APR and Data Memo FAQ

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The Data Memo and the APR Review

The Data Memo

The Data Memo is a 6-month review of CoC-funded program data using the HMIS APR Report. The goal of the Memo is to serve as both a Monitoring Tool, as well as give programs a chance to address issues well before submission of the APR is due.

The Memo highlights problems with data quality, typically indicated as a percentage of missing or null data. After receiving the Memo, programs should determine if clean up of the data is feasible, either because a data entry error occurred at the time of intake, or because new, more complete information has become available.

The Data Memo also includes information on where clients are coming from before project entry, disability status, exit destinations for leavers and utilization as recorded in the HMIS. The APR is an aggregate report, so not all findings in the Memo necessarily ndicate non-compliance. In cases where the Memo highlights individuals not coming from homelessness, not experiencing a disability and/or exiting to non-permanent destinations it is imperative that programs assess their HMIS records and their paper files to ensure program compliance.

The Data Memo is shared with the members of committee responsible for monitoring data in each CoC, as well as staff from the program for which the Memo is being issued. Often, committee Chairs request that they be informed if the information in the Memo has been followed up on by the program.

APR Review

CARES staff review program APRs before submission to HUD. Typically, this review checks for basic data entry errors, as well as highlights anything within the HMIS data that should be explained before submission.

For example, programs with long term stayers may have a high number of individuals who report coming from a non-homeless situation. At the time of reviewing the APR for submission, CARES staff would recommend that the program verify that these individuals met the definition of homelessness at project entry and include a note with the APR that explains these unique circumstances.

Questions

Data Quality (DQ)

Q. How important is my Data Quality?

Programs are advised to do as much as possible to clean up their Data Quality after receiving their Data Memo and again before submission of the APR to HUD. Data Quality is reported on as part of the APR, the grant competition, and several other federal reports.

Q. How can I fix my Data Quality?

This FAQ contains information that may help programs identify how to follow-up on known issues with Data Quality so it is a good place to begin.

Additionally, within HMIS the APR now has an “in-line” functionality, that allows HMIS users to quickly and easily identify the records that are missing information. Links will now appear within the APR tables that, once clicked on, will show you a list of all clients who are appearing in that table. More information on this functionality is available here.

If you aren’t able to identify the specific issue, HMIS HelpDesk is an invaluable resource in helping programs/users identify records that are appearing in the Data Quality section of the APR.

Q. Why are there so many more data elements included in the new APR?

In order to use program and system level data in a meaningful way, it’s important to understand the quality and completeness of that data. To that end, HUD has significantly expanded the monitoring of data quality at all levels of reporting (the APR, System Performance Measures Report, etc).

Having a clear picture of the data quality related to Personally Identifying Information helps the community to be certain that individuals are being de-duplicated across programs so that both the number of homeless persons being reported, as well as their movement within the homelessness system is as accurate as possible.

Additionally, data quality related to Annual Assessment/Update, Chronic Homeless Status and Destination will have a significant impact on program-level and community-level Performance Measures because these elements are used to determine both the scope of homelessness as well program and system outcomes

Q. What is the difference between Missing/Null and Don't know/Refused in the DQ section?

Missing/Null refers to records (intakes, annual updates or discharges) where the response was left blank or entered as Data Not Collected or No Exit Interview Completed. Don't know/refused is used for records where the response was recorded as Client Doesn't Know or Client Refused. HUD looks at both categories separately.

Q. What does "Data Issues" mean in the DQ section of the APR?

Data Issues refers to potential problems with Personally Identifying Information (Name, DOB, SSN), including elements with "Partial or Approximate" Data Quality, as well as records where the responses defy logic (ex: DOB same day as admission, SSN number recorded as 123-45-6789). Because data quality related to Personally Identifying Information (name, DOB, SSN) is vital to the ability to run community-level reports, programs should investigate any Data Issues that appear in the APR.

Q. Why do some of the elements in the DQ section of the APR show an Error Count?

For some of the data elements, the APR shows an Error Count, rather than a value of Missing/Null, etc. to indicate that there is some issue with the record or answer.

- Example for Income and Sources Error: An intake indicates that a client has income, but no sources or amounts have been recorded
- Example for Disabling Condition Error: An intake reflects "Yes" for Mental Health Condition, but the follow up questions are blank

The exact cause and solution to errors depends on the specific data element, and assistance is available via the HMIS HelpDesk.

Q. Some of my clients were admitted before data element X was required, what should I do?

HUD updates the HMIS Data Standards annually on October 1st, and typically expects programs to update their records for all clients in program on or after that date to have their information updated. This is the only way to ensure that older intakes/admissions have all of the information required for current reporting.

Program and Outcomes Review

Q. Why does my Data Memo note that there are individuals with "None" for disabling condition?

This notation is made to assist PSH programs with ensuring that their HMIS reflects that participants meet HUD's eligibility requirements.

