



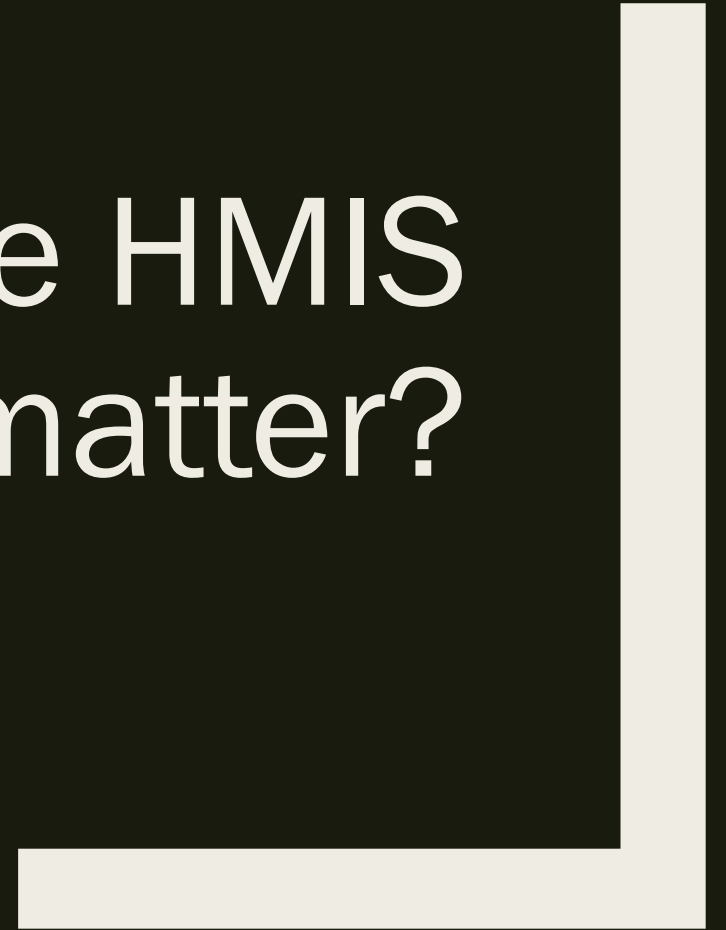
Cambridge CONTINUUM
OF CARE

CAMBRIDGE HMIS DATA COLLECTION GUIDELINES

Improving HMIS Data Quality and Asking Clients for Data

Updated June 2021

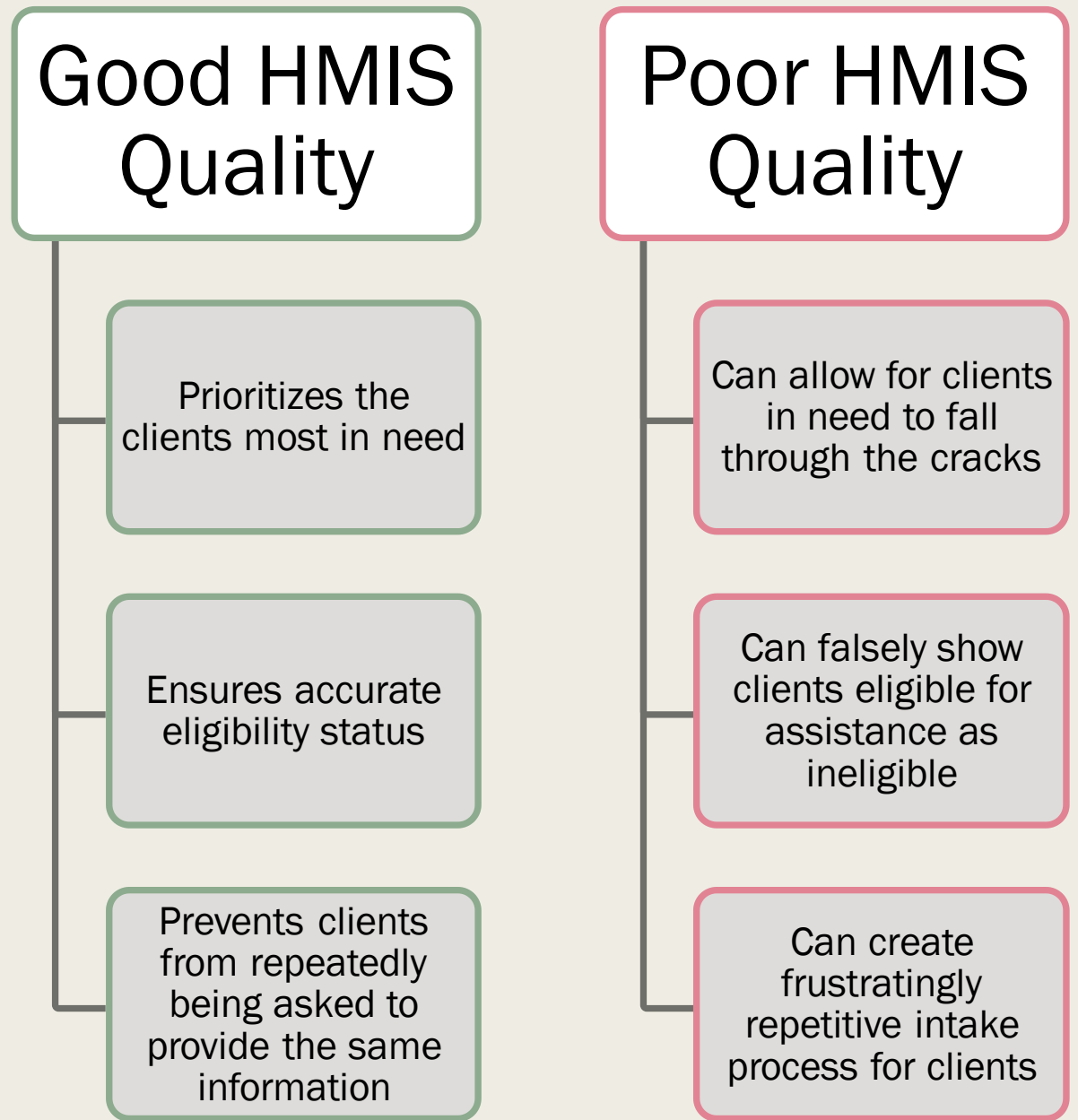
Why does HUD require HMIS
and why does HMIS matter?



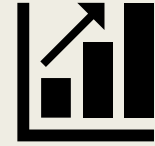
HMIS data collection is required for federally funded programs

- Aggregate statistics used to inform decisions at the federal, state, and local level
- Need for unduplicated count of homeless persons within the community
- Service providers functioning as a coordinated system of care
- Funding implications
 - *Poor data quality can affect scoring for program and CoC*
 - *Need to document that services took place*
- Measure outcomes and performance; identify service needs and gaps
- HMIS data doesn't go into a black hole!

