Cincinnati/Hamilton County
Continuum of Care

Homeless Management Information System
Policies and Procedures Manual

Updated – January 2, 2018
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CLARITY SPECIFICATIONS
This manual is developed by the Data Committee and authorized by the Cincinnati/Hamilton County Continuum of Care (CoC) Board, locally known as the Homeless Clearinghouse.

HMIS GOVERNANCE CHARTER

Through the annual CoC Governance Charter, the Cincinnati/Hamilton County CoC Board, locally known as and names as the Homeless Clearinghouse, along with the full membership of the CoC has selected Strategies to End Homelessness (STEH) as the CoC lead agency/Unified Funding Agency (UFA) and HMIS Lead Agency for the geographic area known as OH-500. The coverage area for both the CoC and the HMIS includes all municipalities in Hamilton County. STEH has primary responsibility to manage all HMIS activities on behalf of the CoC and the CoC Board.

The HMIS Governance Charter is effective in coordination with the CoC Governance Charter. In consultation with the UFA, HMIS Lead, CoC Board, and full CoC membership (as defined by the CoC Governance Charter) the CoC governance charter, the HMIS governance charter, and all applicable policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated at least annually.

The HMIS Governance Charter serves to delineate the roles and responsibilities related to key aspects of the governance and operations of the Cincinnati/Hamilton County HMIS and includes the most recent HMIS Policies and Procedures Manual developed and adopted by the CoC Data Committee and the Homeless Clearinghouse, which is incorporated into this charter by reference.

Beginning with the 2003 Continuum of Care (CoC) grants and continuing with the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all grantees and sub-grantees to participate in their local Homeless Management Information System. This policy is consistent with the Congressional Direction for communities to provide data to HUD on the extent and nature of homelessness and the effectiveness of its service delivery system in preventing and ending homelessness.

The HMIS and its operating policies and procedures are structured to comply with the most recently released HUD Data and Technical Standards for HMIS. Recognizing that the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other Federal, State and local laws may further regulate agencies, the Continuum may negotiate its procedures and/or execute appropriate business agreements with Partner Agencies so they are in compliance with applicable laws.

THE HMIS LEAD uses all submitted data for analytic and administrative purposes, including the preparation of reports to funders and the Continuum’s participation in the Longitudinal Data Analysis (LSA), the national report on the state of homelessness as defined by HUD. Aggregate data taken from the HMIS is used to inform strategic planning activities, including the Consolidated Plans in the applicable jurisdictions of Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati County as required.
KEY SUPPORT ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles and responsibilities of each group identified below are not meant to be all inclusive and a successful HMIS implementation requires all named groups and HMIS agencies to work together. Some roles and responsibilities may overlap between groups.

Continuum of Care Board, locally known as the Homeless Clearinghouse
The Continuum of Care, as managed by its board, known locally as The Homeless Clearinghouse (hereinafter CoC Board):

- Designates a single Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for the geographic area and an HMIS Lead agency;
- Designates an eligible applicant to manage the CoC’s HMIS, which will be known as the HMIS Lead;
- Reviews, revises, and approves a privacy plan, security plan, and data quality plan for the HMIS;
- Ensures minimum required participation of HUD-funded recipients and subrecipients in the HMIS; and encourages and facilitates 100% HMIS participation regardless of partner funding source or HUD mandate.
- Ensures the HMIS is administered in compliance with requirements prescribed by HUD.

Strategies to End Homelessness
As UFA for the Cincinnati/Hamilton County Continuum of Care (CoC), in regards to the HMIS responsibilities:

- Ensures HMIS compliance with all HUD rules and regulations;
- Encourages and facilitates participation in the HMIS from homeless agencies;
- Makes public all applicable CoC and HMIS meetings, inviting participation from the HMIS community at large;
- Consults with the full CoC to develop HMIS policies and procedures in compliance with HUD regulations and facilitates at least an annual review and approval from the CoC Board;
- In consultation with and subject to oversight of the CoC Board, negotiates, approves and executes annual contract(s) with HMIS vendor(s).

