

# New York City's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) New User Training

**NYC HMIS 101**

# Section 1: HMIS Overview

# HUD and HMIS

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In FY2001, Congress directed the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to ensure that homeless programs using federal funds participate in local homeless management information systems (HMIS) to track the use of services and housing within a Continuum of Care (CoC):

“Local jurisdictions should be collecting an array of data on homelessness in order to ***prevent duplicate counting of homeless persons and to analyze their patterns of use of assistance, including how they enter and exit the homeless assistance system and the effectiveness of the systems.***”

# HMIS Key Terms

- **Continuum of Care (CoC):** a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals
- **CHO:** Contributing HMIS Organization
- **CHO HMIS Administrator:** A single point-of-contact established by each CHO who is responsible for day-to-day operation of the CHO data collection system
- **CHO HMIS Security Contact:** A single point-of-contact established by each CHO who is responsible for annually certifying that the CHO adheres to the Security Plan
- **HMIS Lead Agency:** the entity, NYC Department of Social Services (DSS), designated by the CoC to operate HMIS in accordance with HUD standards
- **Data Warehouse:** Foothold Technology Services (FTS) serves as the sole HMIS Data Warehouse for the NYC CoC
- **CHO End user:** An employee, volunteer, affiliate, associate, or any other individual acting on behalf of a CHO who uses or uploads data in project-level HMIS-compliant system from which data are periodically uploaded to the HMIS Data Warehouse
- **Personally Identifiable Information (PII):** Information which can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, such as their name, social security number, biometric records, etc.

# Programs Required to Participate in HMIS

Continuum of Care (CoC) Program

Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program

Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) Program

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH)

Other federally and locally funded projects are highly encouraged to participate in HMIS





# HMIS in New York City

- The NYC Department of Social Services (DSS) as the HMIS Lead Agency manages HMIS operations on behalf of the CoC
- The NYC HMIS collects data on the homeless assistance system in **New York City** only
- Homeless Management Information System:
  - Tracks unduplicated count of clients
  - Analyze patterns of services used
  - Evaluates effectiveness of implemented programs
- NYC HMIS webpage: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nycoc/hmis/hmis.page>



# DSS HMIS Staff

Within DSS, the HMIS Team sits within the Federal Homeless Policy & Reporting unit in the Office of Research & Policy Innovation

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# Federal Reporting

- NYC HMIS generates the following reports:
  - Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA) – submitted to HUD by HMIS Lead agency (DSS)
  - System Performance Measures (SPM) – submitted to HUD by HMIS Lead agency (DSS)
  - Annual Performance Reports (APR) for CoC-funded projects
  - Consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER) for ESG-funded projects
  - NYC CoC Annual Evaluation for all CoC-funded projects
  - The Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) (*note: NYC does not currently use HMIS to generate the HIC submitted to HUD annually*)
- All required systemwide reports are submitted **by DSS** to HUD
- Grantees are responsible for running their projects' Annual Performance Reports (APRs) in HMIS and submitting in SAGE (<https://www.sagehmis.info/>) within 90 days of their grant end date



# HMIS Participation

Contributing HMIS Organization (CHO)

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graph TD; A[Contributing HMIS Organization (CHO)] --> B[Project-level Compliant System (example: AWARDS)]; B --> C[Data Warehouse (HMIS)]; C --> D[HMIS Lead Agency runs reports from HMIS];
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Project-level Compliant System (example: AWARDS)

○ Data Warehouse (HMIS)

HMIS Lead Agency runs reports from HMIS

# NYC HMIS Data Warehouse

- The NYC HMIS is a data warehouse rather than a direct data entry system
- Each CHO chooses their own **HMIS-compliant** data system, but the data entered does not automatically populate in the HMIS Data Warehouse
- DSS and the CoC **do not have access** to the data stored in a CHO's data system if that data is not imported into HMIS
- To import data into HMIS, [CHOs must upload data](#) once monthly (at minimum) either via:
  1. The “one-button” upload function in AWARDS; or
  2. CSV uploads for non-AWARDS agencies (“external importers”) following the current HMIS CSV specifications available at <https://www.hudhdx.info/VendorResources.aspx>

