



**Homeless Services Bureau**  
**City of Long Beach**  
**Homeless Management Information System**  
**Data Quality Plan**

**Revision June 2023**

## HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM DATA QUALITY PLAN

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## Summary of Changes

### Revision History

Approval Date	Version	Revision Description
08/2016	1	First Release
12/2016	2	Appendix - <a href="#">Data Collection Summary</a> : Include as appendix to detail data collection requirements.
07/2017	3	<a href="#">Data Quality Framework</a> : separated Coverage and Utilization to detail requirements. <a href="#">Roles &amp; Responsibilities</a> : clarify CoC Board responsibilities <a href="#">Measures</a> : replaced “Benchmark” with “Measures” to be consistent with terminology used across CoC and organized measures by data quality elements. <a href="#">Monitoring</a> : clarify monitoring requirements. <a href="#">Incentive</a> : clarify Incentives requirements. <a href="#">Enforcement</a> – clarify Enforcements requirements. <a href="#">Glossary</a> – replaced “DHHS” with “HSD”; added “End users”. <a href="#">Monitoring</a> – updated reporting requirement for Data Quality and Utilization and Coverage Monitoring. <a href="#">Appendices</a> – updated the list.
08/2018	4	<a href="#">Appendices</a> – updated the list. Added Data Quality Policies & Procedures.
06/2019	5	Updated <a href="#">Introduction</a> Addition of <a href="#">Minimize Data Quality Issues</a>
06/2023	6	Removed <a href="#">Appendices</a> from Table of Contents. Added <a href="#">Technical Assistance</a> and <a href="#">Remedies</a> to Table of Contents. Updated subtitles under <a href="#">Framework</a> and <a href="#">Measures</a> . Replaced “HSD” and “Division” with “HSB” and “Bureau.” <a href="#">3.3 Agency</a> – added “Agency shall maintain the responsibilities addressed in initial and refresher trainings.” <a href="#">4.3 Coverage &amp; Utilization</a> – removed “Shelter and housing projects client records shall match 100% in ClientPoint and ShelterPoint.” <a href="#">5.2 Data Quality Monitoring</a> – replaced “HSD shall release the data quality report quarterly” with “HSB shall engage in data quality reviews and monitoring meetings as needed.”

		<a href="#">5.4 Coverage and Utilization Monitoring (Shelter and Housing Projects)</a> – edited the bed utilization benchmarks from “under 90% or over 105%” to “under 80% or over 110%” and changed the release of bed utilization reports from monthly to quarterly. Removed <a href="#">Incentives</a> overall. Alphabetized Glossary
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## **1. Introduction**

The City of Long Beach, Department of Health and Human Services, Homeless Services Bureau (HSB) oversees the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The HMIS is a software application designed to record and store client-level information on the characteristics and service needs of persons at risk or experiencing homelessness.

To meet the HMIS goal of presenting accurate and consistent information on homelessness, it is critical that our HMIS has the best possible representation of reality as it relates to people experiencing homelessness and the programs that serve them. Specifically, it is our goal to record the most accurate, consistent and timely information to draw reasonable conclusions about the extent of homelessness and the impact of homeless services.

### **What is Data Quality?**

Data quality is a term that refers to the reliability and validity of client-level data collected in the HMIS. It is measured by the extent to which the client data in the system reflects actual information in the real world. The quality of data is determined by assessing certain characteristics such as timeliness, completeness, and accuracy. To assess data quality, a community must first think about what data quality means and document this understanding in a data quality plan.

### **Why Data Quality is Important?**

When HMIS contains quality data the Continuum of Care (CoC) can portray an accurate accounting of the population experiencing homelessness in Long Beach. Through an accurate account, the Long Beach CoC can make data informed policy and program decisions and deploy the right combination of strategies and resources. Conversely, inaccurate data input will ultimately render reports and analyses imprecise and misleading.