As HMIS Lead for the Cincinnati/Hamilton County CoC:

- Oversees the HMIS project and has primary responsibility for all HMIS activities;
- Attends, provides information to and assists in facilitation of the CoC Data Committee.
- Establishes and facilitates the HMIS User Group

Data Committee
The Data Committee is a CoC Workgroup as outlined in the CoC Governance charter. The committee is open to the HMIS community at large and reports back to the CoC Board. A chair will be named to lead the committee and represent the committee in a voting capacity on the CoC Board. The Data Committee:

- Operates as a CoC Workgroup, following procedures outlined in the CoC Governance charter;
- Coordinates with the HMIS Lead to guide the HMIS implementation;
- Develops, informs, and reviews HMIS policies and procedures;
- Advises and recommends changes to HMIS Policies and Procedures;
- Cultivates ways in which future data measurement can contribute to fulfillment of strategic goals.

HMIS Lead’s Management Team
Consists of the HMIS staff at Strategies to End Homelessness:

- Authorizes/makes decisions regarding day-to-day operations of the HMIS;
Ensures compliance with HUD requirements and locally established policies and procedures;
Monitors and enforces data quality in accordance with the benchmarks as set forth in the *HMIS Policies and Procedures Manual* and Data Quality Plan;
Acts as liaison between the CoC and regional or national HMIS related organizations;
Participates in applicable regional or national HMIS related activities;
Supervises contract(s) with HMIS vendor(s);
Provides initial and on-going training and support to partner agency users;
Facilitates data sharing agreements between partner agencies;
Facilitates HMIS continuing quality improvement in coordination with the CoC Board and the STEH Planning and Evaluation Department.

**HMIS Partner Agencies**

Partner Agencies using the HMIS are key stakeholders in the success of the HMIS. All Partner Agencies will:
- Execute an HMIS Agency Partner Agreement and, if applicable, an agency partnership data sharing agreement;
- Agree to abide by the most current *HMIS Policy and Procedures Manual* (Policy) approved and adopted by the CoC Board;
- Ensure that all employees and agents comply with the established policies and procedures;
- Participate in monitoring and oversight procedures as conducted by the HMIS Lead on behalf of the CoC Board;
- Ensure staffing, training, and secure equipment necessary to implement and ensure HMIS participation.

**HMIS Partner Agencies - Primary Point Persons/Agency Administrators**

Each participating Partner Agency is asked to identify a Primary Point Person(s) or Agency Administrator(s) who will be the main communicator and liaison between the HMIS Lead and their respective agency’s users. These Partner Agency leaders:
- Ensure compliance with HMIS policies within their agency;
- Troubleshoot HMIS issues within their agency;
- Attend all HMIS trainings and maintain full knowledge of the system;
- Provide internal HMIS support within their agencies.

Additional information on these agency leaders can be found in the “Minimum Participation” section of this document.

**HMIS User Group**

The HMIS user group is designed to get authentic feedback from system staff using the HMIS in their day-to-day business as a means of improving the system for all users. Feedback from this group will be considered by the Data Committee, the HMIS Lead, and the CoC Board. The HMIS user group:
- Includes representatives of all HMIS participating projects/agencies and specifically, all identified HMIS Partner Agency Administrators;
- Provides feedback on system performance and the need for system enhancements;
- Provides input and support for policy enforcement;
- Acts as the information link between agency users and the HMIS Lead’s Management Team.
HMIS AGENCY IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

HMIS PARTICIPATION POLICY

Mandated Participation
All projects that are authorized under HUD’s McKinney-Vento Act as amended by the HEARTH Act to provide homeless services must meet the minimum HMIS participation standards. These participating agencies will be required to comply with all applicable operating procedures and must agree to execute and comply with the community approved HMIS Agency Partner Agreement.

Voluntary Participation
Although funded agencies are required to meet only minimum HMIS participation standards, the CoC Board strongly encourages funded agencies to fully participate in the community HMIS with all of their data collected on projects dedicated to serving people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Non-funded partners providing services to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness cannot be required to participate in HMIS by the local community. However, the CoC Board acknowledges the benefit of having full system data in the HMIS. The CoC Board and STEH work closely with non-HUD funded partners to articulate the benefits of the HMIS and to strongly encourage their participation. In addition to the benefits that HMIS will bring the non-required agency, adding this data to the HMIS more accurately illustrates the scope of homelessness in the community, establishes consistency amongst providers, and keeps the CoC competitive in federal funding allocation processes.

