



# **Continuum of Care (CoC) HMIS Program Manual**

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**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

**Version 5**

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## Revision History

March 2015	First Release
December 2016	Second release; version update to align with 2014 HMIS Data Standards V5 documents.

## Introduction

The *CoC (Continuum of Care) Program HMIS Manual* is intended to support data collection and reporting efforts of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead Agencies and CoC program recipients. This manual provides information on HMIS project setup and data collection guidance specific to the CoC Program and the legacy programs: Supportive Housing Program (SHP), Shelter Plus Care (S+C) and Single Room Occupancy for the Homeless (SRO) that have not yet renewed under the CoC Program.

This document is not a replacement for any specific program guidance, requirements, regulations, notices, and training materials on the CoC Program. This manual only addresses the use of HMIS for CoC Program-funded projects.

Guidance about the CoC Program and its requirements can be found on-line at the HUD Exchange on the [CoC Program](#) page.

- To ask a question about any CoC Program requirement go to the [Ask A Question](#) section of the HUD Exchange. Please be sure to select “CoC Program” for your question under “My Question is Related To”
- Information on HMIS is located in the [HMIS Section on the HUD Exchange](#).
- To ask an HMIS-specific question go to the [Ask A Question](#) section of the HUD Exchange. Please be sure to select “HMIS” for your question under “My Question is Related To”

## HMIS Related Documents

There are a variety of documents that comprise the suite of HMIS Data Standard resources. **All HMIS Data Standard related documents updated and released in the Fall of 2016 are labeled Version 5 – to support version control at all levels of use.** Each of the documents has a specific purpose and intended audience. The HMIS Lead should be familiar with all of the documents and collectively use them as their HMIS reference materials along with specific materials provided by the software vendor.

## HMIS Data Standard Documents

The Data Standard Dictionary and Manual contain the core foundations for the data contained within an HMIS. The ESG HMIS Manual builds upon information in the Data Dictionary to provide further information for an HMIS Lead’s on the elements required by ESG projects for set up in the HMIS.

Manual Name & Link	Intended Audience	Contents
<a href="#">HMIS Data Standards Dictionary</a>	HMIS Vendors & HMIS Lead Agencies	<p>The dictionary provides the detailed information required for system programming on all HMIS element and response required to be included in HMIS software. It delineates data collection requirements, system logic, and contains the XML and CSV tables and numbers.</p> <p>The dictionary also includes critical information about data collection stages, federal partner data collection required elements, and metadata data elements.</p>
<a href="#">HMIS Data Standards Manual</a>	HMIS Lead Agencies & HMIS Users	<p>The manual provides a review of all of the Universal Data Elements and Program Descriptor Data Elements. It contains information on data collection requirements, instructions for data collection, and descriptions that the HMIS User will find as a reference.</p>
<a href="#">HMIS Project Descriptor Data Elements Manual</a>	HMIS Lead Agencies	<p>The Project Descriptor Manual is designed to provide specific information about the Project Descriptors required to be set-up in the HMIS by the HMIS Lead Agency.</p>

## HMIS Project Setup Steps

It is important to be sure that communities understand the difference between a **program** and a **project** because they have distinct meanings in this context. A program is the source of funding that the organization is receiving to run its project (e.g. CoC Program funding for ABC Transitional Housing project). For data collection purposes, HUD and its federal partners refer to categories of funding within a program as **components**. For CoC, there are five program components that communities can establish and operate projects under: permanent housing, transitional housing, supportive services only, HMIS and, in some cases, homelessness prevention. Additionally, there are Safe Haven projects with previous funding under the Supportive Housing Program that will be renewed under the CoC Program and the legacy programs: Supportive Housing Program (SHP), Shelter Plus Care (S+C) and Single Room Occupancy for the Homeless (SRO) that have not yet renewed under the CoC Program. The project is the group of activities on the ground delivering services or housing for the homeless client (e.g. XYZ Shelter, Homeless Street Outreach, etc.).

### 1. Identify Projects for Inclusion in HMIS

Identify all the **projects** within the HMIS implementation that receive CoC Program funding or are still receiving their original funding through HUD legacy programs (Supportive Housing Program (SHP), Shelter Plus Care (S+C) and Single Room Occupancy for the Homeless (SRO)) and have not renewed under the CoC Program yet. HUD posts the annual awards on HUDEXchange.info under the [Continuum of Care](#) page.

