

Glossary of HMIS Definitions and Acronyms

Administration for Children and Families (ACYF) – A division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). ACF has a budget for programs that target children, youth and families, including for assistance with welfare, child support enforcement, adoption assistance, foster care, child care, and child abuse.

Alliance of Information & Referral Systems (AIRS) – The professional association for more than 1,000 community information and referral (I&R) providers serving primarily the United States and Canada. AIRS maintains taxonomy of human services.

Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) – Annual report to Congress on the extent and nature of homelessness

Annual Progress Report (APR) – Report that tracks program progress and accomplishments in HUD's competitive homeless assistance programs. The APR provides the grantee and HUD with information necessary to assess each grantee's performance.

Audit Trail – A record showing who has accessed a computer system and what operations he or she has performed during a given period of time. Most database management systems include an audit trail component.

Bed Utilization – An indicator of whether shelter beds are occupied on a particular night or over a period of time.

Client Intake – The process of collecting client information upon entrance into a program.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – A flexible program that provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs. Beginning in 1974, the CDBG program is one of the longest continuously run programs at HUD. The CDBG program provides annual grants on a formula basis to 1,180 general units of local and State governments.

Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)

Consumer – An individual or family who has or is currently is experiencing homelessness.

Continuum of Care (CoC) – A community with a unified plan to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximize self-sufficiency. HUD funds many homeless programs and HMIS implementations through Continuums of Care grants.

Coverage – A term commonly used by CoCs or homeless providers to refer to the number of beds represented in an HMIS divided by the total number of beds available.

Covered Homeless Organization (CHO) – Any organization (including its employees, volunteers, affiliates, contractors, and associates) that records, uses, or processes data on homeless clients for an HMIS. The requirements of the HMIS Final Notice apply to all Covered Homeless Organizations.

Data Quality – Data Quality is a term that refers to the reliability and validity of client-level data collected in the HMIS. It is measured by the extent to which the client data in the system reflects actual information in the real world. With good data quality, the CoC can "tell the story" of the population experiencing homelessness. The quality of data is determined by assessing certain characteristics such as timeliness, completeness, and accuracy. In order to assess data quality, a community must first think about what data quality means and document this understanding in a data quality plan.

Data Quality Plan – A data quality plan is a community-level document that facilitates the ability of the CoC to achieve statistically valid and reliable data. A data quality plan is generally developed by the HMIS Lead Agency with input from community stakeholders and is formally adopted by the CoC. In short, a data quality plan sets expectations for both the community and the end users to capture reliable and valid data on persons accessing the homeless assistance system.

Data Timeliness – Entering data in a timely manner can reduce human error that occurs when too much time has elapsed between the data collection, or service transaction, and the data entry. The individual doing the data entry may be relying on handwritten notes or their own recall of a case management session, a service transaction, or a program exit date; therefore, the sooner the data is entered, the better chance the data will be correct. Timely data entry also ensures that the data is accessible when it is needed, either proactively (e.g. monitoring purposes, increasing awareness, meeting funded requirements), or reactively (e.g. responding to requests for information, responding to inaccurate information).

Date of Birth (DOB) – The date a person was born.

Dedicated HMIS – The cost of the HMIS implementation is its own component in the SuperNOFA project exhibit.

De-identification – The process of removing or altering data in a client record that could be used to identify the person. This technique allows research, training, or other non-clinical applications to use real data without violating client privacy.

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Department of Education (DOE)

Disabling Condition – A disabling condition in reference to chronic homelessness is defined by HUD as a diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions. A disabling condition limits an individual's ability to work or perform one or more activities of daily living.

Domestic Violence (DV) – Occurs when a family member, partner or ex-partner attempts to physically or psychologically dominate another. Includes physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, intimidation, economic deprivation, and threats of violence. Violence can be criminal and includes physical assault (hitting, pushing, shoving, etc.), sexual abuse (unwanted or forced sexual activity), and stalking. Although emotional, psychological and financial abuse are not criminal behaviors, they are forms of abuse and can lead to criminal violence. There are a number of dimensions of DV. Including: mode - physical, psychological, sexual and/or social; frequency - on/off, occasional, chronic; and severity – in terms of both psychological or physical harm and the need for treatment, including transitory or permanent injury, mild, moderate, and severe up to homicide.

