

# Massachusetts Homelessness Data Warehouse Proposal

## Overview of Statewide Homelessness Data Warehouse

The development and use of a statewide homelessness data warehouse is intended to accomplish the following goals and objectives:

- Maximize the use of **anonymous and de-identified data** for reporting and research purposes as well as **personal and identifiable data** for reporting and care coordination purposes
- Standardize data sharing policies, procedures, and practices across CoC geographies to **increase data security** and **decrease unauthorized uses and disclosures** of client-level data
- Support statewide efforts to use data to **allocate resources, secure funding, and leverage existing programs and services** across systems of care
- **Strengthen Continuum of Care leadership** regarding HMIS administration, governance, and resourcing

CoCs are currently sharing data within their provider network to determine eligibility and to make referrals through coordinated entry systems. Additional data sharing through a data warehouse will enhance coordination with providers across CoC geographic areas, the DHCD Emergency Assistance system, and other programs and resources. Data sharing will also support improved reporting, planning, and resource allocation strategies at both the local and state levels. Standardized data sharing across Massachusetts can improve how homeless services are used by the most vulnerable households.

Given these benefits, the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH) is committed to supporting the creation of a statewide homelessness data warehouse for HMIS and EA information. This data warehouse could be used by CoCs, local homeless providers, state agencies, and other relevant parties for:

- Eligibility determination
- Referral to and coordination of services
- Local, regional, and statewide reporting
- Research/administrative data matching

For example, with a statewide homelessness data warehouse...

A state agency could determine the age of chronically homeless people in the state and allocate service resources to meet their needs.

A CoC could determine if there were any trends in migration by tracking new admissions in shelter and which CoC they were involved with previously.

A homeless provider could access an individual's use of shelter in different areas of the state in order to establish chronic homeless eligibility.

## Design and Scope

As the first step in the implementation, ICHH will work with CoCs to achieve consensus on the design and scope of the warehouse. The warehouse will start by aggregating HMIS data from CoCs. At a later date, once implemented, the warehouse will also plans to publish a Request for Proposals to develop the warehouse. At a minimum, the warehouse will be designed to:

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- Export HMIS and EA data in a standard CSV file format on a monthly basis (see attached for a list of HMIS data elements to be shared);
- De-duplicate data and identify quality issues; and
- Control ability to view and use information by establishing different levels of access.

The data warehouse will leverage existing data collection efforts and any additional work beyond that required by HUD of CoCs and HMIS contributing agencies will be compensated. Any new forms or policies (such as standard Release of Information and data privacy protocols) will be developed by ICHH, with input from CoCs. At this point, it is not envisioned that CoCs will use this data warehouse to meet HUD's requirements for a Coordinated Entry System (CES); however the hope is that CoCs will be able to leverage the warehouse to strengthen their existing CES.

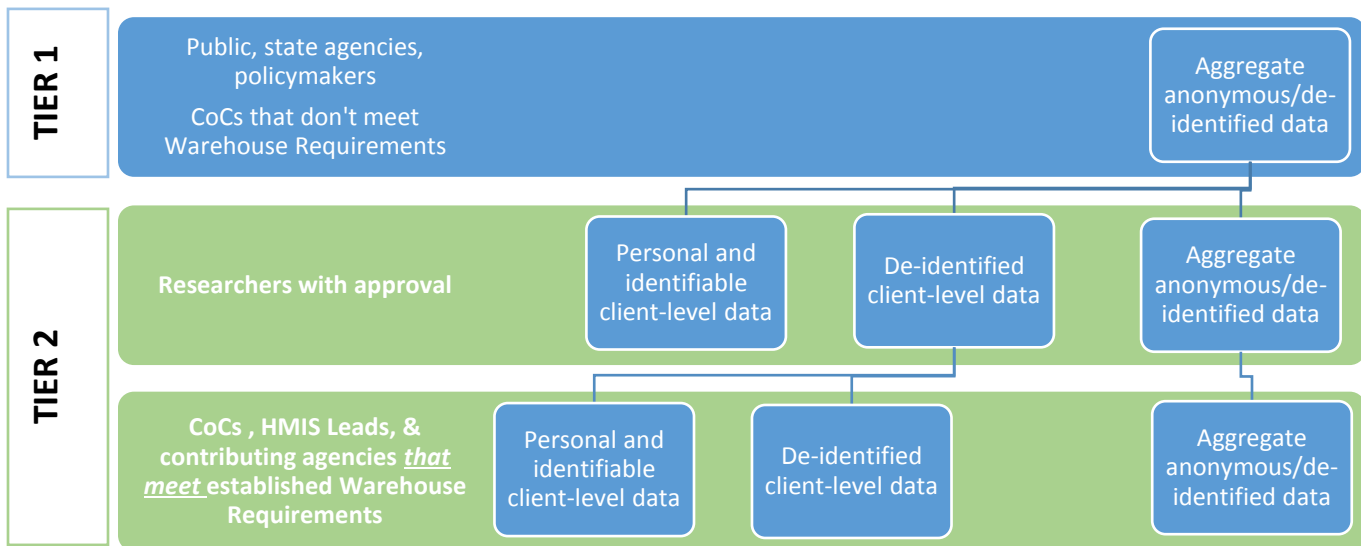
As conceptualized, the data warehouse will receive identifiable data, ensure it is not duplicative, and create 2 types of integrated data sets:

- **Anonymous and de-identified data set**
- **Personal and identifiable form data set**

The warehouse will include safeguards that limit access to data based on the type of agency requesting the data and how the data will be used. For example, general dashboard reports comprising *aggregated de-identified data* will be available to the public; more detailed *personal and identifiable client-level data* will be available to CoCs and contributing agencies. To ensure the safety and security of the data and also ensure compliance with all applicable state and federal privacy laws, all CoCs that want to access *personal and identifiable client-level data* will have to meet specific requirements such as:

- Use standard statewide Release of Information
- Use standard statewide data sharing protocols
- Use standard statewide privacy policies and procedures
- CoC has clear HMIS oversight structure
- CoC and HMIS Lead participate in MA statewide HMIS governance board

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## Continuum of Care Role

According to HUD regulations, the CoC is the entity responsible for not only designating the HMIS Lead, but also:

- Reviewing, revising and approving a privacy plan, security plan, and data quality plan for the HMIS;
- Ensuring consistent participation in the HMIS; and
- Ensuring the HMIS is administered in compliance with requirements prescribed by HUD.

In addition to these duties, as part of the data warehouse the CoC will be responsible for entering into an agreement to participate in the data warehouse and, if they meet the established requirements, ensuring that the data accessed through the warehouse (by the CoC, HMIS Lead, CoC members, or other stakeholders) is maintained in accordance with all applicable privacy and security standards.

## Next Steps

In cooperation with the HMIS Lead, data committee, and other stakeholders, Continuum of Care leadership should review this proposal and associated Frequently Asked Questions document. It is the CoC's responsibility to determine if it would like to participate in the MA Homelessness Data Warehouse. Participation in a data warehouse is a very important step for communities to take to improve how homeless services are funded and operated.

You are encouraged to reach out to discuss this proposal and to ask questions as needed. Before February 15, 2018, Linn Torto, Ryan Burger, and Emily Cooper are available to speak with CoC members (via phone or in person) regarding this project and discuss any outstanding issues or concerns. Written questions/comments can be sent during this time as well. Feedback, comments, and questions can be sent to:

Ryan Burger at [ryan.burger@icf.com](mailto:ryan.burger@icf.com) (HUD Technical Assistance provider)

Linn Torto at [linn.torto@state.ma.us](mailto:linn.torto@state.ma.us) (Massachusetts ICHH)

# Massachusetts Homelessness Data Warehouse Proposal

Emily Cooper at [emily.cooper@state.ma.us](mailto:emily.cooper@state.ma.us) (Executive Office of Elder Affairs)

**Those CoCs that agree to be part of the warehouse must conduct an official CoC vote endorsing this participation and send written notification of this approval to Linn Torto at [linn.torto@state.ma.us](mailto:linn.torto@state.ma.us) by February 15, 2018.**

At a later date the HMIS Lead, on behalf of the CoC, will be required to enter into a DW Participation Agreement.

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## LIST OF SHARED HMIS DATA ELEMENTS

Reports using anonymous and de-identified data will utilize the following standard HUD HMIS data elements for reporting purposes:

- all HUD HMIS project descriptor data elements (2.1 – 2.8);
- HUD HMIS universal identifier elements that describe demographics (3.4 – 3.7);
- all HUD HMIS universal project stay elements (3.8 – 3.917); and
- all HUD HMIS program specific data elements (4.2 – 4.18).

Reports using personal and identifiable data will utilize the following standard HUD HMIS data elements for reporting and care coordination purposes:

- 2.1 Organization Identifiers
- 2.2 Project Identifiers
- 2.3 Continuum of Care Code
- 3.1 Name
- 3.2 Social Security Number
- 3.3 Date of Birth
- 3.6 Gender
- 3.7 Veteran Status
- 3.8 Disabling Condition
- 3.10 Project Start Date
- 3.11 Project End Date
- 3.12 Destination
- 3.16 Client Location
- 4.18 Housing Assessment Disposition
- 4.43 Last Permanent Address<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Zip Code of Last Permanent Address was a Universal Data Element (3.10) until the 2014 HUD HMIS Data Standards but is no longer a Universal Data Element. Last Permanent Address is a current data element for VA SSVF participating projects (V5 Last Permanent Address).