In programs that serve families, it is normal and expected that some members of the household will not have a disabling condition. Programs should verify the HMIS intake and check the paper files to ensure that all primary clients have a qualifying and documented disabling condition. A note indicating that the adults with no disabling conditions are not the head of household in projects serving families should be included at the time of APR submission.

In programs that serve singles only, any number of records indicating "None" for disabling condition may indicate problems with data entry or eligibility screening.

Q. Why is my APR/Data Memo showing an Error for Disabling Condition?

In some cases, it could be that the Special Needs section of the intake was not completely filled out, or the intake indicates a Special Need exists but the answer to the follow up questions related to severity/impact on the client's ability to maintain stable housing was Missing/Don't Know.

In other cases, information in disabling conditions has been changed as part of an annual assessment and the HMIS system is unable to determine which answer is correct. For example, on a client's intake a 'No' is entered for Chronic Health Condition but entered as 'Yes' at a later date on the Facesheet. In these cases, the information should always be entered/updated on the Intake screen.

Q. What does Residence Prior to Entry refer to?

On the intake, this question is literally referring to where the client slept the night before project entry.

However, beginning in October 2016, the HMIS collects additional information for clients entering TH or PSH who indicate they are coming from a non-homeless situation the night before project entry to establish homeless status (ex: Client is entering directly from the hospital. HMIS now asks if the stay was less than 90 days, and, if so, whether they were homeless before the hospital admission).

Programs should evaluate whether they have clients who spent the night before program entry in a place other than ES, the streets or Safe Haven and update those HMIS intakes accordingly by answering the follow-up questions.

For individuals who met the definition of Chronically Homeless at the time of admission to PSH ONLY: If a unit/voucher was available but the client was temporarily unable to move in, you should select 'Interim Housing' as the Residence Prior to Entry. This will preserve the client's Chronically Homeless status.

Q. Why does my Data Memo highlight potential issues with Residence Prior to Entry?

The APR displays several categories of prior living situations, including Homeless Situations, Institutional, Temporary and Other. If the client is not entering from the streets, shelter, Safe Haven or Interim Housing on the night before project entry, they will not appear on the APR as entering from a Homeless Situation.

The Data Memo makes note of participants coming from non-Homeless Situations in order assist PSH programs with ensuring compliance with HUD's eligibility requirements. However, there are a number of scenarios in which individuals who meet the definition of homeless will have a Residence Prior to Entry other than a "Homeless Situation", including:

- Your program has not updated client intakes to respond to the follow-up questions about prior residence that went live in the system October 2016
- Your program contains long-term participants who were admitted under previous definitions of homelessness
- Your program contains individuals who met the HUD definition of homelessness but were not entering directly from Shelter, the Streets or Safe Haven or Interim Housing*
- Your program contains participants who transferred from another PSH program
- Your program serves families and while the head of household meets the definition of homelessness, other adults in the household do not

**If you have questions or concerns about whether your participants meet the definition of homeless you should reach out to CoC staff to discuss.*

Programs with clients who meet the definition of homeless but who did not come from a Homeless Situation as recorded in the APR should verify that they have documentation on file and include a note at the time of APR submission.

Q. Why does the APR distinguish between Exits Before and After 90 days in program?

The APR looks at program stay in relation to exits to assist programs and HUD understand if there are differences between destinations for long term stayers and individuals who remain in program for a short time. For PSH programs, a high number of individuals exiting before 90 days should be explained at the time of APR submission to HUD, as it may indicate that program selection criteria should be evaluated.

Q. What's a Positive, Negative or Neutral Exit Destination?

Exit destinations are broken down into categories, including Permanent, Temporary, Institutional or Other. A positive destination is an exit to a situation that HUD considers permanent. For TH and PSH programs any exit other to a Permanent Destination is typically* considered a negative outcome.

However, there are some destinations that are considered neutral (ex: Client Deceased,) and those exits are removed from the APRs calculation of 'Percentage of persons exiting to positive housing destinations'.

A high number of clients exiting before 90 days or a high number of exits to destinations other than those that are Permanent should be thoroughly explored and, to the extent possible, explained at the time of APR submission.

*DV programs may at times have a higher number of exits to Temporary destinations than other funded programs. In cases where exits to Temporary destinations occurred to maintain or increase the safety of the client, the APR will still categorize these outcomes as negative as it relates to housing stability and a note of explanation should be included at the time of APR submission

Q. The Earned and Total Income Growth Performance Measures look wrong, what should I do?

These measures are calculated using the most recent income information for clients over 18 from within the reporting year and are fairly complex. Therefore, programs should confirm the following if the income growth measures are low:

- All required annual assessments are completed for individuals over 18 who have been in program longer than a year. It is important that the assessment is for the client anniversary date that occurred **within the reporting time frame**. Assessments that are dated AFTER the reporting period will be counted as "missing"
- The 'Youth Aging into Adulthood' data entry section is completed for clients who turn 18 while enrolled in the program
- Income for minor children should be recorded under an adult household member, even if the income is in the child's name