Percentile (A/B): \_\_\_\_\_%.
  
- Coverage Month 2: \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Total Unduplicated Consumers Entered: \_\_\_\_\_.  
(B) Total Unduplicated Homeless Consumers: \_\_\_\_\_.  
Coverage Percentile (A/B): \_\_\_\_\_%.
  
- Coverage Month 3: \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Total Unduplicated Consumers Entered: \_\_\_\_\_.  
(B) Total Unduplicated Homeless Consumers: \_\_\_\_\_.  
Coverage Percentile (A/B): \_\_\_\_\_%.

If coverage is less than 95%, discuss concerns and opportunities to improve participation.

- Data Quality** – are interviews/forms generating complete, high quality information? Are definitions being applied uniformly? Are all required fields being completed? Issues:
  
- Security/Privacy/Confidentiality** – Are there concerns regarding the organizations practice around privacy issues. A plan should be developed to correct any problems that are identified. Describe any planned changes in privacy practice:
  
- Reporting issues** – are staff able to access and use the data from the system? Are their problems with the report writer or other interface technology?

## 18. Continuum User Meeting Report Form

**Source:** Michigan Statewide Homeless Management Information System, Michigan

**Description:** This document is used by an implementation that includes multiple CoCs. Each CoC conducts regular meetings using this structured framework. A report of the meeting is sent back to the lead agency.

### Continuum User Meeting Report Form

CoC Structured Minutes

Continuum: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendees:


1. Controlling Access to the System – user identification and passwords.
2. Training and technical support protocols/experience.
3. Technical performance of the System.
4. Data Quality overall.
5. Aggregated Reports – those generated during the last month and those being planned.
6. Audit issues.
7. Security/Privacy/Confidentiality – Are there concerns regarding the central server’s practice around privacy issues. A plan should be developed to correct any problems that are identified.

## 19. HMIS Self-Assessment Survey

*Source: Rockford, Illinois*

*Description: This survey is filled out by the agency in advance of a site visit by the lead agency and gives a comprehensive picture of the agency's compliance with HMIS privacy, data entry, training, and participation guidelines. Questions are categorized as mandatory action items, recommendations or suggestions, as defined by the community at the time of drafting.*

The *Self Assessment Survey* is a new tool, developed to assist in the Homeless Management Information System process. The purpose of the survey is:

- to highlight standard issues noted and discussed during the site visit interviews, and
- to orient and prepare the agency and its users for the site visit interviews.
- *In some cases, the HMIS Committee may waive the site visit, after the first site review, based on the review of your completed Self-Assessment Survey. The self-assessment survey should be emailed to \_\_\_\_\_ [email address of HMIS project manager] \_\_\_\_\_*

### Instructions for completing the Survey

- One or more agency staff should complete the written survey.
- A meeting to discuss the survey answers should be attended by agency staff and volunteers planning to participate in the site visit interviews. **At least one agency staff should be involved in the self-assessment survey process.** During the meeting, those items that are tagged “Needs Work”, “No”, or “N/A” should be highlighted and details shared as needed. HMIS governance committee members will receive a copy of the completed survey, and the responses will provide a basis for dialogue during the one-to-one interviews at the site visit.
- The agency may provide additional information regarding one or more responses, but this is **not** an expectation. Such information may be given orally during the site visit.

Responses to each statement and definitions are as follows:

**Yes** — The agency has completed and can demonstrate that all criteria related to this statement are met.

**Needs Work** — Some work has been done related to this statement, but not all criteria are met.

**No** — None of the criteria stated are met.

**N/A** — Statement is not applicable to the agency.

You will note that each statement has a rating code, describing its relative importance and/or relationship to the HMIS participation process:

**A** — *Action Item*: Policies or procedures identified relate to HMIS participation process. If these items are not complete, the HMIS team will designate remediation as an “action item”, with an established time frame.

**R** — *Recommendations*: Policies or procedures that are necessary to ensure nonprofit compliance with state/federal guidelines, and/or that client confidentiality will not be jeopardized. HMIS volunteers may make formal recommendations for follow-up to the HMIS Committee.