HMIS data quality matters for your clients



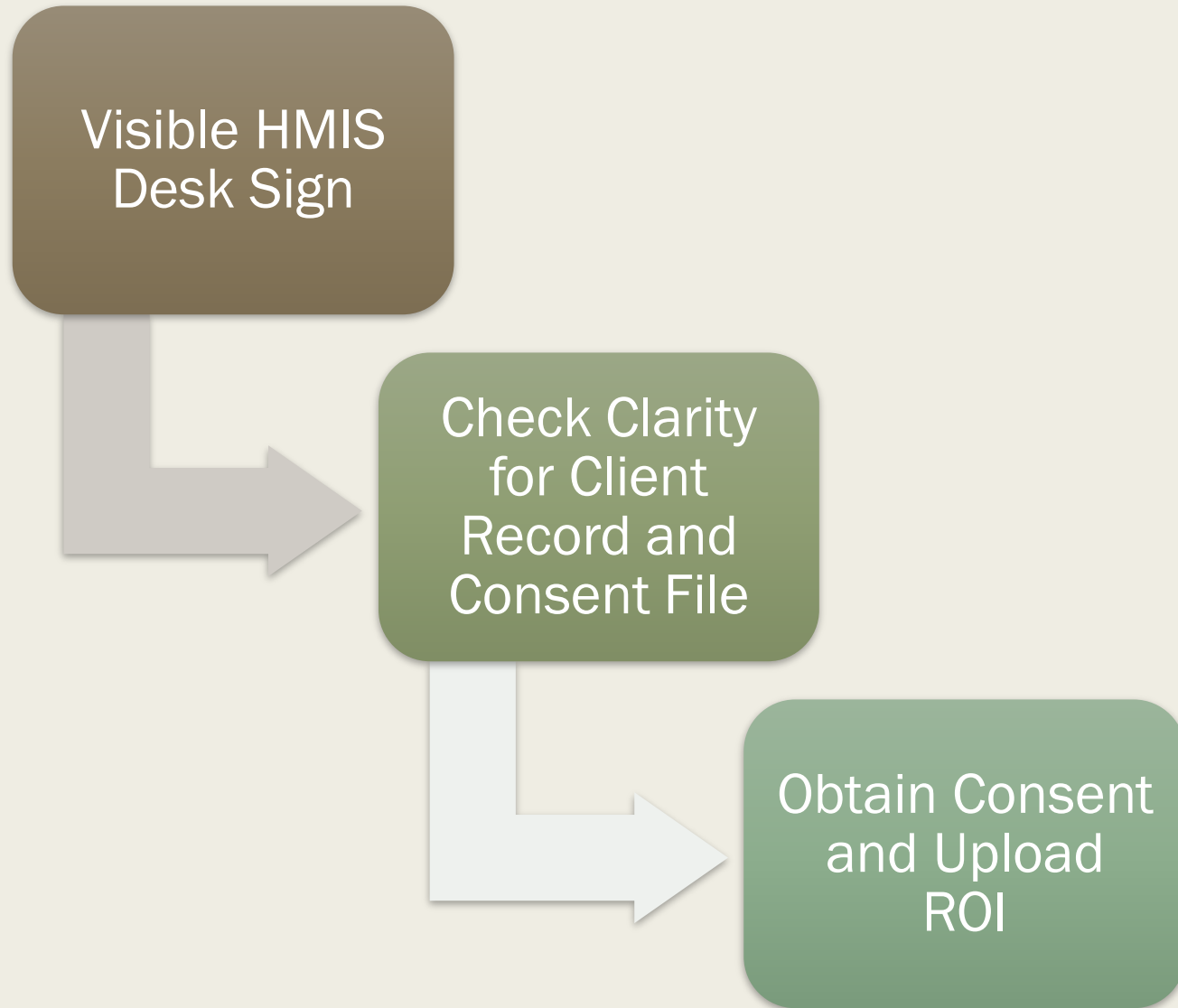
Key Metrics to Consider: *System Performance Measures*



1. Length of time persons remain homeless
2. The extent to which persons who exit homelessness to permanent housing destinations return to homelessness
3. Number of homeless persons
4. Jobs and income growth for homeless persons in CoC Program-funded projects
5. Number of persons who became homeless for the first time
6. Homelessness prevention and housing placement of persons defined by Category 3 of HUD's homeless definition in CoC Program-funded projects
7. Successful housing placement

“A critical aspect of the [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#), as amended, is a focus on viewing the local homeless response as a coordinated system of homeless assistance options as opposed to homeless assistance programs and funding sources that operate independently in a community.”

