



On October 12, 2021, the ICH Executive Committee voted unanimously to prioritize increasing visibility in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to improve service delivery and case coordination. The purpose of this memo is to provide an overview of the feedback received through the ICH regarding HMIS Visibility and to share a high-level implementation timeline to increase HMIS Visibility. Understanding the importance of collecting and sharing feedback across the system, we recommend using this same process to identify potential HMIS system improvements in a comprehensive manner.

## Background

A Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data on housing and services proffered to individuals, families, and youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires HMIS implementation for every community receiving HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) program funding. The other programs that make use of the District's HMIS include programs funded by the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the District's Department of Human Services (DHS).

The District's HMIS currently operates as a primarily "closed system" (i.e., limited data sharing between providers). In contrast, communities that launched systems after DC naturally have more "open" systems due to advances in technology since DC first launched HMIS 15 years ago and lessons learned about the importance of case coordination across providers. The District has attempted to address HMIS Visibility over the years, but the work has stalled for numerous reasons. The ICH Executive Committee again renewed calls for addressing visibility across HMIS.

## Challenges with Lack of Visibility and HMIS Overall

Based on feedback received through the ICH, a closed system/lack of visibility has resulted in various challenges across the homeless services system, including:

- **Matching clients to appropriate housing resources:** Difficulty determining if someone is eligible for higher-level CoC intervention (RRH, PSH) without being able to see a person's service history.
- **Locating clients:** When a housing resource becomes available, the housing provider often cannot see where the client is accessing shelter or services in the system.
  - **Delivering appropriate care/services:** Unclear when a client is already receiving services (e.g., the client is working with an outreach, shelter, or drop-in center case manager at the same time).
  - **Subsystem example:** Youth often move through various youth programs (i.e., transfer from TH to ETH for a higher level of service). Additionally, youth often leverage both case managers with their housing program and case managers at Drop-In Centers. It would be helpful to coordinate care by knowing what services the youth is accessing across the system.
- **Facilitating transitions/transfers:**
  - Consumers must frequently give the same information multiple times; while providers can now see that a client record exists, they cannot see service engagements/case notes/etc.

- Programs create new/additional processes/protocols because of lack of visibility of service history (i.e., Transfer Summaries that require the client or case manager to answer duplicative questions) to respond to missing information due to lack of visibility of HMIS.
- Lack of continuity of services when working with new or different service providers because of a lack of a person's service history.
- **Subsystem example:** Family system Homeless Prevention Program (HPP) providers cannot see prior service provision and program connections when a family returns to VWFRC from FRSP or TH.
- **Maintaining Data Quality and Monitoring:** Varying levels of visibility so that funders responsible for monitoring programs are not able to access information regarding the program
- Inability to talk to other systems, resulting in duplicate/triplicate data entry
- Failure to create/run reports promptly
- Timely data entry by using HMIS as a mobile application (while in the field)
- **Subsystem examples:** Singles PSH-P and Family PSH-P Providers who primarily access HTH are not all able to access HMIS to complete entries/exits and basic demographic data.
- **Standard Protocols for HMIS Access:**
  - Lack of clarity on process and protocol to ensure eligible volunteers and volunteer organizations, including those that leverage peer volunteers, have appropriate access to HMIS.
  - Users remembering to Enter Data As (EDS) and data being entered correctly
  - **Subsystem example:** People for Fairness Coalition now delivers comfort items and engages in regular outreach to encampments throughout the District.
- **Vendor Support**, including long and changing timelines working with Wellsky.

## Next Steps

Given the time elapsed since the last attempt at establishing HMIS Visibility in 2017, beginning early 2022, the ICH recommends:

- **Hosting listening sessions** in coordination with the District's HMIS Administrator (TCP). See the proposed schedule below, which leverages ICH Committee and Workgroup in meetings in November and December;
- **Scheduling additional meetings** with
  - Funders (i.e., DHS) to identify specific funder/administrator needs; and
  - Vendors (i.e., Wellsky) to outline their ability to address the feedback flagged and any resource constraints
- **Reporting** outcomes to the ICH Executive Committee in January, including:
  - Feedback received from the listening sessions
  - Recommendation regarding which challenges can be addressed by our HMIS system and which cannot.
  - Timeline and process for making these updates.

### Proposed Feedback Session Schedule:

ICH Committee/Workgroup	Upcoming Meeting Dates	Subsystem
DC SHY Youth Action Board	Every Other Wednesday from 5:30 to 7:30	Youth with Lived Expertise
FSWG – Cross System Solutions Team	First Monday from 10 to 11:30am	Families
Single Adult System WG	First Tuesday from 1pm to 2:30pm	Single Adult
Youth Outreach WG.	Second Tuesday from 12:30 to 2pm	Youth
Adult System Outreach WG.	Second Wednesday from 2:30 to 4pm	Single Adult
Shelter Conditions WG.	Third Thursday from 10:30am to 12pm	Single Adult
Strategic Planning Committee	Fourth Tuesday from 2:30 to 4pm	All Subsystems
Consumer Engagement WG.	Fourth Friday from 2:30 to 4pm	Adult Consumers with Lived Expertise

<b>DHS/TCP/ICH Specific Meetings</b>	<b>Who Should be Included?</b>
Singles System Meeting	DHS: Carmen Hernandez, Tawana Holland, Bill Kuennen TCP: Eileen Rosa, Eric Schneider ICH: Kimberly Waller, Theresa Silla
Families System Meeting	DHS: Noah Abraham, Jenna Cevasco, Kia Williams, Darrell Cason, Tawana Holland, Melanie Newkirk TCP: Eileen Rosa, Kevin Craver, Tom Fredericksen ICH: Kimberly Waller
Youth System Meeting	DHS: Sheila Clark, Tamara Mooney, Michelle Maringe TCP: Sabrina Burrell, Eileen Rosa, Tom Fredericksen ICH: Kimberly Waller
<b>DHS Provider Calls</b>	<b>ICH recommends that DHS invite TCP to provider calls to receive additional feedback</b>

## Feedback and Input Discussion Questions

1. What aspect(s) of HMIS do you find most useful?
2. What aspect(s) of HMIS are most challenging and why?
3. Is HMIS easy to use? Why or why not?
4. What client information would be helpful for you to see in HMIS that would improve your ability to provide services to your client?
5. Is there any information in HMIS that should not be shared?
6. What changes to HMIS would make your job easier?
7. What changes could be made to HMIS that would increase your desire to use it?

## Clarifying Questions for TCP and DHS

1. TCP: What are the different levels of visibility for provider staff, and how are those decisions made?
2. TCP: What are the different levels of visibility for funder staff, and how are those decisions made?
3. DHS: What visibility do your staff need in HMIS to ensure program monitoring and support?
4. Does a universal ROI achieve our visibility goals?
5. What is the current protocol to ensure volunteers and volunteer organizations have appropriate access to HMIS?