Frequently Asked Question
Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

1. What is a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)?

HMIS is a database application that allows agencies within the continuum of care (CoC) to better provide services to the homeless population, by collecting basic demographic and other information in a secure site. HMIS allows organizations providing services to the homeless to collect client information electronically. HMIS is designed to be flexible, secure and protect client confidentiality. HMIS allows organizations providing services to the homeless to:

- Collect individual client information (demographics)
- Collect household information (housing status, services provided, income, etc.)
- Dynamically query individual/household data
- Selectively share client data with other service providers
- Produce reports required by funding agencies

2. Who is Bitfocus?

Bitfocus is an IT consultancy, providing custom software development, database management, report development, TA and many other tasks not just exclusive to HMIS.

3. Clarity Human Services Software

The Clarity Human Services Software is a new database management system developed by Silver Spur Systems LLC, a separate firm from Bitfocus that was established when METSYS was purchased. Both Bitfocus and Silver Spur are owned by Robert Herdzig. Clarity operates as a Cloud Service: a software application that is provided as a live service through a web browser such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari or Chrome, rather than a product you need to download and install. This means wherever you or your authorized users are, only the internet and your secure login details are required to access the Clarity database management system.

4. Who is currently using the system in Sacramento CoC)?

The local agencies use HMIS:

1.	Center for Aids Research Education & Services (CARES)	10. Sacramento Veterans Resource Center
2.	CommuniCare Health Centers	11. Salvation Army
3.	Lutheran Social Services (LSS)	12. Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Agency (SHRA)
4.	Mercy Housing	13. Sierra Foothills AIDS Foundation
5.	Sacramento Area Emergency Housing Center (SAEHC)	14. St. John's
6.	Resources for Independent Living (RIL)	15. Transitional Living & Community Support, Inc. (TLCS)
7.	Sacramento Children's Home, Crisis Nurseries	16. Traveler's Aid Emergency Assistance Agency
8.	Cottage Housing Industries	17. Volunteers of America
9.	Sacramento Self Help Housing	18. Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF)

5. **How SSF connects with providers who are using the system**

SSF conducts a monthly HMIS User Meeting (4th Wednesday of each month) to aid in community building and HMIS networking across the CoC. This meeting serves as place for communication about HMIS/Clarity System and guides in communication so that SSF can better address the needs of the service providers and front-line staff. Also, SSF's HMIS Analyst provides ongoing training and support for the HMIS users via e-mail, phone and onsite visits to the program. *The users drive the system!*

6. **Feedback from the HMIS Users/System Administrator**

During a recent HMIS User meeting and other conversations with CoC providers, users have shared the following:
- Clarity is much faster and easy to use compared to MetSYS
- Clarity is both intuitive and user friendly
- This system has minimized the amount of time that it takes to enter individuals or families.

During the use of MetSYS system every provider created their own client profile which caused duplication of profiles of same clients who were served at multiple programs. Clarity allows the providers to use the existing profile of a client that was created by a different provider which minimize the duplication of clients in the system. Clarity makes it hard to create multiple profiles, which allows for unduplicated data for reporting purposes.

7. **System Security**

SSF ensures that client and service provider data is secure at all times. The only people permitted to see confidential information are the people who need to see it. Information can be locked or unlocked, viewed or not, depending on the level of security of the viewer. When it comes to meeting legal mandates—from HIPAA to state regulations and agency guidelines— SSF is currently working on policies, procedures and agreements that guide security precautions for HMIS.

8. **What documents do I need to get started using HMIS?**

Once an agency decides that they are going to participate in HMIS, they need to complete the following documents and send them to the SSF HMIS Analyst:
  1. **Agency Agreement** (one per agency, regardless of how many programs information will be entered for)
  2. **User Agreement** (one document completed and signed for every user of the system)
  3. **Data Sharing Form**
  4. **Request for adding new Program/Institution Form**

After an agency has signed up for the system, training will be scheduled for all their users. After training is completed, users will have access to the system to begin inputting client information.

Before client information can be entered into the system, each client needs to complete a "Consumers Informed Consent & Release of Information Authorization" form. Agencies will also be required to post the "**HMIS Consumer's Notice"** in a visible location for clients to see.

Note: Documents listed above are in process of being revised or created by SSF.