The HMIS Lead will work with all dedicated homeless projects operating in the geographic area to incorporate their data into the HMIS, including support in transferring data securely from other data systems.

Minimum Participation Standards

Policy
Each participating Partner Agency agrees to use the Cincinnati/Hamilton County HMIS software as part of the community’s effort to provide accurate data on homelessness in accordance with the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) data collection, management, and reporting standards. The HMIS is used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness.

Procedure

- Each participating Partner Agency shall execute an HMIS Agency Partner Agreement and, if applicable, an Agency Partnership Data Sharing Agreement.
- Partner Agency staff shall collect the program-specific and universal data elements as defined by HUD and other data elements as defined by the CoC Board for all clients served by projects participating in HMIS.
- The Partner Agency may customize their data collection to include additional data elements beyond those required by the most current published version of HUD Data Standards by making the request to the STEH HMIS Department. The scope, timeline, and terms for additional data collection will be agreed to by the Partner Agency and STEH when a request for custom data collection is received.

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1 This CoC’s HMIS Participation Policy is incorporated herein by reference.
2 As of the drafting of this document, a listing of HUD’s Universal Data Elements may be accessed online at: [https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hmis/hmis-data-and-technical-standards/#elements](https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hmis/hmis-data-and-technical-standards/#elements)
Data Collection

Policy
Real time data entry is encouraged and considered to be best practice. However, in cases where real time cannot be accomplished the following procedure and timeframes are required to be followed.

Procedure

- **Residential Projects**: All data required to be collected at project entry is to be made available in the HMIS within two working days of a residential project entry. Residential projects include: emergency shelter, safe haven, transitional housing, and all types of permanent housing. In accordance with HUD policy, all residential projects where persons reside for a year or longer must do an annual assessment within a 60-day window between 30 days before and 30 days after the client’s anniversary of project entry each year.

- **Emergency Assistance, Service Only, and Stabilization Projects**: All intake data required to be collected at project entry is to be made available in the HMIS within two working days of project entry. All data documenting specific shared services, such as holiday basket/gift sign ups or meal provision, should generally be recorded at the time of service to prevent duplication of these services.

- **Street Outreach Projects**: Limited basic demographic data (race, gender, and a unique identifier) is to be made available in the HMIS system within two working days of the first substantial outreach encounter.

- **Exit Data**: All data required to be collected at project exit is to be made available in the HMIS within five working days of the client exiting any project type (i.e. Residential, Emergency Assistance, Services Only, Stabilization).

Agencies that opt to use an alternative data collection software and import HMIS required data into the Cincinnati/Hamilton County HMIS must adhere to the same data timelines listed above.

Partner Agency Leadership

Policy
Each Partner Agency will play a leadership role in the successful implementation of the HMIS within their agency and projects. To achieve this, partner agencies will identify an HMIS Primary Point Person and/or an Agency Administrator.

Procedure
Each HMIS participating Partner Agency is required to have a representative that attends the HMIS User Group meetings and who can effectively communicate information to and implement new procedures with the rest of their agency. While the HMIS Lead will attempt to document communication for circulation amongst partners, it is the requirement of each participant to share the contents of the meeting with HMIS users at their agency.

The roles of Partner Agency leaders are as follows:

- **Primary Point Person**: Each Partner Agency shall designate at least one Primary Point Person. This person functions as the main liaison with the HMIS Lead and is responsible for organizing its agency’s users, making sure proper training has taken place for the users and that all paperwork and confidentiality requirements are being followed by all users within their agency.

- **Agency Administrators**: Each Partner Agency having five or more users is required to designate at least one user to function as an Agency Administrator. The Agency Administrator is expected to...
provide on-site support to the agency’s end-users, run agency reports, monitor the agency’s data quality, and work with the HMIS Lead to troubleshoot HMIS issues. Agency Administrators are expected to attend HMIS User Group meetings. When applicable, the Primary Point Person and the Agency Administrator can be the same person.