**S** — *Suggestions*: Other good business practices that will enhance HMIS process as it relates to your agency.

# HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

## Self Assessment Survey

Completed for \_\_\_\_\_  
*Agency Name*

The following survey information was completed by one or more agency representatives and discussed by agency staff.

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Agency Representative*

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Agency Representative*



## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

### HMIS Self-Assessment Survey Agency and Client Related Activities

Assessment Criteria	Yes	Needs Work	No	N/A	Rating
1. The agency has obtained signed HMIS Client Authorization Forms for data entry/updating and they are housed in a secure location.					A
2. The agency has consent forms for data entry/updating available for minors that speak/read various languages					A
3. The agency clearly displays or provides confidentiality policies and procedures for the benefit of the client					S
4. The agency has a written or computerized log that tracks anonymous information.					A
5. The agency uses its own HMIS data for public relations, reporting and funding while maintaining client confidentiality.					A
6. The agency uses HMIS data for Continuum planning, reporting and grant writing processes as part of the Continuum of Care policies.					A
7. The Agency uses the HMIS release form or its own agreement and release forms and processes prior to information sharing.					A
8. The Agency has secured signed partnership agreements that clearly detail services, terms and partners when sharing full data.					A
9. The agency has its own written client complaint policy.					R
10. The agency has a process for reporting all filed complaints and received complaints to the HMIS Committee quarterly.					A
11. The agency lists the number of complaints and types of complaints to the HMIS Committee quarterly when reporting filed and received complaints.					A
12. The agency ensures that all signed forms are locked in a designated location with limited access to staff.					S
13. The agency enters Client Basic Demographic Data into the HMIS system within one week of a residential intake.					A
14. The agency ensures that all homeless residential clients are entered into the system detailing basic, services and special needs data.					A
15. The agency has ensured that each HMIS user within its agency has signed a user agreement stating full understanding of user rules, protocols and confidentiality.					A
16. The agency established an HMIS training plan for its staff.					A
17. The agency has assigned a representative to serve on the HMIS Governance Committee.					A

**20. HMIS Issues Report Template**

**Source:** Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, Colorado

**Description:** This document is maintained as a spreadsheet to track software issues and convey them to the HMIS provider. Maintaining such a document conveys to the software provider the precise nature of the problem and gives the community input into priorities. (Information in template has been edited for length and modified from original.)

HMIS Feedback, Request, Requirements Tracking											
#	Date Entered	Area	Description	Priority H/M/L	HUD Req Y/N	Functional Req Y/N	Feature Y/N	Status Open/Closed/On Hold	Version	Resolution Date	Resolution
1	5/25/04	Overall	Font is too small, and screen resolution will be at 800x600.	L	N	N	Y	Open	3.6		
2	6/1/04	Overall	Need to ensure that Universal and Programmatic data standards are entered while maintaining logic workflow.	H	N	Y	N	Open	3.6		Scheduled for version 3.8
3	6/12/04	Overall	Need a visual flag for required fields to help prompt users.	H	N	Y	N	Closed	3.6	7/15/04	Color coding in version 3.7
4	6/25/04	Profiles	Need 'Continuum of Care' drop down on agency, program, service, and user profiles.	H	N	Y	N	Closed	3.6	7/15/04	Added drop down in version 3.7
5	6/30/04	Profiles	Need 'HMIS/2-1-1/Both' drop down on user profiles; maybe agency, program, service profiles too.	M	N	Y	N	Open	3.6	7/15/04	Added in 3.7
6	7/8/04	Overall	Verification of a person's identity	L	N	N	Y	Open	3.6.		
7	7/23/04	Overall	Integration with HealthTrac, CBMS (referral capability), RHYMIS	L	N	N	Y	Open	3.7		

## 21. HMIS Advisory Committee Mandate

**Source:** CSPTech (Connection, Service, Partnership through Technology), Massachusetts  
**Description:** This policy establishes an advisory committee, membership targets, and topics the committee will address. After clearly stating that the advisory committee does not have overall decision-making authority, it delegates such authority in a number of key areas.

**Title:**           **ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Policy:**        An Advisory Committee, representing all stakeholders to this project will advise all project activities.

**Standard:**    The responsibilities of the Advisory Committee will be apportioned according to the information provided below.