### 2. Identify Funding Components for each Project

Identify the **component** for each project funded through the CoC Program *per the project's grant agreement*. The CoC Program includes six eligible components:

- **Permanent Housing (PH)** has two distinct types:
  - **PH: Permanent Supportive Housing** provides indefinite housing assistance in community-based housing paired with supportive services to assist homeless individuals with a disability or families with an adult or child member with a disability achieve housing stability.
  - **PH: Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)** provides short or medium term tenant-based rental assistance in community-based housing paired with necessary supportive services for homeless individuals and families (with or without a disability).
- The **Supportive Services Only (SSO)** component of the CoC program provides services to homeless individuals and families not residing in housing operated by the recipient. Funds may be used to conduct outreach to sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons and families, link clients with housing or other necessary services, and provide ongoing support.
- The **Transitional Housing (TH)** component of the CoC program provides housing and accompanying supportive services to homeless individuals and families for up to 24 months to assist with stability and support to successfully move to and maintain permanent housing.

- The **Homelessness Prevention (HP)** component is limited to recipients in “High Performing Communities Only”. HUD has not designated any High Performing Communities as of January, 2016, thus no projects have been funded for Homelessness Prevention, to date, under the CoC Program.
- The **HMIS** component of the CoC program may be used only by HMIS lead agencies for costs associated with HMIS. No HMIS project setup is required for grants funded under the HMIS component.
- The **Safe Haven (SH)** program is a component that can be renewed from the SHP Program under the CoC Program. However, no new Safe Haven projects have been funded since 2011. All Safe Haven projects can be renewed to continue ongoing eligible costs and must be included in HMIS.

#### Legacy Program Information:

- The **Supportive Housing Program (SHP)** is not a component under the CoC program. No new SHP projects have been funded since 2011.
- The **Shelter Plus Care (S+C)** program is not a component under the CoC program. No new S+C projects have been funded since 2011. However, some of the older five year grants are still in effect and all S+C projects could be renewed under the CoC Program and should be included in HMIS.
- The **SRO** program is not a component under the CoC program. No new SRO projects have been funded since 2011. Existing SRO projects continue to be renewed under the Multifamily Assisted Housing Reform and Affordability Act of 1997 and should be included in HMIS.

### 3. Set Up Projects in HMIS

One of the most critical steps in accurate data collection and reporting is ensuring that a project is set up properly in an HMIS. Incorrect project setup will jeopardize recipients’ ability to produce accurate, reliable reports. HMIS System Administrators should follow the procedures established for their particular HMIS when setting up projects in the HMIS. These setup procedures must include, at a minimum, that:

1. the HMIS includes **project descriptor** information for all CoC projects participating in HMIS; and
2. the HMIS Lead, in consultation with the CoC, review project descriptor data at least once annually and update that data as needed.

The following are required Project Descriptor Data Elements:

- **Organizational Identifier (2.1)** – The name of the agency/organization receiving CoC funding must be entered or identified with the CoC specific project. An identification number will be generated by the HMIS. There should be a single record in HMIS for each agency/organization, regardless of how many projects they operate.

- **Project Identifier (2.2)** – The name of the project receiving CoC funding must be entered or identified with the CoC specific project. HMIS administrators should note that often the name of the project on the grant agreement is not the same as the name the project is called by the organization and/or the common name in the community and often not the same name as is used on the Housing Inventory Chart (HIC). System administrators should maintain mapping information to correlate grant names, HIC names, and common names with the project identifiers either within the HMIS itself or separately.

**Continuum of Care (CoC) Code (2.3)** – Select the CoC code based on the location in which the project operates. For example, if the project operates in City X which is part of a CoC consolidated application, select the CoC Code that was identified for each project in the annual grant application.

- **Project Type (2.4)** – Select the correct project type for each project. Each project in an HMIS must be set up for the correct project type. No single project within an HMIS may have two project types. No agency receives a CoC Program award consisting of multiple components.

