

City of Cambridge

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

PRIVACY PLAN

City of Cambridge Department of Human Service Programs
Planning & Development Division
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This document describes the Privacy Plan of the Cambridge, Massachusetts Homeless Management Information System (CHMIS). It is intended to be consistent with the HUD standards for HMIS issued by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in July of 2004 (69 Federal Register 45888). All front end users, case managers, and HMIS agency administrators must adhere to this Privacy Plan. It is the responsibility of the HMIS Agency Administrator to monitor compliance with standards of client privacy outlined in this document. The Continuum of Care (CoC) Grant Manager conducts a compliance audit during regular site visits.

In addition to requirements established by HUD, protection of client privacy is also informed by other Federal, State and industry privacy standards, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA), and other standards established for substance abuse, legal service, and domestic violence providers.

The foundation of this Privacy Plan is outlined in both the Homeless Services/HMIS Privacy Notice and the CHMIS Participation Agreement between the Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP) and CoC Providers. The latter includes the following requirements of participating CoC agencies:

1. The Agency agrees to obtain written consent from clients for the collection and recording of Protected Personal Information (PPI), as defined in the CHMIS Privacy Notice, or to make available a copy of the CHMIS Privacy Notice (or an acceptable Agency-specific alternative) to each consumer who is asked to furnish such information. The Agency understands that the collection and disclosure of disability-specific information or information about domestic violence requires the written consent of the consumer, notwithstanding any presumption, advertised or not, that a consumer's request for program services or disclosure of personal information constitutes unwritten consent for such collection and disclosure by the Agency.
2. The Agency will not divulge any confidential information received from the CHMIS to any organization or individual who is not expressly authorized to receive such information without proper written consent by the client, unless otherwise permitted by applicable regulations or laws.
3. The Agency will ensure that all persons who are issued a User Identification and Password to the CHMIS abide by this Participation Agreement, including all associated confidentiality provisions. The Agency will be responsible for oversight of its own related confidentiality requirements.
4. The Agency agrees that it will ensure that all persons issued a User ID and Password will complete a formal training on privacy and confidentiality and demonstrate mastery of that information, prior to activation of their User License.
5. The Agency acknowledges that ensuring the confidentiality, security and privacy of any information downloaded from the system by the Agency is strictly the responsibility of the Agency.
6. The Agency understands that the CHMIS Administrators at the DHSP are the only staff in the department who have access to client-level data, and that said staff are obligated under all of the same restrictions described herein as apply to Agency staff.

Privacy Plan Documents	Description	Use by Agency
Homeless Services/ CHMIS Privacy Notice	Primary document for agencies to detail their privacy policies and practices. Serves to describe how and why personal information is recorded, disclosed and protected.	*REQUIRED* Agencies must adopt a privacy notice which meets all minimum standards.
CHMIS Privacy Notice Posting	Provides concise statement on information collection and why we do so. Refers to privacy statement and access for client to obtain a printed copy.	*REQUIRED* Agencies must post this in public areas and wherever clients receive services. They should adopt the language of this while using their name, logo, or other agency branding.
Client Informed Consent Form	This form describes collection of personal data for entry into HMIS; it describes client's right to refuse and their rights to opt-out of this data sharing. It provides written authorization by the client to collect information.	*REQUIRED* Agencies must have this form available for the client. If a client is receives services for a long duration, a new signature should be obtained every three years.
User Policy, Responsibility Statement & Code of Ethics	Completed by all HMIS users during training. Its primary focus is on adherence to maintaining and protecting clients' privacy.	*REQUIRED* All CHMIS users must read and sign this form prior to obtaining database access.
CHMIS Partner Agency Agreement	Written agreement between agency and DHSP detailing responsibilities of each entity with regard to use of software, HMIS data, protection of client privacy and adherence to confidentiality rules.	*REQUIRED* All agencies participating in the CHMIS must enter into this agreement.

All inclusions and revisions to this Privacy Plan are approved by the HMIS Working Group of the City of Cambridge Continuum of Care.