

MA-503 Cape Cod and Islands Continuum of Care

Homeless Management Information System

Data Quality and Why It's Important

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a statutory requirement of the US Department Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for each Continuum of Care (CoC). HMIS collects client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. An HMIS knits together homeless assistance providers within the community and creates a more coordinated and effective housing and service delivery system. HMIS also serves as an outcome-based system that facilitates timely, efficient, and effective access to services and supports for homeless persons. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other planners and policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels use aggregated HMIS data to obtain better information about the extent and nature of homelessness over time.

Data quality refers to the reliability and validity of client-level data collected in the HMIS and is measured by how closely data in the system reflects actual information in the real world. No data collection system has a quality rating of 100%. However, it is critical that the HMIS have the best possible information about persons experiencing homeless and the projects that serve them. The goal is to record the most accurate, consistent, and timely information in order to draw reasonable conclusions about the extent of homelessness and the impact on the homeless service system. Each CoC should assess the quality of its data by examining characteristics such as timeliness, completeness, and accuracy.

Data quality is vitally important to the success of the HMIS and the programs that use this database. HUD monitors the quality of HMIS data through the **Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR)** - a HUD report to the U.S. Congress that provides nationwide estimates of homelessness – and the **Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**, which establishes the funding criteria for the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program. If the quality of a CoC's data is poor, HUD may refuse to grant funding or trim future funding to the CoC. If this happens, funding cuts can negatively affect program(s) throughout the CoC Region.

Because it is imperative that HMIS data is correct, the Cape and Islands HMIS Lead works collaboratively with all Covered Homeless Organizations (CHOs) to encourage adherence to HUD data standards and to ensure that all reports are complete, consistent, accurate, and timely across the entire region.