### **What is a Data Quality Plan?**

The Long Beach CoC Data Quality plan is a community-level document that facilitates the ability of the CoC to achieve statistically valid and reliable data. Collecting and inputting data in homeless service can be challenging; the constituents are often distraught, scared, or confused. Therefore, it may be difficult to obtain accurate information from them, but

the obtaining accurate information is an integral component in the fight to end homelessness. For example, when homeless providers collect information on a client's military service history, or veteran status, it allows case managers to make appropriate service and benefit referrals the client may be eligible to receive. These services and benefits could ultimately lead to the client becoming permanently housed. Without good information, it is difficult to assess a client's needs and determine the appropriate level of services for each homeless individual or family. Ultimately, the Long Beach CoC Data Quality Plan sets expectations for both the community and the end users to capture reliable and valid data on persons accessing the homeless assistance system.

### **Goals of the Data Quality Plan**

The Long Beach CoC Data Quality Plan will set expectations and help agencies better understand the importance of working with their clients to gather timely, complete, and accurate data. In coordination with the CoC Board, the HSB developed this data quality plan with the following goals:

- Help ensure the availability of timely and accurate data so that policy makers can make informed, data driven decisions
- Identify the responsibilities of all parties within the CoC that affect data quality
- Assist agencies in developing standard practices that allow inaccuracies to be identified early and often
- Establish benchmarks for specific data quality measures
- Expedite the data cleanup process prior to NOFA submission, HUD reporting, and other community-level reporting requests
- Agencies benefit from participating in this process by:
  - Having information readily available to make informed program decisions
  - Increased accuracy when monitoring client progress
  - Better ability to inform stakeholders about program development
  - Lessen the burden of data cleaning

This plan describes the key elements to the data quality framework. The framework is based on the HUD HMIS Data Standard and Technical Standards. The framework supports the objective of obtaining reliable and valid data in HMIS. The data is measured by the extent to which the data in the system reflects actual information in the real world.

## **2. Framework**

High quality data is essential in developing an accurate picture of the health of the CoC's coordinated system of care and knowing where improvements are needed. "Data quality"



is an umbrella term that refers to the reliability and comprehensiveness of the CoC data and encompasses several concepts. This section outlines the rationale for each key element associated with data quality.

#### 2.1. Timeliness Framework

Entering data in a timely manner can reduce human error that occurs when too much time has elapsed between the data collection (or service transaction) and the data entry. Timely data entry assures that the data is accessible when it is needed, either proactively (e.g. monitoring purposes, increasing awareness, meeting funded requirements), or reactively (e.g. responding to requests for information, responding to inaccurate information).

#### 2.2. Completeness Framework

Complete data is necessary to fully understand the demographic characteristics and service use of persons in the system. Data collections contain information during a specified timeframe. Partially complete or missing data can negatively affect the ability to provide comprehensive care to clients. Missing data could mean the client did not receive needed services – services that could help them become permanently housed and end their episodes of homelessness.

#### 2.3. Coverage & Utilization Framework

It is important to determine whether the data accurately reflects what is happening within the projects or across the system. Partial participation across the CoC can negatively affect the ability of the CoC to report on and analyze community performance. Complete coverage and high utilization rate of the clients served is an excellent barometer of data quality. It is difficult to measure data quality if the coverage and utilization rate is too low or too high.

#### 2.4. Accuracy Framework

The accuracy of information is the degree to which the information correctly describes the client. Accuracy of data in HMIS can be difficult to assess. It depends on the client's ability to provide the correct data and the intake worker's ability to document and enter the data accurately.

#### 2.5. Consistency Framework

The purpose of consistency is to ensure that data is understood, collected, and entered consistently across all projects in the HMIS. Consistency directly affects the accuracy of data; if an end user collects all the data, but does not collect it in a consistent manner, then the data may not be accurate.