Obtaining Consent: 3 Steps

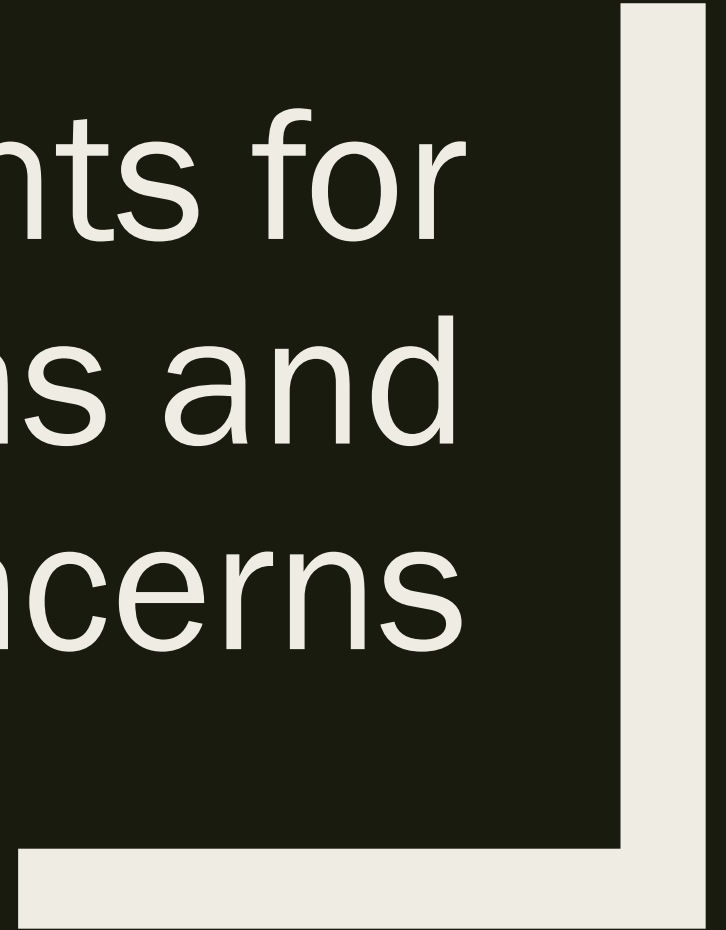


Obtaining Consent



- Be familiar with the [ROI consent form](#)
- Ensure [HMIS Privacy Statement](#) (“Desk Sign”) is posted wherever client intakes are conducted
- Consider it part of your job to help remove any mystery or misunderstanding about what we will do with the information they provide and why we ask for it
- Personally Identifiable Information (PII): Identifying information that is entered into HMIS and protected by adherence to strict confidentiality rules
 - *Used for de-identified and aggregate statistics in reporting (e.g. SPM’s)*
 - *Secure and encrypted data*

Helpful talking points for
client questions and
concerns



Why do you ask for this information?

- To provide and coordinate services
- To refer clients to other programs that provide different services
- To comply with requirements of funders, such as HUD
- To ensure that Cambridge can give an accurate count of persons needing shelter; to demonstrate need for increased affordable housing and other support systems
- To document a client's history of homelessness

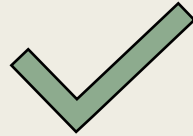
What does sharing my data mean?

- Data is shared within Cambridge only (except for CCAN)
- Other providers can view client data on a need-to-know basis; it isn't actively shared with all providers upon granting consent
- C-CAN staff can see record of services to determine eligibility
- Alternate language for "sharing": *allow access, disclose, make available*
- Providers can view and accept referrals

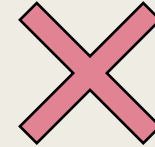
Is my data safe?

- Data is encrypted on a secure server
- All end users must comply with the Policy and Procedures for Privacy and Security
- Extra precautions to protect PII
- Only last four digits of SSN are visible to end user

Asking for data: dos and don'ts



- Use the time to build a connection with your client
- Take responsibility for asking the guest intake questions
- Be comfortable in your role and ask the client to help you gather this information
- Encourage your client to ask any questions during the intake process
- Have a semi-structured approach: focus on key questions but be open for guests to raise any questions or issues



- Don't have client complete intake form on their own; self-completion yields low response rates, minimizes the importance of the data collection, and disengages you from the process
- Don't be casual about collecting the information; don't make it seem like it would be nice to have but isn't required
- Don't be ambivalent about asking for information; if you are uncertain about why we ask for something, contact P&D and ask us!