# DV Projects and Victim Service Providers (VSPs)

- Projects that primarily serve survivors of domestic violence are prohibited from uploading client data into a shared database
- CoC-funded DV projects are **REQUIRED** to have their own HMIS-comparable database
  - This means the database must include all required HMIS data elements as outlined in the HMIS Data Standards and be able to produce HMIS reports
- DV projects will still submit an Annual Performance Report (APR) to HUD through the Sage HMIS reporting portal (the APR is aggregate data with no PII)
- DV projects funded through the CoC program are required to submit data to DSS for the Annual CoC Evaluation using their data systems (most of these metrics can be sourced from the APR)

# Section 2: CHO Roles & Responsibilities

# HMIS Policies and Procedures

Each CHO is responsible for ensuring all end users of HMIS are appropriately trained on system use, privacy, security, and data collection requirements

The HMIS Lead will provide training to CHO HMIS Administrators and Security Contacts to ensure they are adequately trained to provide such trainings to their End Users

At the discretion of the HMIS Lead, additional trainings may be offered to CHO HMIS Administrators, Security Contacts, and other users

# CHO Executing Officer

Executes the  
Participation  
Agreement

Designates the  
CHO Administrator  
and Security  
Contact

Certifies  
compliance with  
HMIS P&P

Authorized Signor  
for the CHO



# Data Warehouse End User Agreement

Comply with HMIS Data  
Technical Standards  
Notice

Adhere to the HMIS  
Policies and Procedures

End User Agreement  
signed by the Data  
Warehouse (DW) End  
User(s) and CHO  
Executing Officer

HMIS User Agreement  
signed prior to being  
granted access to the  
system

# HMIS Data Warehouse: End User Responsibilities

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HMIS User ID and Password must not be shared with anyone

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Log-off of NYC HMIS before leaving your work area

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Any computer that has HMIS open and running shall never be left unattended

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Any computer used to access HMIS must be equipped with locking (password protected) screen savers

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Any computer that is used to access HMIS must have virus protection software installed with auto-update functions

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Any computer that is used to access HMIS must have software or hardware firewall protection

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Failure to log off NYC Data Warehouse appropriately may result in a breach in client confidentiality and system security

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Notify the HMIS Lead System Administrator within 3 business days of noticing a security breach

# HMIS Participation Agreement

Client Data entered within 3 business days

Uploaded to HMIS within first 10 business days every month

Meet Data Quality Standards

Reviewed on an annual basis within 30 days before or after client project entry date

# Section 3: Getting Started for New Projects and Providers

# HMIS Access

- Once the CHO has selected a vendor for their HMIS-compliant data system, they can start the process of gaining access to NYC HMIS Data Warehouse
- After reviewing the [HMIS Policies & Procedures](#), the CHO and end-users must complete the HMIS Participation Agreements in Appendix B to F and return to DSS
- Once user agreements have been completed, DSS HMIS staff will create log-ins for up to two HMIS end-users per agency
- After receiving their username and temporary password, end-users should navigate to <https://nychmis.footholdtechnology.com/> to access HMIS (note this link is different than the link to access your agency's AWARDS)
- For more information on logging into HMIS, please see [Appendix A of the Policies & Procedures](#) on the HMIS page of the NYC CoC website

# HMIS Required Data Elements

As of October 1, 2021, the FY 2022 Data Standards are implemented in NYC HMIS

The CoC Program Manual summarizes the data collection requirements for CoC-funded programs (<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/CoC-Program-HMIS-Manual.pdf>)

The HMIS Data Standards outline the required HMIS data elements by category:

- Project descriptor data elements (PDDE), including bed/unit inventory for residential project types
- Universal data elements (UDE)
- Program-specific data elements (PSDE)



# Uploading Data to NYC HMIS

AWARDS users have a seamless "one-button" upload functionality from their AWARDS, but keep in mind the data **must** still be uploaded; data entered into AWARDS does not automatically appear in NYC HMIS Data Warehouse

Non-AWARDS users / external importers to HMIS must generate CSV files that conform with the current HMIS Data Standards and CSV Specifications

Step-by-step instructions on uploading to HMIS are included in Appendix A of the HMIS Policies & Procedures on the website

# HMIS Project Set-up

The HMIS Lead staff will enter the agency name, project name, project type, and operating start date into NYC HMIS

Project names should match the name on the grant unless there are exenuating circumstances (please discuss with DSS upon initial project set-up)

Project names in HMIS must match the name in the agency's AWARDS /the non-AWARDS CSV files

Operating End Date should remain **blank** until the day the last clients are discharged from the project

- Note that projects must DISCHARGE all clients from AWARDS/HMIS before the project closes; clients without a discharge date will remain "active" in a project regardless of whether the project has stopped uploading data to HMIS