#### 2.6. Monitoring Framework

Monitoring is the primary tool to review and generate information necessary to identify areas for improvement. Data is monitored monthly to quickly identify and resolve issues that affect the timeliness, completeness, coverage & utilization, accuracy, and consistency of the information collected. The data produced from the HMIS is critical for project management and reporting requirements.

#### 2.7. Incentives and Enforcement Framework

Incentives and enforcement are actions to assure agencies remain compliant to the plan. Celebrating data quality successes and allowing for growth ensure that agency learn how to value and improve data quality. Regular emphasis on using the data across the community and assessing the data quality will create incentives to further improve and rely on the data.

### 3. **Roles & Responsibilities**

This section clarifies expectations to carry out the data quality plan.

#### 3.1. CoC Board

- CoC Board shall review and approve the data quality plan and data quality measures.
- CoC Board shall consider data quality in the rating and ranking process for funding decisions.
- CoC Board shall recommend solutions for improving data quality.

#### 3.2. HSB

- HSB shall act as the liaison between the Long Beach CoC and HUD.
- HSB shall provide data quality training.
- HSB shall provide technical assistance relating to HMIS requirements.
- HSB shall monitor compliance with data collection, entry, and retrieval.
- HSB shall conduct monthly monitoring for project compliance.
- HSB shall communicate regularly with the CoC and Agency to ensure stakeholders are informed and have the resources to address data quality concerns.

- HSB shall monitor the comparable database of project whose primary mission is to serve victims of domestic violence to ensure data quality plan aligns with Long Beach HMIS Data Quality Plan, meet the most recently released HUD HMIS Data Standards, Technical Standards, System Performance Measures, funding and reporting requirements.
- HSB shall assess end user understanding of data collection requirements using different evaluation platforms.
- HSB shall hold HMIS sub-committee meetings to ensure the interpretation of data quality is consistent with HUD and local requirements.
- HSB shall incorporate data quality compliance as part of the funding requirement.

### 3.3. Agency

- Agency shall collect information on all clients served.
- Agency shall set the tone for the agency's commitment to data quality.
- Agency shall complete monthly monitoring for project compliance.
- Agency shall maintain the responsibilities addressed in initial and refresher trainings.
- Agency shall resolve any data quality findings within the timeframe provided.
- Agency shall identify a contact person who will serve as the main contact for data quality assurance.
- Agency operating projects whose primary mission is to serve victims of domestic violence shall have a comparable database data quality plan that aligns with the Long Beach HMIS Data Quality Plan and meet the most recently released HUD HMIS Data Standards, Technical Standards, System Performance Measures, funding and reporting requirements.
- Agency shall review the data and confirm the data quality by the deadlines outlined in the data quality plan.
- Agency shall ensure end users have the consistent understanding of the data elements.

## 4. **Measures**

This section outlines measures for Timeliness, Completeness, Coverage & Utilization, Accuracy, and Consistency.

### 4.1. Timeliness Measures

- Client project entry records shall not exceed 6 days.
- Client project exit records shall not exceed 6 days.
- Client records with project entry date in HMIS exceeding 6 days shall not exceed 10% (For example, if reviewing includes 10 client records then 9 out of 10 of these records must have entry date entered within 6 days of record creation date.). Comparable database data quality plan shall include monitoring for project entry date that is 6 days or less.

- Clients remaining in the project 12 months or longer without annual assessment shall not exceed 10% (For example, if reviewing includes 10 client records then 9 out of 10 of these records shall have annual assessment completed annually. The annual assessment must be within 30 days before or after the anniversary project start date.). Comparable database data quality plan shall include monitoring for annual assessment of clients remaining in the project 12 months or longer, the annual assessment shall be completed annually within 30 days before or after the anniversary project start date.

#### 4.2. Completeness Measures

- Missing data, data not collected shall not be more than 5%.
- Client doesn't know or client refused shall not be more than 5%.
- Clients served shall have 100% data elements completed.
- Clients served shall have 100% services transactions completed.
- Clients remaining in projects 12 months or longer shall have 100% of the Annual Assessment completed within 30 days before or after the anniversary of project entry regardless of the most recent update.
- Clients exiting from project shall have 100% exit assessment completed.