Before you ask clients, ask yourself:

What are your own experiences and feelings around someone asking you for personal information?

What are your past experiences and views on asking this information of clients?

What impact does this have on you when sitting with a client to collect their information?



Popular Myth:

“Data collection is an invasion of guest privacy.”

- It is true that these questions can be perceived as intrusive, but most clients understand that they will be asked to disclose personal information in order to receive services.
- If you are clear about why you are asking, most clients will be very open to telling you their story.

So...what data exactly are we asking clients for?

HUD Universal Data Elements (UDEs) are required to be collected by all projects in an HMIS.

Universal Data Elements

Why this information? These data elements enable an HMIS to record unique, unduplicated client records, establish participation in a project within a date range, and identify clients who meet the criteria for chronic homelessness.

Universal Identifier Elements (One and only one per client record):

- 3.01 Name
- 3.02 Social Security Number
- 3.03 Date of Birth
- 3.04 Race
- 3.05 Ethnicity
- 3.06 Gender
- 3.07 Veteran Status

Universal Project Stay Elements (One or more value(s) per client or household project stay)

- 3.08 Disabling Condition*
- 3.10 Project Start Date
- 3.11 Project Exit Date
- 3.12 Destination
- 3.15 Relationship to Head of Household
- 3.16 Client Location
- 3.20 Housing Move-In Date
- 3.917 Prior Living Situation*

Common Program Specific Data Elements

- 4.02 Income and Sources
- 4.03 Non-Cash Benefits
- 4.04 Health Insurance
- 4.05 Physical Disability
- 4.06 Developmental Disability
- 4.07 Chronic Health Condition
- 4.08 HIV/AIDS
- 4.09 Mental Health Disorder
- 4.10 Substance Use Disorder
- 4.11 Domestic Violence
- 4.12 Current Living Situation
- 4.13 Date of Engagement
- 4.14 Bed-Night Date
- 4.19 Coordinated Entry Assessment
- 4.20 Coordinated Entry Event

For more information on data elements for specific program types,
view HUD's [FY 2022 Interactive HMIS Data Standards Tool](#)

Additional guidance for data collection

- Aim to get all the questions answered at the time of the intake; enter data directly into Clarity if possible
- ES project types: collect UDEs and any disability information you can if you suspect a guest will only be staying for one night
- Be sure to record an Update Assessment in Clarity any time a client's income or disability status changes
- HMIS data are self-reported; do not assume or guess any answers
- Data Quality benchmarks to consider:
 - *Completeness*
 - *Timeliness*
 - *Accuracy*
 - *Consistency*
- High levels of HMIS data quality will make things easier for everyone, including your clients

Questions?

We want you to be confident in knowing why HMIS data collection is required, both for you and for your clients. If you are unsure, please reach out!



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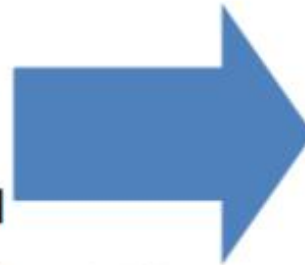
Appendix A: Move to Systems Approach

From HUD presentation at NHSDC Conference in May 2020

Move to Systems Approach to End Homelessness

Moving from:

- Agency Performance
- Unique Agency Intake
- Planning in Silos
- Haphazard Decisions
- Housing Readiness
- Automatic Project Renewal
- Outdated Program Models
- Housing the Next In Line
- My Program



Transforming to:

- System Performance
- Coordinated Entry
- Data Integration
- Data Driven Decisions
- Housing First
- Higher Performing Program Funding
- Best Practices
- Prioritizing/Serving the most Vulnerable
- Our System