



January 14, 2011

Frequently Asked Questions

Privacy and Security

Can we have a global agency Password and Username so several of our volunteers or staff can access the HMIS system?

Unfortunately no: privacy rules for clients set up in HMIS do not allow single point access for multiple users. Every HMIS User must have their own Username and Password.

Can I close off programs in my agency so only certain staff can see them?

Yes, each agency will need to identify each individual program and which staff members need access to that program. Additionally, specific security protocols can be attached to programs that can increase the privacy (information from a program can be made visible to the entire system, can be made visible only to specific agencies/programs, or can be set up so as not to be visible to any other program).

Does the client need to sign an ROI at every agency, even if they have already done one for us?

Yes, any agency that will be accessing or altering a client's file will need to have a Client Consent Form signed and on file with the agency. Additionally, these forms will need to be re-signed annually if the client is still receiving services.

What if the client doesn't want their information in the HMIS?

Any client may decline to have his or her information input into HMIS without affecting his or her eligibility for services. If a client does not want to participate, an agency may create an "unnamed file". This file will still have a unique client id number that can be kept with a client's paper file at the agency. This number can be used in place of a name for searching for a client file at the agency. Each time that client receives services, the agency can update the client's unnamed file using that number (it is assumed this client will not share data outside the agency).

What if the client only wants to release their information to some agencies and not others?

Agencies will need to decide to which agencies client information will be made visible. Once this decision is made, a client can be informed of the potential risks and benefits through the Client Consent procedure. If a client wishes to have alterations made to his or her HMIS file security, the data entry person can make those changes without affecting the security on any other client's file.

Can case notes be locked?

Yes: please remember to spellcheck in your browser and save, save, save.

HMIS Utilization

I heard some agencies aren't allowed to participate in HMIS?

Agencies with Emergency Shelters directly funded by HUA are awaiting final approval to participate in HMIS.

What if we feel the answer to one of the HMIS questions is incorrect?

Since the information input into HMIS should be the client's self-reported responses, the user should go back to the client for clarification of a response. If a response is incorrect in the system (i.e., misspelling of name, incorrect date of birth), the user should make the correction.

Do I input all clients needs or just the ones my agency can deal with?

At a minimum, users should record all needs for which their agency/program is providing services. At a maximum, users can record all the needs of the client and make electronic referrals to other agencies/programs to fill those needs which the agency does not address.

What if our agency decides to not use HMIS anymore? If an agency decides to terminate their contract with Calgary Homeless Foundation for the use of HMIS, a 30-day written advance notice of termination is required; and the client database specific to your agency is released back to your agency in a format of your choice.

We have medical components – can we track medication history, prescriptions, contraindications, dosages (quantity and schedule), pharmacy use, etc.

Yes, you can work with the HMIS Program Manager to add new Agency-specific Data Elements (ADE) to the database. The Program Manager will ensure that questions are not repeated in the database and can provide agencies with a list of existing ADEs and their response categories.

Can we track our volunteer hours?

HMIS is designed to be a database for client information. As such, volunteer hours are not recorded in HMIS. Volunteer case management hours, though, can be recorded as case management and attached to the appropriate client's file. A new module called ActivityPoint is being developed by Bowman and will have this functionality eventually.

Will HMIS interface with Outlook?

Not at this time; but follow-ups are generated in the system which you see immediately upon logging on.

Can HMIS create an hourly log so staff can be up-to-date on what's happening with clients?

HMIS records and displays information in real-time. As soon as a case note is input and saved, the other users who have access to it can view it; or they can be exported to hardcopy and circulated to your staff/volunteers.

How will HMIS track outcomes for our agencies?

Data elements such as demographic information, household data, goals, needs and services are all logically organized and tracked across time and used to generate meaningful information. Your agency needs to decide specifically what it wants to track: demographics (who is served based on ethnicity/income/location/need?); household data (number of children?); needs and services (need vs. provision, program effectiveness?); meeting goals (what % met goals?).

Tracking outcomes will depend on how well the data is input because reports on outcomes will draw from the individual client records that are populated in the database that incorporate demographics, household data, needs, services, program aspects, goals. If you have missing information in data fields, this will affect the ability of HMIS to show outcomes.

Costs**I know CHF is giving us a certain number of licences, what are the costs of getting additional HMIS licences for our Agency?**

- One-time \$200 per licence
- On-going (annual maintenance fee) \$80

Training

What will training sessions involve?

Monthly, role-defined training sessions will include software training (and hardware training, as needed), ethics training, and training on the data elements. The purpose is to ensure that users are fully prepared to start using the HMIS as soon as they have completed training and that they will be using it in a manner consistent with other users and respectful of client confidentiality and privacy.

What is the cost of sending my staff to training?

free

Reporting

Can I create and run my own reports?

Any reports that are not available as “default/canned” reports in the HMIS will need to be created. There are two different tools for creating reports or extractable databases. ReportWriter is accessible by most users, and it can create a downloadable csv file that can be further analyzed in Excel or other statistical software. ART, the Advanced Reporting Tool, can be manipulated by the HMIS Program Manager to create a more finished report with tables, charts, and graphs. Once the HMIS Program Manager has created the requested report, the agency will be able to run the report and view and download the results. The results from ART can be downloaded in xls or pdf file.

Can I run daily reports?

Yes! Within the HMIS, reports will show results in real-time. If a user runs a report and notices an error, they can correct the error and re-run the report right away. The resulting report will be the corrected version. Because of this, the reports in HMIS can be run as often as an agency desires. In ART, the data must be updated overnight. If corrections are made to a report, they will not show up until the following day. This, however, does not hinder access to the reports.

I heard HUA wants client level data, not aggregate. What will this mean for monthly reporting?

Bowman will work with HUA's ETO system to create a software bridge to do direct upload of de-identified data from HMIS.

For more information, contact:

Chantal Hansen
HMIS Administrator
Calgary Homeless Foundation
chansen@calgaryhomeless.com