**Continuum Project** should be answered ‘Yes’ for all projects funded under programs listed below. Appropriate project types will be critical to the CoC’s ability to produce System Wide Performance measures. CoC project types should be set up as follows:

COC Program Component	HMIS Project Type
Permanent Housing (PH)	PH: Permanent Supportive Housing
Permanent Housing (PH)	PH: Rapid Re-Housing
Supportive Services Only (SSO)	See SSO Chart Below
Transitional Housing (TH)	Transitional Housing
Homelessness Prevention (HP)	Homelessness Prevention
Safe Haven (SH)	Safe Haven
Legacy Programs	HMIS Project Type
Supportive Housing Program – Permanent Housing	PH: Permanent Supportive Housing
Supportive Housing Program – Supportive Services Only	See SSO Chart Below
Supportive Housing Program – Transitional Housing	Transitional Housing
Shelter Plus Care	PH: Permanent Supportive Housing
Single Room Occupancy for the Homeless	<u>If services are provided</u> – type as PH: Housing With Services
Single Room Occupancy for the Homeless	<u>If services are not provided</u> – type as PH: Housing Only

There are a wide variety of Supportive Services Only projects within the CoC Program. Many SSO projects that were incorrectly classified were able to reclassify their project in 2014 and [change their component type](#) from SSO to a Housing Project Type (e.g. SH, TH or PH) depending on the relationship of their services to specific housing. Those SSO projects that changed component types in 2014 or later should have their project types changed in the HMIS to the residential HMIS Project Type they are affiliated with.

For SSO projects whose services are designed to serve all persons in the residential facility, and where the project’s housing and service providers are able to share data – it is advisable to adjust the system so that there is only a single project within the HMIS, using the residential HMIS Project Type. In this situation both the housing provider and the service provider would have access to the clients’ project record and would be able to enter data and run reports on the same client. In merging these projects together within the system the occurrence of duplicate client records and double counting for inventories and system-wide outcomes will be eliminated. If the housing and service providers cannot share the same record due to community confidentiality policies or domestic violence restrictions, then the project that the service provider is entering data for in the HMIS should be typed as a Supportive Service Only project and should identify in the Project Type element that “yes” they are affiliated with a residential project and enter the HMIS Project ID of the project they are affiliated with.

For **SSO projects that are affiliated with a residential project in HMIS that did not change component types or who provide services only to Emergency Sheltered clients** the following rules should be applied.

Way the affiliation works	Affiliated with <b>one</b> residential project  & either does not offer to provide services for all of the residential project clients  <b>Or</b> only serves clients for a portion of their project stay (e.g. provides classes)  <b>Or</b> information sharing is not allowed between residential project and service provider.	Affiliated with <b>multiple</b> residential project of the <b>same project type</b> (e.g. multiple PH:PSH)  & either does not serve all of the all residential project clients.  <b>Or</b> information sharing is not allowed between residential projects and service provider.	Affiliated with <b>multiple</b> residential project of <b>different project types</b> (e.g. PH: RRH and PH:PSH)  <b>OR</b> Affiliated with <b>Emergency Shelter(s)</b>
2.4 Project type to use	Services Only		
2.4 A – Affiliated with a residential project	Yes		
2.4 B – ID of Affiliated Project	List the HMIS Project ID of the residential project		

For a **SSO whose primary work is street outreach** use the HMIS Project Type – Street Outreach.

For a **SSO that is a standalone supportive service** use the HMIS Project Type – Other. A standalone supportive service is one that is typically provided in a facility or office designated for the sole purpose

of providing that service by providers that are trained and/or licensed in the field. Common examples include: child care centers or employment training centers. These SSOs will generally be the APR SSOs without Housing Outcomes. By using other you are ensuring that this project will not be considered in system wide performance measurements or causing duplicate HIC/PIT counts.

- **Method for Tracking Emergency Shelter Utilization (2.5)** – This element is not relevant for CoC Projects as the CoC Program does not fund Emergency Shelter projects.
- **Federal Partner Funding Sources (2.6)** – projects funded in whole or in part by CoC Program funds are to be identified based on the CoC Program component type. Select the appropriate CoC component for each project:
  - **HUD: CoC – Permanent Supportive Housing [Use also for legacy SHP-PSH and S+C]**
  - **HUD: CoC – Rapid Re-Housing**
  - **HUD: CoC – Supportive Services Only**
  - **HUD: CoC – Transitional Housing [Use also for legacy SHP-TH]**
  - **HUD: CoC – Safe Haven**
  - **HUD: CoC – Single Room Occupancy**
  - **HUD: CoC – Homelessness Prevention (High Performing Communities Only)**

Enter a grant identifier for each CoC Program grant the project receives along with the grants operating start and end dates.