For Partner Agencies with fewer than five users it is optional to designate an Agency Administrator. The HMIS Lead may be able to provide this support to smaller agencies.

HMIS PARTNERSHIP TERMINATION - DATA TRANSFER POLICY
In the event that the relationship between the Cincinnati/Hamilton County HMIS and a Partner Agency is terminated, the Partner Agency will no longer have access to the HMIS. The HMIS Lead shall make reasonable accommodations to assist a Partner Agency to export its data in a format that is usable in its alternative database. To the extent possible, the plan for each termination will be developed between the HMIS Lead and the Partner Agency with a timeline and cost proposal. Any costs associated with exporting the data will be the sole responsibility of the Partner Agency.

After termination, the CoC retains the right to use historical data entered into the HMIS for continued analysis.

HMIS USER IMPLEMENTATION

Eligible Users
Each Partner Agency must ensure that only authorized HMIS users view or update client data. Partner Agencies and the HMIS Lead shall authorize use of the HMIS only to users who need access to the system for data entry, editing of client records, viewing of client records, report writing, administration or other essential activity associated with carrying out participating agency responsibilities.

- Partner Agencies may determine how many users they need to fulfill the HMIS requirements of their projects.
  - Agency Executive Directors (or designee) must approve each individual User from their agency.
  - All users must have their own usernames and passwords.
  - Partner Agencies will be responsible for all user fees incurred based on their Agency Partner Agreement.
  - Each user must receive training provided by the HMIS Lead or agency level staff previously trained by the HMIS Lead train-the-trainer model prior to accessing the system and must continue with additional trainings made available by the HMIS Lead.

- User licenses requested beyond those provided by the HMIS grant may incur additional costs for the agency.

- Only actively engaged staff, in their status as paid employees/contractors, authorized students, interns, or other volunteers may be users.

Partner Agency Responsibilities
- A user’s access is contingent on continued active engagement as staff at the Partner Agency, and will be terminated immediately if the user is no longer actively engaged as staff by the Partner Agency. It is the responsibility of the Partner Agency to notify STEH prior to, or upon the termination of, the staff person.
  - The Partner Agency will be responsible for any user fees incurred resulting from STEH not receiving notification to terminate a user’s access to the HMIS.
o If the Partner Agency fails to inform the HMIS Lead of the need to terminate a user, the Partner Agency maintains responsibility of all actions taken by the User in regards to the HMIS.

- Each user must sign a user agreement before receiving a username and password. These agreements must be renewed annually or user access to the system will be revoked.
- It is the responsibility of each user, in coordination with the Agency Administrator, to operate the system under requirements currently in place at the time of use.
- In the event that a User is employed and/or actively engaged as staff by more than one Partner Agency, that User must have a separate username for each agency, and each username must be associated with a different e-mail. If a user is authorized to have HMIS access by multiple Partner Agencies, the HMIS Lead will contact the Executive Director (or equivalent) of each Agency to verify that they are aware of such multiple Agency access.
- In accordance with the HMIS Dormant User Policy, all user accounts are subject to a 90-day activity review; if a user does not login to HMIS within a 90-day period, their access will be deactivated automatically. This access may be reactivated by the Executive Director (or equivalent) emailing HMIS Support at HMISsupport@end-homelessness.org and indicating the user account needing reactivation, along with the explanation of why the end user had not logged in within 90 days and why said user still needs access.

User Responsibility
Users must be aware of the sensitivity of client-level data and must take reasonable and appropriate measures to prevent its unauthorized disclosure. Users are responsible for protecting institutional information to which they have access and for reporting security violations. Users must comply with all policies and standards described within this manual. Users are accountable for their actions and for any actions undertaken with their username and password.

INCIDENT RESPONSE POLICY AND PROCEDURE
Policy
To protect the data in the Cincinnati/Hamilton County HMIS and the integrity of the community level database, procedures have been put in place to ensure consistent responses to incidents (such as security breaches and/or inappropriate User, project, or agency actions). This plan, while subject to revision, is intended to address how STEH will respond to any incident, including: assessing the incident, minimizing damage, ensuring rapid response, and documenting and preserving evidence.