**Purpose:**       To define the roles and responsibilities of the project Advisory Committee.

**Scope:**        All project stakeholders

### **Responsibilities:**

The Advisory Committee advises and supports [NAME OF HMIS PROJECT]'s operations in the following programmatic areas: fundraising and resource development; consumer involvement; and quality assurance/accountability. The committee meets quarterly.

Membership of the Advisory Committee will be established according to the following guidelines:

- Target for membership will be 25 persons;
- There will be a concerted effort to find replacement representatives when participation has been inactive or inconsistent from the organizations involved in the project;
- There will be a pro-active effort to fill gaps in the membership of the Committee in terms of constituency representation: consumer representatives, shelters for both families and individuals, advocacy organizations, and government agencies that fund homeless assistance services, and statewide geographic distribution.

The Committee is fundamentally an advisory committee to the project. However, the Project staff delegates final decision making authority to the Committee on the selected key issues that follow. These issues include:

- Determining the guiding principles that should underlie the implementation activities of the project and participating organizations and service programs;
- Selecting the minimal data elements to be collected by all programs participating in the project;
- Defining criteria, standards, and parameters for the release of aggregate data; and
- Ensuring adequate privacy protection provisions in project implementation.

## 22. HMIS Governing Committee Mandate (a)

**Source:** *Chicago Continuum of Care, Illinois*

**Description:** *The drafters of this document used the previous document as a model, but wrote a different overall policy establishing a governing board that has a greater role in project operations and must approve all major policy decisions.*

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SOP#: 01-010

Revision:

Prepared by:

Approval Date: 6/28/04

Revision Date:

Revised by:

Title: GOVERNING BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

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**Policy:** The Governing Board will approve all major HMIS policy decisions.

**Standard:** The HMIS related responsibilities of the Governing Board will be apportioned according to the information provided below.

**Purpose:** To define the roles and responsibilities of the Governing Board with respect to HMIS activities.

**Scope:** \_\_\_\_\_ Continuum of Care Governing Board

### Responsibilities:

The Governing Board will support the overall initiative, in particular advising the Management on HMIS operations. The Governing Board shall meet at least quarterly, at which time HMIS decisions can be raised for discussion and/or approval. The Governing Board shall designate a committee or task group to develop and help enforce the implementation of HMIS policies.

The Governing Board's role is fundamentally advisory to the project overall. However, the Governing Board, with representation from the City of \_\_\_\_\_, has authority to approve final decisions on the selected key issues that follow.

These issues include:

- Determining the guiding principles that should underlie the HMIS implementation activities of the project and participating organizations and service programs;
- Setting and enforcing minimum data collection requirements, as defined in SOP 03-070: Data Collection Requirements;
- Encouraging Continuum-wide provider participation;
- Facilitating consumer involvement;
- Defining privacy protection policies for HMIS implementation;
- Defining criteria, standards, and parameters for the usage and release of all data collected as part of the HMIS;
- Documenting, approving, and regularly reviewing the above policies in the form of the "Standard Operating Procedures for the HMIS Implementation" (commonly referred to as the SOPs);

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

- Establishing Continuum-level mechanisms for monitoring and/or enforcing compliance with the approved SOPs; and
- Compiling and analyzing HMIS data with other provider and community data sources.

To the extent that an SOP is identified which conflicts with applicable state or federal laws, then the Governing Board will work with the City to amend the policy and/or software design to resolve the conflict. The Governing Board may also identify procedures that need to be amended based on the initial implementation and/or ongoing operation of the system. If the Governing Board or its designee identifies procedures that need to be amended, the process will include:

- Any individual, organization or Continuum committee/workgroup can raise concerns or recommendations for revisions to a specific SOP.
- The Governing Board shall designate a specific committee or workgroup to explore the concern and to develop a recommendation for full Governing Board consideration. While a single committee may be identified as the primary entity generally responsible for overseeing the SOPs, another committee may be designated as the lead to explore a specific concern/recommendation.
- Proposed revisions must be presented and approved by the full Governing Board.
- After approval, a list of all revisions, the date revised, and a brief description of the change should be incorporated as part of the Table of Contents in the SOP documentation. Most current revision dates should also be noted at the top of each individual policy.