- **Bed and Unit Inventory Information (2.7)** – projects which provide lodging (Permanent Supportive Housing, Transitional Housing, Rapid Re-housing, and Safe Haven) must complete the bed and unit inventory information. This information should match the information provided by the CoC for the Housing Inventory Count (HIC). The bed and unit information is based on the number and type of beds in the entire project, which may be more beds/units than are funded by the CoC Program.
- **Site Information (2.8)** – Where HMIS is used to generate the HIC, site information should be entered consistent with HIC guidance and the policies of the HMIS implementation.
- **Target Population (2.9)** – Where HMIS is used to generate the HIC, target population should be selected if the project is designed to serve that population and at least three-fourths (75 percent) of the clients served by the project fit the target group descriptor.

## Data Collection Requirements

All CoC Program funded projects are required to collect all of the Universal Data Elements and a select number of Program-Specific Data Elements, which are shown below for each program component:

	HMIS Program Specific Data Element	Homelessness Prevention	Permanent Supportive Housing	Rapid Re-Housing	Supportive Services Only	Transitional Housing
4.1	Housing Services	+	+	+	+	+
4.2	Income and Sources	X	X	X	X	X
4.3	Non-Cash Benefits	X	X	X	X	X
4.4	Health Insurance	X	X	X	X	X
4.5	Physical Disability	X	X	X	X	X
4.6	Developmental Disability	X	X	X	X	X
4.7	Chronic Health Condition	X	X	X	X	X
4.8	HIV/AIDS	X	X	X	X	X
4.9	Mental Health Problem	X	X	X	X	X
4.10	Substance Abuse	X	X	X	X	X
4.11	Domestic Violence	X	X	X	X	X
4.12	Contact				Required for Street Outreach	
4.13	Date of Engagement				Required for Street Outreach	
4.17	Residential Move-In Date			X		
4.18	Housing Assessment Disposition	*	*	*	*	*
4.19	Housing Assessment at Exit	X				

+ Housing Status is required ONLY if the CoC has applied for and been approved by HUD to serve persons in Category 3 – Homeless Under Other Federal Statutes

X = data collection is required

\* Data collection is optional and determined by how the CoC has structured the coordinated assessment in their area. Placement of the element would be required for any project that is conducting a coordinated assessment. This may be across multiple projects or sited in a central access point or coordinated intake center.

Refer to the [HMIS Data Standards Manual](#) for information on rationale, collection point, and subjects.

## Special Data Collection Instructions

There are several special data collection issues that apply to CoC Program funded projects of which both System Administrators and HMIS users should be aware.

### Homelessness Prevention

- Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing are two separate projects in an HMIS. They may not be combined into one project.
- In addition to the Universal Data Element – 3.12 (Destination) Homelessness Prevention projects must also collect 4.19 (Housing Assessment at Exit) information to more accurately reflect the housing situation of clients at exit.
- Data collection must include an annual assessment for all persons in the project one year or more.

### Permanent Supportive Housing

- Data collection must include an annual assessment for all persons in the project one year or more.

### Rapid Re-Housing

- Rapid Re-housing assistance usually begins prior to the client entering housing. Depending on the HMIS setup, data collection may occur in one of two ways:
  - Method 1: Identifying Residential Move-In Date
    1. The Project Entry Date is the date the person eligible for CoC Rapid Re-housing assistance is admitted to the project, even only in initial stage of engagement. Rapid Re-housing is the only residential project that allows the project entry date to be earlier than the client's move in date.
    2. At project entry, record the Universal Data Elements and any other information required at project entry.
    3. When the client moves into permanent housing, enter the date the household physically moved into the housing unit in the Residential Move-In Date (4.17) field.

**Note:** In this method, the HMIS must be programmed to exclude from all point-in-time or residential services counts all persons without a Residential Move-In Date (4.17).
  - Method 2: Using a pre-entry project (using a project type of Services Only)
    1. Reporting must be able to link data in the services-only project to data in the RRH project in a manner that accurately reflects the entire RRH period of service.
    2. Data element 2.4 Project Type could be utilized for this purpose by specifying that the Services Only project is affiliated with the RRH project.
    3. Any HMIS standard export of data must combine data from separate enrollments into a single RRH enrollment.
    4. Reporting or export of project entry data should be based solely on data collected at the first project entry.