Electronic Special Needs Assistance Program (e*SNAPs) – The electronic update from HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPs) in the Office of Community Planning and Development, offers policy and program highlights, resource links, and community spotlights. The e*SNAPs update is issued bi-monthly to members of HUD's Homeless Assistance Program listserv.

Emergency Shelter (ES) – Any facility whose primary purpose is to provide temporary shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless.

Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) – A federal grant program designed to help improve the quality of existing emergency shelters for the homeless, to make available additional shelters, to meet the costs of operating shelters, to provide essential social services to homeless individuals, and to help prevent homelessness.

Encryption – Conversion of plain text into unreadable data by scrambling it using a code that masks the meaning of the data to any unauthorized viewer. Computers encrypt data by using algorithms or formulas. Encrypted data are not readable unless they are converted back into plain text via decryption.

Ethnicity – Identity with or membership in a particular racial, national, or cultural group and observance of that group's customs, beliefs, and language.

Expansion Grant – Additional funds to an existing grant by proposing a new expansion project within the implementation.

Extensible Markup Language (XML) – General-purpose specification for creating custom markup languages. It is classified as an extensible language because it allows its users to define their own elements. Its primary purpose is to facilitate the sharing of structured data across different information systems, particularly via the Internet, and it is used both to encode documents and to serialize data.

Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) – Provides national leadership on youth and family issues. Promotes positive outcomes for children, youth, and families by supporting a wide range of comprehensive services and collaborations at the local, Tribal, State, and national levels.

Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) – Publicly announced standards developed by the U.S. Federal government for use by all non-military government agencies and by government contractors. Many FIPS standards are modified versions of standards used in the wider community.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) – An information system for capturing, storing, analyzing, managing, sharing, and displaying geographically referenced information.

Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) – One of a series of laws designed to improve government project management. The GPRA requires agencies to engage in project management tasks such as setting goals, measuring results, and reporting their progress. In order to comply with GPRA, agencies produce strategic plans, performance plans, and conduct gap analysis of projects.

Grant and Per Diem Program (GPD)

Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV)

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) – U.S. law designed to provide privacy standards to protect patients' medical records and other health information provided to health plans, doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers. Developed by the Department of Health and Human Services, these standards provide patients access to their medical records and give them more control over how their personal health information is used and disclosed.

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HMIS Data and Technical Standards Final Notice – Regulations issued by HUD via the Federal Register describing the requirements for implementing HMIS. The HMIS Final Notice contains rules about who needs to participate in HMIS, what data to collect, and how to protect client information.

HMIS Lead Organization/Agency – The central organizations/agency that will house those individuals who will be directly involved in implementing and providing operational, training, technical assistance, and technical support to participating agencies.

Homeless – An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

- (i) An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;

OR

- (ii) An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low income individuals);

OR

- (iii) An individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) – Computerized data collection tool designed to capture client-level information over time on the characteristics and service needs of men, women, and children experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness Prevention (HP)

Household ID- Household is automatically generated by the HMIS application to count the number of households served in a project or CoC.

Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) – Consists of three housing inventory charts for: emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing.

Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) – Established by HUD to address the specific needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families. HOPWA makes grants to local communities, States, and nonprofit organizations for projects that benefit low-income persons medically diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and their families.

Inferred Consent – Once clients receive an oral explanation of HMIS, consent is assumed for data entry into HMIS. The client must be a person of age and in possession of all his/her faculties (for example, not mentally ill).

Information and Referral (I&R) – A process for obtaining information about programs and services available and linking individuals to these services. These services can include emergency food pantries, rental assistance, public health clinics, childcare resources, support groups, legal aid, and a variety of nonprofit and governmental agencies. An HMIS usually includes features to facilitate information and referral.