An incident is any one or more of the following:
- Loss of information confidentiality
- Compromise of information integrity
- Theft or loss of physical IT asset, including computers, storage devices, printers, etc.
- Misuse of information, tools, etc. Including but not limited to unauthorized transfer of client data, breaches of security or confidentiality.
- Sharing login information
- Infection of systems by unauthorized or hostile software
- An attempt at unauthorized access
- Unauthorized changes to organizational hardware, software, or configuration
- Reports of unusual system behavior
Procedure
STEH will use the following guidelines when addressing a given incident in relation to HMIS.

Discover
Typically, an incident will come to the attention of the HMIS Lead when someone discovers something “not right” or suspicious. It may be discovered by the HMIS Lead or a variety of others involved in the implementation of the HMIS, including but not limited to: HMIS users, monitoring team, management staff, agency IT staff, a firewall administrator or an intrusion detection system.

Assess and Document
Actions will be taken to determine the following:

- Whether the incident is still in progress or is over.
- Scope of the issue, including how many records were affected and how many HMIS users were involved.
- The data or property that is threatened and how critical is it.
- The system or systems that are and/or were targeted, where they are located physically and/or on the network.
- Whether the incident is inside the trusted network.
- Whether the incident was intentional or accidental.
- Whether the situation resulted from a user acting on their own, under the direction of a supervisor, and/or due to a general culture of the project or Agency.

Determine Response and Minimize Damage:
In order to minimize risk and respond quickly, the HMIS Lead may act initially on its own to determine the appropriate response strategy and inform additional parties after the incident is contained. In determining the strategy, the following questions will be considered and an incident level will be assigned.

- What is the scope and nature of the incident?
- Is an urgent response required?
- Can the incident be quickly contained?
- Will the response appropriately alert those involved in the incident?

Incident Level System (ranked from most severe to least)

- Category 1 - A threat to HMIS security at a community-wide level
- Category 2 - A threat to shared HMIS data elements
- Category 3 - A threat to HMIS security within a Partner Agency or across shared projects
- Category 4 - A threat limited to the scope of actions of one user

Responses: The following guidelines have been established to help guide the initial response. 
This list is subject to change based on the specifics of each incident that is encountered.

- Isolate and contain the incident.
- Incident level category 1 and 2 – This may result in temporarily disabling a particular feature, field option, or data sharing protocol.
- Incident level Category 3 and 4 – This may result in temporarily disabling access for a Partner Agency, project, or specific User.
- Notify the following parties, as applicable depending on the category level of incident:
  - Agency Executive Director (or equivalent), project managers, and specific Users involved
  - CoC Board, Co-Chairs
  - CoC Board, full body
  - All HMIS users.
- Initiate determination of Action Plan to address the incident.

**Address the Incident**
The HMIS Lead will work with the those involved to quickly resolve the issue. If, due to the severity of the risk, time does not allow the HMIS Lead to convene all parties prior to additional intervention, the HMIS Lead will convene such a group as soon as practicable following initial intervention in order to discuss an appropriate action plan to resolve the incident. This is intended to ensure all viewpoints are addressed and considered as part of the action plan. As appropriate and/or necessary, the Data Committee and/or the CoC Board may also convene to ensure agreement on the action plan.

**Establish an Action Plan**
Once the incident is contained, the HMIS Lead will initiate the process of determining an Action Plan for moving forward. The Action Plan may include:
- Partner Agency leadership and the HMIS Lead addressing the actions of staff and determining if additional action against the user is appropriate.
- Partner Agency leadership establishing or modifying internal policies around HMIS usage and ensuring staff are properly notified.
- Restoring Access – In cases in which the severity of the security risk resulted in revocation of access to the system, the HMIS Lead will, if and when appropriate, restore access once the Action Plan is established and corrective steps have been taken.
- Terminating Specific User Access:
  - In severe cases, the HMIS Lead may, without warning to the user, choose to ban the user from future access to HMIS.
    - This includes but is not limited to cases where a trained user has knowingly and intentionally shared their personal password and login.
    - The HMIS Lead will inform the user’s supervisor and the Agency Administrator of the termination and any necessary remediation efforts required to be completed by the Partner Agency.
  - In other cases, the HMIS Lead will notify the user and supervisor of the issue as a warning, but if the User commits the same or similar action again, the HMIS Lead may ban the User from future access, temporarily suspend the Users’ account, and/or require the User to complete additional training before turning their access back on.