## 23. HMIS Governing Committee Mandate (b)

**Source:** Cincinnati-Hamilton County Continuum of Care, Ohio

**Description:** This committee mandate establishes a committee to “support, encourage, and oversee the HMIS.” It puts the committee in charge of decision-making, planning and managing HMIS assets. The document also mandates monthly meetings.

### HMIS Committee Mandate

March, 2002 (approved 3/11/02)

**Purpose:** To guide the planning and implementation of a community-wide Homeless Management Information System for the \_\_\_\_\_ Continuum of Care.

**Mandate:** In the tradition of the Continuum of Care process, a joint planning committee has been established. \_\_\_\_\_ is the lead agency in implementing and operating the HMIS project and received Continuum-wide support to apply for a HUD grant to fund it. A leadership team including the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ Coalition for the Homeless, the City and County and the fiscal agent, along with experienced agency and community representatives, are working together to support, encourage and oversee the HMIS system across the Continuum of Care.

### Work of the committee includes:

1. Planning, decision-making, evaluation and facilitation for the implementation of the HMIS.
2. Determination of how the universe of homeless providers will be defined (area, programs, etc).
3. Determination of voluntary or mandatory participation and/or recommendation to the City/County Continuum of Care and Emergency Services Grant processes of participation requirements.
4. Coordination and gathering of incentives, resources, and leverages available to assist programs with participation.
5. Coordination of system administration and data aggregation issues.
6. Determination of the long-term policy and procedures for the system.
7. Recommendation about the software application, data elements to be collected, and intervals for data gathering.
8. Consideration of a community-wide centralized intake process.
9. Encouragement and research to support the lead agency in linking the HMIS with other community databases.
10. Supporting the rights and privacy of the homeless in determining policy and procedures development.

**Asset Management:** The HMIS Committee will manage assets associated with the HMIS system on behalf of the Continuum of Care. These assets may be held in trust for the Continuum of Care by a fiscal agent. In the event that this committee dissolves, asset management will be transferred to the contracted Continuum of Care Facilitator or the \_\_\_\_\_ Coalition for the Homeless.

**Meetings:** The committee meets monthly, with subcommittee meetings throughout the month. Subcommittees are chosen as necessary and may consult with additional agencies and resources in the community. Meeting minutes and supporting materials are available for public review at :  
\_\_\_\_\_[website]\_\_\_\_\_

**Term and Structure:** The HMIS committee will serve as an advisory board or make recommendation on who should replace them, throughout the project, which extends through \_\_\_\_\_. Lead agency staff, \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ Coalition for the Homeless, the City of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ County are members, and agencies representing core constituencies were also specifically asked to send representatives to the committee. To select other members, a community-wide invitation was issued to all participating agencies during the April 2001 Continuum process. Invitations to join the committee were also included in

## HMIS Project Management Topics and Tools

newsletters and other communications. All interested parties were invited to join. The committee elected a chair from among its members who will serve for one year. The committee reports to agencies of the Continuum through mailings, reports to the Homeless Coalition General Body, a website, large group meetings, and presentations during the Continuum process.