Informed Consent – A client is informed of options of participating in an HMIS system and then specifically asked to consent. The individual needs to be of age and in possession of all of his faculties (for example, not mentally ill), and his/her judgment not impaired at the time of consenting (by sleep, illness, intoxication, alcohol, drugs or other health problems, etc.).

McKinney-Vento Act – The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan on July 22, 1987. The McKinney-Vento Act funds numerous programs providing a range of services to homeless people, including the Continuum of Care programs: the Supportive Housing Program, the Shelter Plus Care Program, and the Single Room Occupancy Program, as well as the Emergency Shelter Grant Program.

Mental Health – MH - state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual is able to use his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life.

Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) – An announcement of funding available for a particular program or activity. See also SuperNOFA.

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Performance Assessment Rating Tool (PART) – Developed to assess and improve program performance so that the Federal government can achieve better results. A PART review helps identify a program's strengths and weaknesses to inform funding and management decisions aimed at making the program more effective. The PART therefore looks at all factors that affect and reflect program performance including program purpose and design; performance measurement, evaluations, and strategic planning; program management; and program results. Because the PART includes a consistent series of analytical questions, it allows programs to show improvements over time, and allows comparisons between similar programs.

Performance Measures – A process that systematically evaluates whether your program's efforts are making an impact on the clients you are serving.

Personal ID – To obtain an unduplicated count of persons served within a CoC, every client entered into an HMIS is assigned a Personal ID, also known as **Unique Identifier** which is a permanent and unique number generated by the HMIS application.

Permanent Housing Placement (PHP)

Permanent Supportive Housing – Long-term, community-based housing that has supportive services for homeless persons with disabilities. This type of supportive housing enables the special needs populations to live independently as possible in a permanent setting. Permanent housing can be provided in one structure or in several structures at one site or in multiple structures at scattered sites.

Personal Protected Information (PPI) – Information that can be used to uniquely identify, contact or locate a single person, or may enable disclosure of personal information.

Point in Time Inventory – A calculation of the numbers of beds in a region on one particular night.

Point in Time (PIT) – A snapshot of the homeless population taken on a given day. Since 2005, HUD requires all CoC applicants to complete this count every other year in the last week of January. This count includes a street count in addition to a count of all clients in emergency and transitional beds.

Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH)

Privacy Notice – A written, public statement of an agency's privacy practices. A notice informs clients of how personal information is used and disclosed. According to the HMIS Data and Technical Standard, all covered homeless organizations must have a privacy notice.

Program Specific Data Elements – Program Specific Data Elements differ from the Universal Data Elements in that no one project must collect every single element in this section. Which data elements are required is dictated by the reporting requirements set forth by each Federal partner for each of their programs to complete the Annual Progress Reports (APRs).

Race – Identification within five racial categories: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White.

Rapid Re- Housing (RRH)

Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY)

Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS) – An automated information tool designed to capture data on the runaway and homeless youth being served by FYSB's Basic Center Program and Transitional Living Program for Older Homeless Youth (TLP). RHYMIS also captures information on the contacts made by the Street Outreach Program grantees and the brief service contacts made with youth or families calling the FYSB programs.

Rural Assistance (RA)

Scan Cards – Some communities use ID cards with bar codes to reduce intake time by electronically scanning ID cards to register clients in a bed for a night. These ID cards are commonly referred to as scan cards.

Seriously mentally ill (SMI)

Shared Grant – The cost of the HMIS Implementation is shared with another program. For example, if a transitional housing facility shares the cost of the HMIS implementation with other providers.

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Shelter Plus Care (McKinney-Vento Program) (S+C) – A program that provides grants for rental assistance for homeless persons with disabilities through four component programs: Tenant, Sponsor, Project, and Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Rental Assistance.