#### 4.3. Coverage & Utilization Measures

- Shelter and housing projects shall have bed utilization rates 90% or higher.

#### 4.4. Accuracy Measures

- Client records with inaccurate information compared to applicable data entry, attachments and if available, other document sources shall not exceed 10%. (For example, if reviewing includes 10 client records then 9 out of 10 of these records must have the entire applicable data entry, attachments and if available other document sources.)

#### 4.5. Consistency Measures

- Client records data entry workflow shall match 100%. (For example, if reviewing includes 10 client records then 10 out of 10 of these records must follow the data entry workflow such as entry assessment, service transaction, status updates and annual assessments as applicable, and exit assessment, etc.)

### 5. **Monitoring**

The data produced from HMIS is critical to meet the reporting and compliance requirements of agencies and the CoC. As such, all agencies are expected to meet the data quality plan described in this document. To achieve this, the HMIS data will be monitored monthly to quickly identify and resolve issues that affect the timeliness,

completeness, coverage & utilization, accuracy, and consistency. All monitoring will be done in accordance with the data quality plan.

#### 5.1. Required Reports

- Agency shall submit the CoC APR report monthly.

#### 5.2. Data Quality Monitoring

- HSB shall send monthly reminder emails to the Agency contact person(s) about data quality report deadline.
- Agency shall ensure data quality measures have been met by the report deadline.
- Agency shall submit CoC APR by the fifth (5th) working day of the following month.
- HSB shall review and confirm data upon HSB final review.
- HSB shall engage in data quality reviews and monitoring meetings as needed.

#### 5.3. Client Record Monitoring

- HSB shall conduct monthly record monitoring based on timeline.
- HSB shall send monthly reminder email to Agency contact person(s) regarding client record monitoring review.
- HSB shall sample 10% of clients served.
- HSB shall review the sample based on the measures.
- HSB shall communicate result to agency.
- Agency shall make corrections by the fifth (5th) working day of notification and notify HSB of completion by email.
- HSB shall verify the corrections after the allotted time has expired, if the Agency fail to make corrections, HSB shall report results based on final review.
- HSB shall email a final confirmation notification confirming result.
- HSB shall save the notification to the monitoring folder for documentation.
- HSB shall release the client record monitoring report quarterly.
- HSB shall determine if technical assistance is needed and/or agency can request for technical assistance at any time.
- Technical assistance shall be completed within the quarter or as soon as possible.

#### 5.4. Coverage and Utilization Monitoring (Shelter and Housing Projects)

- Agency shall ensure the project accurately reflects all active clients on the last day of the month.
- Agency shall submit CoC APR by the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) working day of the following month. The submitted APRs shall be the final confirmation of clients served to be reported in the Long Beach CoC Occupancy Report. Projects that fail to submit the APR within the allotted timeframe will be marked as "Missing Data."

- Projects with bed utilization rate under 80% or over 110% shall provide a written explanation of the variation.
- HSB shall release the bed utilization report quarterly.

## **6. Minimize Data Quality Issues**

Tips on how to minimize data quality issues:

- Enter client data as soon as possible. The more time that passes between collecting data and entering the data into HMIS, the greater the odds that there will be data quality issues. This is particularly true if the collection of data doesn't happen directly within the HMIS. For example, many times HMIS data is entered based on handwritten notes or a memory of a case management session or service transaction, thereby making data accuracy dependent on timeliness. Making timely data input a priority not only increases the chances the data will be correct but ensures data is entered as close to real-time as possible, making it accessible when needed. Whenever possible, consider entering data during client visits so that clients may help identify potential inaccuracies.
- Establish clear, consistent definitions and interpretations. Consistency is crucial to good data quality. For example, there could be inconsistent interpretation of the exact meaning of a field, such as "disability." Two people with the same condition might provide completely different answers in response to whether they have a disability, leading to inconsistent data. To avoid this, you must fully understand the meaning of the field and query further to elicit the most accurate response from the client. There needs to be established definitions and interpretations of questions, answers, and data entry processes, including which HMIS fields require completion. Following HUD's HMIS Data Standards is also a large part of maintaining consistency.
- Make sure your client understands the question. Errors in data collection occur when the client misunderstands the question. A common example of this is misunderstanding what is meant by the "Residence Prior to Project Entry" question. The client may give you a response referring to where they lived for years prior to becoming homeless as opposed to the place they stayed for one night prior to shelter entry. Even the question "What is your name?" may elicit two different responses—the client's legal name one day, and their nickname in a follow-up interview. Where there is any room for misunderstanding, always elaborate and explain the question to make sure the most accurate data is collected.

- Take precautions to avoid duplicate entries. It's easy to accidentally create duplicate records for the same client. Typos in social security number, date of birth, and misspellings of names are common intake errors that can lead to duplicate client records. However, these are easy to avoid by following the simple rule of always confirming the response. Regarding spelling, even common names like "Jesse" can sometimes be spelled "Jessy." For unusual spellings like this, it's a good idea to circle or highlight the name to help ensure data entry staff make note of it and don't try to correct it to usual spelling.

## **7. Enforcement**

Common compliance issues generally involve: (1) incomplete or late data quality report submissions; (2) missing client record documentations; (3) data quality impacting performance reporting; or (4) incomplete or late performance reporting.

### **7.1. Issue Resolution**

HSB shall proceed in good faith to work with the Agency to resolve potential and identified issues at the lowest level necessary. To facilitate resolution, the Agency is advised to immediately notify of any issues that may significantly impact performance.

### **7.2. Technical Assistance**

Issues will be resolved to the extent possible through communication between HSB and the Agency. If the issue cannot be resolved, HSB will notify the Agency, in writing, of the circumstances, including the nature of the problem, the specific deficiency, and the status and outcomes to date. The Agency is required to respond in writing within 15 calendar days of the date of such communication, describing the steps and schedule for correcting the deficiency. If HSB deems the stated corrective actions as satisfactory, the Agency will be notified of that decision in writing.

### **7.3. Remedies**

After carefully reviewing the situation and responses from the Agency, HSB shall consider taking action as appropriate.

Agencies that are funded through the CoC may receive a reduced funding or non-funding due to non-compliance. HSB may impose probationary contract conditions. HSB may also take additional actions, including but not limited to:

- Remove access to HMIS.
- Disallow all or part of the cost of the activity that is deemed ineligible.

- Suspend or terminate the current award, in whole or in part.
- Decline renewal of awards for the project or project.
- Consider other remedies as appropriate.

Agencies that are not funded through the CoC may be denied HMIS participation.

Remedies will stay in effect until all issues identified in writing have been fully resolved to the satisfaction of HSB. HSB reserves the right to deny HMIS participation and/or terminate a contract if it has attempted to resolve issues under the guidance provided in the LB HMIS Data Quality Plan.



## 8. Glossary

**Agency:** Organization participating in the HMIS

**Client:** Person(s) served by the organization participating in the HMIS.

**CoC:** Long Beach Continuum of Care, comprised of organizations that plans, manages, and delivers homeless assistance resources to people who are at risk or experiencing homelessness in Long Beach.

**End Users:** HMIS users such as outreach staff, case managers, project managers, or directors

**HMIS:** Homeless Management Information System, software application designed to record and store client-level information on the characteristics and service needs of persons at risk or experiencing homelessness.

**HSB:** City of Long Beach, Department of Health and Human Services, Homeless Services Bureau

**HUD:** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

**Project:** The project or projects operated by the organization participating in the HMIS



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