Homeless Management Information System

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that each metropolitan area use the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), a database system that collects specific, local data on client, housing, and homeless services.

The HMIS team monitors and improves data quality on 400,000 client records and provides training and helpdesk support for 1,100 database users close to 100 agencies. We analyze aggregate data, share trends and insights to drive strategy and policy decisions, and measure progress towards specific goals, such as the effectiveness of our city's network of services in connecting people to affordable housing or employment. All Chicago’s goal is for data to drive every conversation around ending homelessness.

As the administrator of the HMIS database, All Chicago is the only organization that can provide clear and transparent data to a comprehensive network of social service agencies that serve people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness.

Since 2012, All Chicago has served as the lead agency to implement, manage and provide training on our city’s HMIS. We:

- Submit aggregate reports to HUD, such as the Annual Performance Report, Annual Homeless Assessment Report, System Performance Measures report, Housing Inventory Count, and NOFA reports
- Monitor compliance with HUD regulations on HMIS standards and data quality
- Develop local HMIS policies and procedures, in partnership with the HMIS committee
- Monitor and improve data quality, in partnership with the Data Quality Committee
- Analyze and publish quarterly system performance data dashboards
- Administer day-to-day operational functions of HMIS, including vendor agreements and contracts
- Support database users and Agency Technical Administrators with training, help desk services, and by creating reports.
- Build and manage the technology platform for Chicago’s Coordinated Entry System, where households are assessed and connected to housing through the database.

Key Accomplishments and Collaborations

In 2015, HMIS was selected as the database for the Ending Veteran Homelessness Initiative. Since then, we have used the data to create one list of all of Chicago’s homeless veterans and a data dashboard that is updated and shared weekly to inform the initiative’s Leadership Team of progress and setbacks. To date, more than 4,000 veterans have been housed, and approximately 650 veterans are still in the process to be housed. In 2017, we developed interactive dashboards showing real-time progress and challenges.

In 2016, All Chicago and the University of Illinois Hospital and Health Sciences System (UI Health) created a prototype that integrates data from UI Health’s electronic medical records with housing status...
information from HMIS. In 2018, we worked to refine the prototype and expand our collaborations with healthcare institutions across Chicago for greater care coordination through data integration.

In 2017, Chicago’s network of homeless services providers fully adopted a process known as “coordinated entry” which will reduce the amount of time people experience homelessness, reduce new entries into homelessness, and improve data collection and provides accurate information on what programs and services best fit a person’s needs. It allows our community to identify and house those most in need first. The goal of this system is that someone experiencing homelessness will quickly receive the same information and any necessary referrals no matter where they first show up for services. This process has been critical in the collaborative effort to end veteran homelessness, and it has been heartening to see the community call for this process to be applied to serve other populations.

All Chicago’s unique role in coordinated entry is to lead all the data collection and data quality efforts. We continue to administer the HMIS, our city-wide database which was selected to house the coordinated entry assessment.

Over the past year, we have continued our work to:

- Provide reports via HMIS’s Advanced Reporting Tool to prioritize veterans for housing based on their vulnerability, and to track referrals and progress to permanent housing.
- Daily update the “By Name List” (also known as the “One List”) with people who are entering homelessness, entering permanent housing, or exiting the list due to inactivity.
- Monitor data points necessary to meet the federal criteria and benchmarks that will allow us to demonstrate that Chicago has ended veteran homelessness.

In 2017, HMIS launched Chicago’s Dashboard to End Homelessness (https://allchicago.org/dashboard-to-end-homelessness) to empower the housing and homeless services system to assess their progress and take action to prevent and end homelessness in Chicago. This dashboard harnesses data from HMIS to transparently depict how people experiencing homelessness access services and move to housing. The dashboard is updated on a weekly basis to allow for real-time analysis and for the community to act on data to improve strategies that prevent and end homelessness.

In 2018, we created additional data dashboards to guide our city’s work to end homelessness. These include a Coordinated Entry Dashboard, a Youth Homelessness Dashboard, and a Continuum of Care System Goals Dashboard. Additionally, we hired dedicated help desk staff and training coordinators, expanded our documentation library for HMIS procedures, and automated data quality reminders for partner agencies. In 2018, we furthered our efforts to integrate data with other sectors and performed data matches within the healthcare sector, while exploring other partnerships.

Please visit our website at allchicago.org.