Short Term Housing (STH)

Short Term Rent, Mortgage Utility Assistance (STRMU)

Single Room Occupancy (SRO) – A residential property that includes multiple single room dwelling units. Each unit is for occupancy by a single eligible individual. The unit need not, but may, contain food preparation or sanitary facilities, or both. It provides rental assistance on behalf of homeless individuals in connection with moderate rehabilitation of SRO dwellings.

SNAP – See Special Needs Assistance Program

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

Social Security Number (SSN) – A 9-digit number issued by the Social Security Administration to individuals who are citizens, permanent residents, and temporary (working) residents.

Special Needs Assistance Program – SNAP

Street Outreach (SO)

Street Outreach Program (SOP)

Substance Abuse (SA)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Super Notice of Funding Availability (SuperNOFA) – The consolidation of all of HUD’s homeless grants program into one notice of funding availability. The SuperNOFA funds the Continuum of Care Competition.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) – A monthly stipend provided to aged (legally deemed to be 65 or older), blind, or disabled persons based on need, paid by the U.S. Government.

Supportive Housing Program (SHP) – A program that provides housing, including housing units and group quarters that has a supportive environment and includes a planned service component.

Supportive Services – Services that may assist homeless participants in the transition from the streets or shelters into permanent or permanent supportive housing, and that assist persons with living successfully in housing.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program (SSVF)

Supportive Services Only (SSO) – Projects that address the service needs of homeless persons. Projects are classified as this component only if the project sponsor is not also providing housing to the same persons receiving the services. SSO projects may be in a structure or operated independently of a structure, such as street outreach or mobile vans for health care.

Technical Assistance – TA

Technical Submission – The form completed in the second phase of the SHP fund application process where an applicant that is successful in the competition (called a “conditionally selected grantee” or “selectee”) then provides more detailed technical information about the project that is not contained in the original application.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) – Provides cash assistance to indigent American families with dependent children through the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Transitional Housing (TH) – A project that has its purpose facilitating the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing within a reasonable amount of time (usually 24 months).

Transitional Living Program (TLP)

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Unaccompanied Youth – Minors not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, including those living in inadequate housing such as shelters, cars, or on the streets. Also includes those who have been denied housing by their families and school-age unwed mothers who have no housing of their own.

Unduplicated Count – The number of people who are homeless within a specified location and time period. An unduplicated count ensures that individuals are counted only once regardless of the number of times they entered or exited the homeless system or the number of programs in which they participated. Congress directed HUD to develop a strategy for data collection on homelessness so that an unduplicated count of the homeless at the local level could be produced.

Unique identifiers – To obtain an unduplicated count of persons served within a CoC. Every client entered into an HMIS is assigned a Unique Identifiers, also known as **Personal ID** which is a permanent and unique number generated by the HMIS application.

Universal Data Element (UDE) – HMIS Universal Data Elements are elements required to be collected by all projects participating in HMIS, regardless of funding source. Data required to be collected from all clients serviced by homeless assistance programs using an HMIS. These data elements include date of birth, gender, race, ethnicity, veteran's status, and Social Security Number (SSN). These elements are needed for CoCs to understand the basic dynamics of homelessness in their community and for HUD to meet the Congressional directive to support AHAR.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) – A Cabinet department of the United States government with the goal of protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) – The Federal agency responsible for national policy and programs that address America's housing needs that improve and develop the Nation's communities, and enforce fair housing laws. HUD's business is helping create a decent home and suitable living environment for all Americans, and it has given America's cities a strong national voice at the Cabinet level.

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) – A government-run military veteran benefit system. It is responsible for administering programs of veterans' benefits for veterans, their families, and survivors. The benefits provided include disability compensation, pension, education, home loans, life insurance, vocational rehabilitation, survivors' benefits, medical benefits, and burial benefits.

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) – Programs range from policies to encourage the prosecution of abusers to victim's services to prevention programs. VAWA helped forge new alliances between police officers, courts, and victim advocates.

Written Consent – Written consent embodies the element of informed consent in a written form. A client completes and signs a document consenting to an understanding of the options and risks of participating or sharing data in an HMIS system. The signed document is then kept on file at the agency.