The CHO is responsible for updating HMIS bed inventory and the Funding source information

Be careful to select the funding source (or funder ID for non-AWARDS users) that aligns with the project type (I.e. RRH projects should not select PSH funding source)

- Grant ID should be the **fixed grant number** (i.e. the grant number minus that last 4 digits which change annually with renewal)
- Leave Grant End Date **blank** unless and until the grant is not renewed

# HMIS Bed and Unit Inventory

The number of beds is generally equivalent to the number of persons a lodging project (ES, SH, TH, PSH, and RRH) can house on a given night

- Beds are equivalent to the **maximum number of people** that can be housed, regardless of the actual number of physical beds present in a unit

The number of units is equivalent to the total number of households that can be housed; for example, a single adult, an adult couple, or a family with children are each considered 1 household in 1 unit

- For single adults, unit inventory should be equal to bed inventory

Inventory is reported separately for the three different household types: adults without children, adults with children (under 18), and child only (i.e. all people in household are under 18)

- The inventory household types should reflect the household types of the actual clients enrolled in the project in HMIS to avoid errors in reports

**Dedicated beds** for veterans, youth, and chronically homeless (PSH only) should be reported where beds are specifically prioritized for these populations.

- Dedicated beds include the household members -- i.e. if a project has units for veterans with children, the childrens' beds **should be counted as dedicated veteran beds**; the same goes for youth households
- All CoC PSH beds should be chronically homeless dedicated even if the project happens to have non-chronically homeless persons residing there

# Key Universal Data Elements

To ensure high data quality in HMIS, HUD measures the CoC on whether certain fields are blank or missing data

The NYC CoC and HMIS Lead monitor the data quality of CHO's via the HMIS Data Quality Reports and the Annual NYC CoC Evaluation

The following universal data elements are considered critical; CHOs are encouraged to make the best effort possible to collect this data from clients:

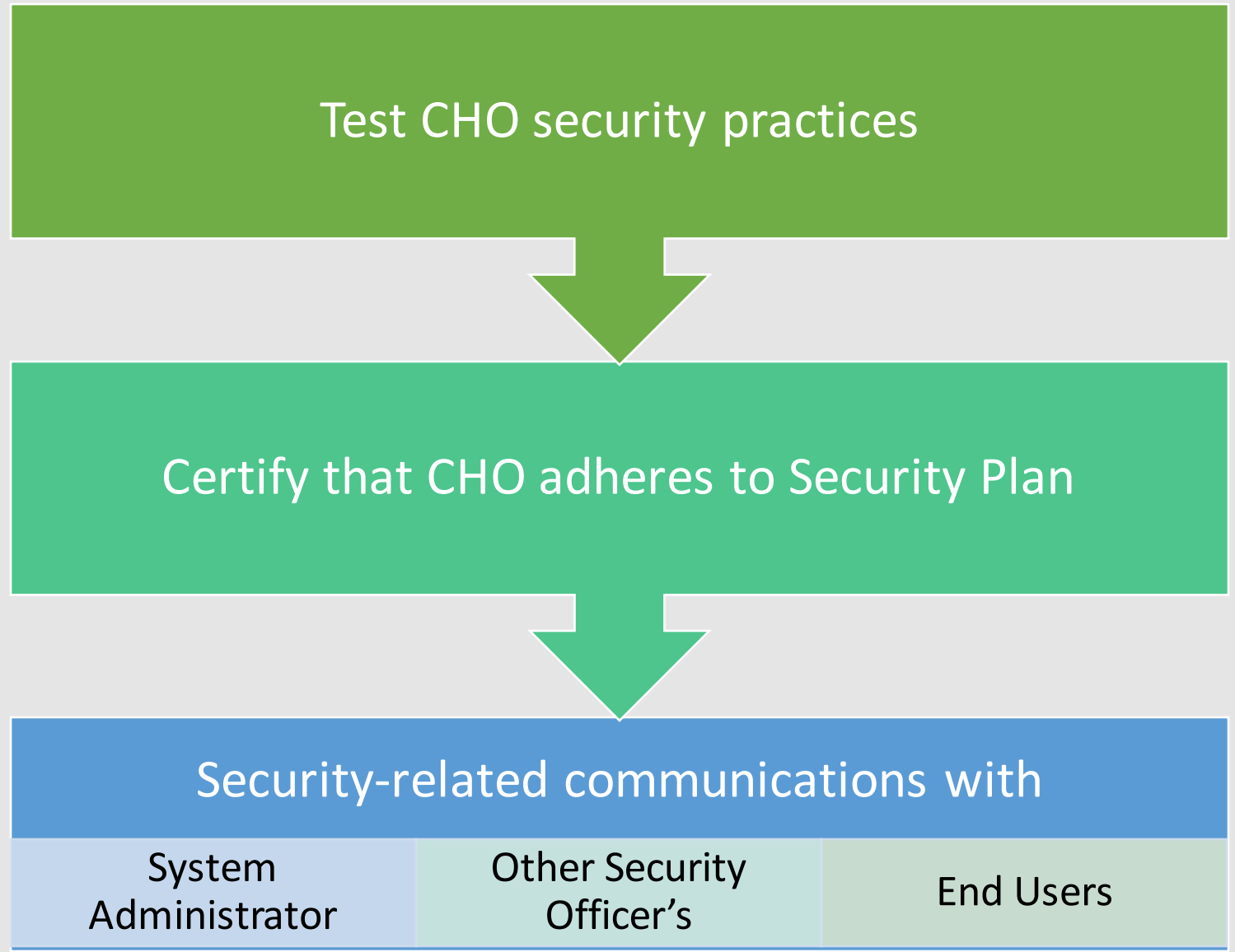
- Personal identifiers: Name, Date of birth, Social Security Number (all used to deduplicate clients across the entire HMIS)
- Date homelessness started, time homeless, prior living situation (all used to calculate chronicity)