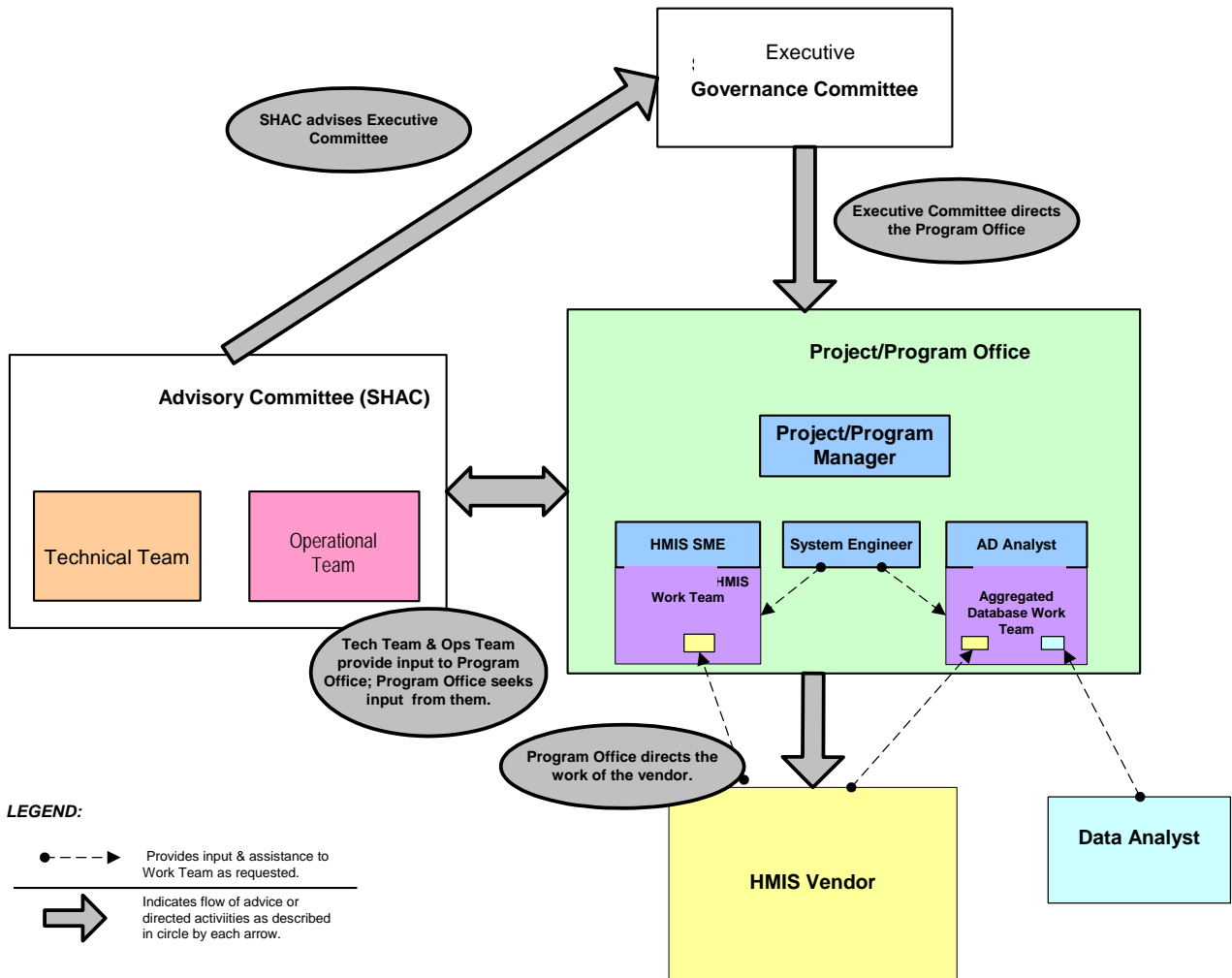
**Chair:** Name, Affiliation . **Current Members:** List Names and Affiliations

*For further information contact HMIS Committee Chair, \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ phone \_\_\_\_\_; Project Director, \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ phone \_\_\_\_\_; or any committee member.*

## 24. Two-Committee Organizational Structure

**Source:** Safe Harbors, Seattle, Washington

**Description:** This diagram depicts an HMIS organizational structure that includes both an advisory committee and governing committee. The governing committee directs the HMIS project manager. The advisory committee, which includes an operational team and a technical team, advises both the executive committee and the project team. The project team is led by the project manager and includes a system engineer as well as people working directly with the HMIS software and with an aggregate database for analysis. The project office directs the HMIS vendor. The vendor and an outside data analyst assist project staff as needed.





## 25. User Group Mandate

**Source:** *Chicago Continuum of Care, Illinois*

**Description:** *This policy officially establishes an HMIS user group, which has formal responsibility for prioritizing system issues, providing feedback on system performance, and other matters.*

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SOP#: 01-030

Revision:

Prepared by: ECM

Approval Date: 6/28/04

Revision Date:

Revised by:

Title: HMIS USER GROUP RESPONSIBILITIES

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**Policy:** The Partner Agencies should have a forum for providing input on planning and HMIS governance issues.

**Standard:** Designated individuals will serve on the HMIS User Group to formally manage communication on system issues between user agencies, the Continuum, and HMIS management.