**Final Resolution**
In a case in which the Partner Agency, the HMIS Lead, and/or CoC Board are unable to come to an agreement regarding an Action Plan to resolve the incident, the HMIS Lead maintains the right to terminate system usage for any action that violates or compromises client confidentiality based on access to or use of the system. Any Partner Agency wishing to contest the termination may submit a grievance to the CoC Board for review.
If necessary, the HMIS Lead will assess the damages to HMIS and/or the costs associated with responding and fixing the incident. The Partner Agency or its employed HMIS user may be held liable for any/all expenses incurred from the incident.

**Document the Incident**
Detailed documentation of the incident and response will be maintained by HMIS Lead. Any documentation referencing client files will use the client’s unique identifier from HMIS as the key reference code to the file stored in the HMIS.

**Notification of Affected Parties**
Notification of incidents is important as HMIS is a shared database. Beyond the notification step as part of any response, there may be times in which it is necessary and/or appropriate to notify other groups, such as the CoC Board and general HMIS users. When necessary and/or appropriate, the HMIS Lead may post a general warning or notice to all users on HMIS to alert them of the incident and response or provide a more detailed account of the incident, response, and resolution.

**Review Response and Update Policies**
After any incident, the HMIS Lead will plan and take preventative steps so that the possibility of a similar incident occurring again will be minimized and update these policies as needed. The following will be considered:

- Whether an additional policy could have prevented the intrusion.
- Whether the failure to follow a procedure or policy allowed the intrusion, then consider what could be changed to further ensure the procedure or policy is followed in the future.
- Was the incident response appropriate? How could it be improved?
- Was every appropriate party informed in a timely manner?
- Is additional follow up necessary?
- Were the response procedures sufficiently detailed and do they cover the entire situation? Can the response procedures be improved?
- In the case of an infection, have changes been made to prevent a re-infection of the same infection? Are all systems patched, systems locked down, passwords changed, anti-virus updated, email policies set, etc.?
- Have changes been made to prevent a new and/or similar infection?
- Should any security policies be updated?

**HMIS DORMANT USER POLICY**

**Policy**
In order to maximize HMIS security, only users who are accessing HMIS on a routine basis (or who are accessing limited features at specific intervals) should have active user accounts. A current HMIS User Agreement by itself does not signify an “active” User. User accounts are monitored to ensure that Users with valid accounts are using the system on a regular basis.

**Procedure**
The HMIS Lead will review User activity across the entire HMIS system at regular intervals. Dormant User accounts (defined as: those who have not accessed the system for at least 90-days) will be handled as follows:

- A User who has not accessed HMIS login for 90-days or longer will be deactivated. This policy will be
implemented regardless of the status of the User’s HMIS agreement. Such accounts will only be reactivated at the specific request of the Executive Director (or equivalent) of the agency where the user is employed. When a user is terminated for inactivity, they may be required to participate in additional training in order to have their access restored. This will be determined by the HMIS Lead and is dependent on length of and reason for inactivity.

**HMIS AGENCY IMPLEMENTATION**

**Adding Partner Agencies**

Prior to setting up a new Partner Agency within the HMIS database, the HMIS Lead will:

- Review HMIS records to ensure that the agency does not have previous violations.
- Contact STEH Director of Planning and Evaluation in order to communicate with the CoC Board, to ensure its review of any and all documentation regarding and/or provided by said Partner Agency and its Project(s) to determine whether the new potential Partner Agency is appropriate to be added to the HMIS.
- If the Partner Agency is eligible for HMIS participation, verify that the required documentation has been correctly executed and submitted or viewed on site, including:
  - Agency Partner Agreement
  - Designation of HMIS Primary Point Person and/or Agency Administrator
  - Payment of defined HMIS fees
- Work with the Partner Agency to input applicable agency and project information into the HMIS.
- Work with the Partner Agency to review any legacy data and determine the best path forward to integrate that data into the HMIS or other storage options.
- Determine training plan and timeline for Partner Agency users and ensure all user level agreements will be signed in accordance with HMIS Policies and Procedures.