5. Reporting or export of exit data must be: based on exit data from the first enrollment for clients who are not in permanent housing at the time of exit; or based on the second exit for clients who do move in to permanent housing.
6. For clients who move into permanent housing, exit data from the first project and entry data from the second should either be excluded from reporting/export or identified with a data collection point of 'Project update'.

Notes: 1- In this method the HMIS must exclude all pre-entry project clients from all point-in-time or residential services counts. 2- The Residential Move-In Date (4.17) is equal to the Project Entry Date (3.10) of the Rapid Re-housing residential project.

- Data collection must include an annual assessment for all persons in the project one year or more.

### Supportive Services Only

- SSO projects are often the most complicated to set up and manage in an HMIS. Consideration of the CoC's privacy and security policies for the HMIS will often determine how the project is setup. Pay careful attention to the project typing instructions.
- Data collection must include an annual assessment for all persons in the project one year or more.

### Supportive Services Only - Street Outreach

- **Data Collection Challenges:** A street outreach project is likely to encounter difficulty engaging homeless persons. Street outreach projects may record a project entry with limited information about the client and improve on the accuracy and completeness of client data over time by editing data in an HMIS as they engage the client. The initial entry may be as basic as the project entry date, a "made-up" name (e.g., "Redhat Tenthstreetbridge") that would be identifiable for retrieval by the worker in the system, and gender. Over time, the data must be edited for accuracy (e.g., replacing "Redhat" with "Robert") as the worker learns that detail.
- **De-Duplication of Client Records:** It is possible in a street outreach setting that a single client may be contacted by multiple street outreach workers over a period of time in different locations. Local protocols should be established to determine how coordination among street outreach projects effectively manage the identification and data collection of clients. In smaller CoC, it may be possible to coordinate street outreach efforts and reduce duplication of client records through case conferences or other efforts to coordinate outreach services. In larger CoC, client search functionality may be made available in HMIS so that street outreach workers can perform queries or client searches by "made-up" name or alias, or other informal identifier shared with street outreach workers in order to manage the identification of clients. The use of temporary "made-up" names should not be an excuse for excessive de-identified clients or poor data quality. Street Outreach projects and local HMIS leadership should work together to minimize the use of "made-up" names and attain high data quality.
- **Contacts:** A street outreach project is expected to record every contact made with each client in the HMIS. A contact is defined as an interaction between a worker and a client designed to engage the client. Contacts include activities such as a conversation between the street outreach worker and the client about the client's well-being or needs, an office visit to discuss their housing plan, or a referral to another community service. A contact must be recorded anytime a client is met, including when an engagement date or project entry date is recorded on the same day.

- **Engagements:** Per the HMIS Data Standards and by agreement across all federal partners, an engagement date is the date on which an interactive client relationship results in a deliberate client assessment or beginning of a case plan. The date of engagement should be entered into HMIS at the point that the client has been engaged by the outreach worker. This date may be on or after the project entry date and must be prior to project exit. If the client exits without becoming engaged, the engagement date should be left blank. If the client was contacted on the date of engagement, a contact must also be entered for that date.
- **Data Quality:** Reporting on data quality for street outreach projects is limited to clients with a date of engagement. Therefore, it is important that outreach workers record the engagement date and also review all of the Universal Data Elements and applicable Program Specific Data Elements for completeness and accuracy. The Date of Engagement coincides with the requirement for HMIS data quality, therefore all Universal Data Elements should be entered into HMIS at or before the Date of Engagement.
- **Project Exit:** Project exit represents the end of a client’s participation with a project. the exit date should coincide with the date that the client is no longer considered to be participating in the project. This standard should be applied consistently across all Street Outreach projects. Reasons to exit a client include:
  - The client has entered another project type (e.g., TH, PSH) or otherwise found housing;
  - The client is engaged with another outreach worker or project;
  - The client is deceased;
  - The outreach worker has been unable to locate the client for an extended period of time and there are no recorded contacts.
- **Annual Assessments:** Data collection must include an annual assessment for all persons in the project one year or more.

### **Transitional Housing**

- Data collection must include an annual assessment for all persons in the project one year or more.