**Purpose:** To outline the major responsibilities of the HMIS User Group.

**Scope:** System-wide

### **Responsibilities:**

The HMIS User Group is responsible for:

- Identifying and prioritizing system enhancements.
- Providing quick feedback loop on system performance.
- Brainstorming the best uses of the HMIS to inform training and other TA.
- User Group Chair/Co-chairs may be involved in the process of imposing sanctions on users/agencies for misuse of system. (This procedure is further specified in SOP 04-030: Auditing Policies and Procedures)

The HMIS User Group may be subdivided by type of partner categories (e.g. direct partner agencies interface agencies and anonymous data submittal partner agencies).

## 26. Data Release Policy

**Source:** CSPTech (Connection, Service and Partnership through Technology), Massachusetts  
**Description:** This excerpt from a policies and procedures document is an example of a data release policy. In this case data can only be released in aggregate form when 60% coverage has been achieved, unless a special exception is made. A statement of data parameters is also required.

SOP#: DAT-001                      Revision:                      Prepared by:  
Effective date: 06/01              Revision date: 02/04              Revised by:  
Title: DATA RELEASE AUTHORIZATION AND DISTRIBUTION

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**Policy:**              HMIS staff will follow Steering Committee procedures for the release of all data.

**Standard:**        HMIS staff will abide by Access to Data Policies as established by the Steering Committee.

**Purpose:**            To outline the procedures for the release of data from the HMIS Project.

**Scope:**            Steering Committee and HMIS staff.

**Procedure:**        All data that are to be released in aggregate format must represent at least sixty percent (60%) of the clients in that region.

### **Release of data principles (Participating Agency)**

- Only de-identified aggregate data will be released.
- Program specific information will not be released without the written consent of the Participating Agency Executive Director.
- There will be full access to aggregate data for the inner circle (all participating agencies).
- Aggregate data will be available in the form of an aggregate report or as a raw data set.
- Aggregate data will be made directly available to the public in the future.
- Parameters of the aggregate data, that is, where the data comes from, what it includes and what it does not include will be presented with each report.
- An executive committee shall be put in place when approval is required for release of data that do not meet the 60% release rate.

## 27. Press Release for New Grant

**Source:** Created for this publication

**Description:** This press release announces a new HMIS grant. It describes the goals of HMIS and the benefits it will provide to the homeless providers, their clients, and the community.



Division of Housing and Homeless  
Services of XYZ County  
100 Main Street  
XYZ, CA 11111

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[www.dhhs.xyz.gov/hmis](http://www.dhhs.xyz.gov/hmis)

For Immediate Release

November 15, 2004

### **New Technology Will Help Homeless Shelters XYZ County Receives \$80,000**

XYZ County has never known exactly how many of its residents are homeless and what their needs are. At the same time, three of the four homeless shelters in XYZ are still keeping records with pen and paper and don't have access to decent computers or software to help them run their programs. But, a new \$80,000 federal grant for a homeless management information system, or HMIS, will help solve both of these problems.

Each program that serves the homeless will receive new computers and access to web-based software that they can use to enter client information, manage cases, and run reports. Since all the shelters will be using the same database, homeless people who move between shelters can choose to allow new caseworkers to see the information previously entered. The county can use the information to understand the entire homeless population. "It's a win-win-win," said Jennifer Smith, manager of the new HMIS project. "Shelters get software and new computers, clients get more efficient and coordinated service, and the county gets a better picture of homelessness."

HMIS is governed by an Executive Committee consisting of County officials, homeless service providers, and homeless individuals. The Committee has been meeting over the past year to choose the best software and make sure the system serves everyone's needs and protects client privacy. According to Smith, the system will be voluntary for clients, who will have to give consent before being entered in the database.

The XYZ HMIS is part of a national strategy of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Communities around the country are using HMIS to understand homelessness. XYZ's HMIS data will be included in a national report to Congress. "People think that the homeless are all mentally ill and living in big cities. But XYZ HMIS will prove that working families and children in suburban counties like XYZ are homeless too. And they need help," Smith said. The County plans to begin rolling out its HMIS in December.

**XYZ HMIS is a project of the Division of Housing and Homeless Services of XYZ County.**

###