**DATA COLLECTION LIMITATION POLICY**

Partner Agencies will solicit and enter information about clients into the HMIS only in order to provide services, conduct evaluation and/or to perform counts of individuals experiencing homelessness as is periodically required by HUD.

**TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

**HMIS Application Support**

As unanticipated technical support questions on the use of the HMIS application arise, users will follow this procedure to resolve those questions:

During the normal business hours of STEH:

1. Begin with utilization of the on-line help and/or training materials.
2. If the question is still unresolved, direct the technical support question to the Agency Administrator or Primary Point Person.
3. If that person or persons is unavailable and/or after consultation with said person or persons, the question is still unresolved, direct the question to the HMIS Lead who will determine the appropriate procedure to be followed.
4. If the question is still unresolved, the HMIS Lead will direct the question to the software vendor’s technical support staff.
After the normal business hours of STEH:

1. Begin with utilization of the on-line help and/or training materials.
2. If the question can wait to be addressed during the following business day without risk to the client, agency, program or CoC, wait and follow the normal business hours procedure outlined above.
3. If the question cannot wait, direct the technical support question to the Agency Administrator or Primary Point Person, if available.
4. If that person or person is unavailable, and/or after consultation with said person or persons, the question is still unresolved, contact the HMIS Lead, who will determine the appropriate procedure to be followed.
5. If it is determined that the issue needs immediate attention, the user’s request will be forwarded to an appropriate HMIS technical support representative. Otherwise, the user will be instructed to pursue assistance through normal channels on the following business day.

**User Training**

The HMIS Lead will provide HMIS application training periodically throughout the year. If additional or specific training needs arise, the HMIS Lead may arrange for special training sessions. All Partner Agencies will be informed of trainings via email and the Strategies to End Homelessness website.

**Agency/User Forms**

All Agency Administrators and Primary Point Persons will be trained in the appropriate on-line and hardcopy forms. If the Agency Administrator or Primary Point Person has questions on how to complete HMIS forms, they should contact the HMIS Lead.

**Report Generation**

Each Partner Agency is strongly encouraged to send its Agency Administrator to receive training on how to develop Partner Agency-specific reports using the HMIS application.

The HMIS User Group will be the primary body to query Partner Agencies on their reporting needs and to prioritize a list of reports to be developed by the HMIS Lead for use by the full CoC.

**Programming-Related Service Requests**

If a user encounters programming issues within the HMIS application that need to be addressed, that user should identify the error and/or suggest an improvement to the Agency Administrator. The Agency Administrator will forward this information to the HMIS Lead, identifying the specific nature of the issue and/or recommended improvement, along with the immediacy of the request.

The HMIS Lead will review all application service requests and determine the action to be taken. Requests to fix programming errors will be prioritized and forwarded to the software vendor. Suggested application improvements will be compiled and discussed by the Data Workgroup and the HMIS User Group. Approved recommendations will be submitted to the software vendor, as applicable.

**HMIS SYSTEM AVAILABILITY**

In order to perform necessary backup and maintenance of the HMIS database, there may be periods of time during which the HMIS software is unavailable. In cases in which the maintenance is not the result of or related to an emergency, these periods will normally occur at times when as few people as possible need access to the system and the HMIS Lead will make every effort to give Partner Agencies a reasonable period of notice prior.
However, if/when the HMIS Lead receives notice of a planned interruption of service for other reasons or for an abnormal amount of time, they will notify Agency Administrators via email. If there is an unplanned interruption to service, the HMIS Lead will communicate with the software vendor, and Agency Administrators will be notified of any information regarding the interruption as it is made available.

**Coming Soon!**
Additional Documents to be added to the Policies and Procedures Manual:

**HMIS SECURITY PLAN**
Will provide Partner Agencies with a detailed list of security measures that need to be in place for the HMIS.

**HMIS PRIVACY PLAN**
Will outline privacy guidelines for Partner Agencies and individual users.

**HMIS DATA QUALITY PLAN**
Will define data quality expectations and standards for the CoC.

**CLARITY SPECIFICATIONS**
Will outline requirements and processes specific to the HMIS