

**PRELIMINARY Emergency Shelter/Solutions Grant (ESG)
Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) Policy
2011-2012**

Notwithstanding the HUD mandate for HMIS, the purpose of Georgia's collaborative HMIS program is to

- A. Assist homeless persons to navigate the continuum of care
- B. Assist homeless service agencies with information allowing them to better serve clients, and
- C. Assist homeless agencies, local, state and Federal entities with information on numbers of homeless persons, reasons for homelessness, services required, services received, gaps in services, etc.

Participation Requirements

- 1. All DCA-funded ESG agencies must actively participate in HMIS by meeting the Implementation Requirements defined herein and in more detail in the Standard Operating Procedures Manual available at www.dca.ga.gov.
- 2. Grantees must establish a unique program in HMIS for each DCA-funded ESG PROGRAM TYPE, i.e. emergency shelter, rapid re-housing, etc.
- 3. Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing programs must also establish a housing inventory in HMIS for each program and keep this information updated and accurate. If a shelter or transitional housing program is a scattered site program with beds across multiple continua, separate HMIS programs must be created for the beds in each continuum. For assistance with determining how to configure your HMIS programs, please contact Pathways.
- 4. All agencies must have more than one user in HMIS, with one user designated as the Agency Administrator of HMIS.
- 5. Authorization for HMIS should be attempted for 100% of persons who are "homeless" or nearly homeless. At a minimum, grantees are required to enter all DCA required data elements into the HMIS system for 80% of the clients enrolled *in each program*. Agency performance will be based partly on the ability to provide complete and accurate information of their projected number of households served.
- 6. Soup kitchen and other short term service programs that see large numbers of persons in poverty, including homeless persons, for limited periods of time are not necessarily expected to document all services provided but are expected to provide HMIS-compliant outreach in conjunction with those services in a reasonable way, as determined on a case-by-case basis by DCA.
- 7. All housing programs are required to ensure that they enroll 100% of clients who have signed authorizations into the appropriate HMIS program within one week of program enrollment. Clients must also be discharged from the appropriate HMIS program within one week of their actual discharge. Date of enrollment and discharge within the HMIS system should reflect the actual dates of program enrollment and program discharge. Agencies should enroll ALL family members into the program.
- 8. Efforts should be made to document all key service transactions provided to clients, particularly for prevention and rapid re-housing programs.
- 9. If the Grantee is not able to serve a particular client, the Grantee must make every effort to record universal data elements for the household into the HMIS and to make an appropriate referral to service providers based on the needs of the individual/family.
- 10. In the event of conflict between federal, state and local government and/or local Continuum of Care HMIS policy, the higher standard must be met.

Implementation Requirements

1. All agencies must comply with the policies and procedures outlined in the Georgia HMIS Standard Operating Procedures Manual (http://www.dca.ga.gov/housing/specialneeds/programs/documents/GaHMIS_SOPmanual.pdf)
2. All agencies must comply with the current HMIS Privacy, Confidentiality, and Security standards issued in the HUD Notice on 7/31/2004. These standards require, but are not limited to:
 - a. Installing virus protection software, with an automatic update on every computer that accesses HMIS
 - b. Activating a locking screen saver on every computer that accesses HMIS
 - c. Developing a data privacy policy and notice
 - d. Posting the agency's privacy notice on its premises and website
 - e. Installing an individual or network firewall
 - f. Posting "purpose for data collection" signs at each intake desk
3. Documentation of client authorization/refusal must be maintained in each clients file. Individuals refusing to authorize participation in HMIS should complete a Refusal form which should be kept in their case file. Information equivalent to the required HMIS data elements must be gathered and documented in the case file if an individual refuses to participate.
4. DCA staff will monitor HMIS participation through periodic monitoring and ongoing review of data in the HMIS. Data will also be reviewed within the reimbursement process where possible. DCA reserves the right to withhold payment until HMIS violations are corrected.
5. Agencies must respond to written notification of HMIS Policy Violation within **10 working days** of receipt. Agencies should inform DCA in writing of how they have responded to the violation. Failure to comply with HMIS participation requirements may result in DCA withholding payments until compliance is complete and documented, or termination of the grant(s). In addition, failure to comply with requirements may result in an agency being ineligible for funding or receiving a low HMIS performance score in the next grant year.
6. Future DCA funding and funding levels will be based, in part, on HMIS performance. Considerations will include, but not limited to:
 - a. Level of system utilization including: having a clearly identifiable program name and set up in HMIS
 - b. Number of households served versus number of households projected in application
 - c. Completeness of universal and program level data elements, response to monitoring
 - d. Ability to produce reports through HMIS
 - e. Program enrollment (where applicable)
 - f. Service transactions
 - g. Referrals for non-clients
7. Grantees with ESG funds approved for housing support (case management) may utilize those funds for HMIS costs, including fees, basic software (virus protection/spyware, networking/firewall, operating system, productivity software such as MS Office, etc.) and Internet service if they have approval from DCA to do so.
8. Although DCA will make every effort to inform Agencies when this policy is revised, it is the responsibility of the grantee to ensure they are in compliance with the current version of the HMIS Policy and Standard Operating Procedures.
9. For guidance on required data elements refer to the HMIS Standards posted on the ESG page of the DCA website.

*Training and technical assistance (TA) for HMIS is provided by Pathways Community Network, Inc. and can be accessed Monday-Friday from 8:30 A.M. through 4:30 P.M via phone at (866) 818-1032 or email at support@pcni.org.

*Domestic Violence Agencies should not enter any data in the Pathways HMIS system but should collect equivalent data in the ALICE system and will receive guidance in separate communication.

"What gets measured gets done"