## Section 4: HMIS Security and Privacy Policies



# Security Contact





# Administrative and Software Certification Checklist



Documents  
compliance with:

Administrative  
Requirements  
Software &  
Technical  
Requirements



Participating Projects List



Signed by CHO NYC HMIS  
Participation Agreement  
(Appendix C)

# Security Plan

GOAL: To ensure that the HMIS data is collected, used, and maintained in a confidential and secure environment at all times.

- HMIS Security Officer & CHO Security Contact
- CHO Project-level HMIS-compliant System Security
- Compliance Review
- PII Management and Disposal
- Use Requirements
- Security Incidents
- Data Warehouse Security
- Disaster Recovery

# Security Certification Checklist



Physical Security



Backup Requirements



Software Security



Password Compliance



Audit Compliance



PII Management & Storage



Disposal Compliance

# Unauthorized Use or Disclosure of Data or PII

- All Data Warehouse End Users are responsible and accountable for safeguarding information assets from unauthorized modification, disclosure, and destruction.
- The CoC considers unauthorized use or disclosure of HMIS information to be a serious matter and any Data Warehouse users found to be in breach of their Data Warehouse User Agreements will be subject to penalties or sanctions including:
  - The loss of use or limitation on the use of HMIS and other office and technology resources;
  - Adverse employment actions, including dismissal; and
  - Civil and/or criminal prosecution and penalties
- Security or Privacy Breach
  - Inform HMIS Lead within 3 business days of discovery
  - CHO must have written security and privacy policies (see example policies in the HMIS P&P Appendices G through J)

# Electronic PII

## PII: Protected Individual Identifiers

- May only be saved to encrypted hard drives
- Not stored on personally owned media
- Not placed on USB drive for personal use
- Protected from modification, theft or unauthorized access

# Hardcopy PII



Locked files or file rooms



Prevent exposure to others



Not removed from places of business



Sealed envelopes and receipt delivery records



Fax Machines/Printers kept  
in secure areas

Call recipients in  
advance of faxing



# PII Disposal Compliance

CHO will establish procedures for disposal of PII

Hardcopy = Cross Cut Shredding & Pulverizing

Electronic = D5220-22.M or Gutman Wipe

- Sanitize Hardware (crush, shred, incinerate, melt)
- PRNG Stream with 8 passes

S6.10 Record Retention Schedule:

- Disposal or de-identify PII not in current use, seven years after the information was created or last changed.

# Privacy Policy: Minimum Requirements

Specify all potential uses & disclosures of PII

Specify purpose for collecting the information

Specify data retention time-frame & method for disposal or de-identification after 7 years

Amendatory procedure & documentation

Accommodate disability & language barriers

Allow client's right to a copy of their record

Specify process for privacy policy suggestions

# Privacy Policy: HMIS Data Use and Disclosure

When required by law

To avert serious  
threat of health or  
safety

To report abuse,  
neglect or domestic  
violence to  
government authority

To a law enforcement  
official

To comply with  
government reporting  
obligations for HMIS

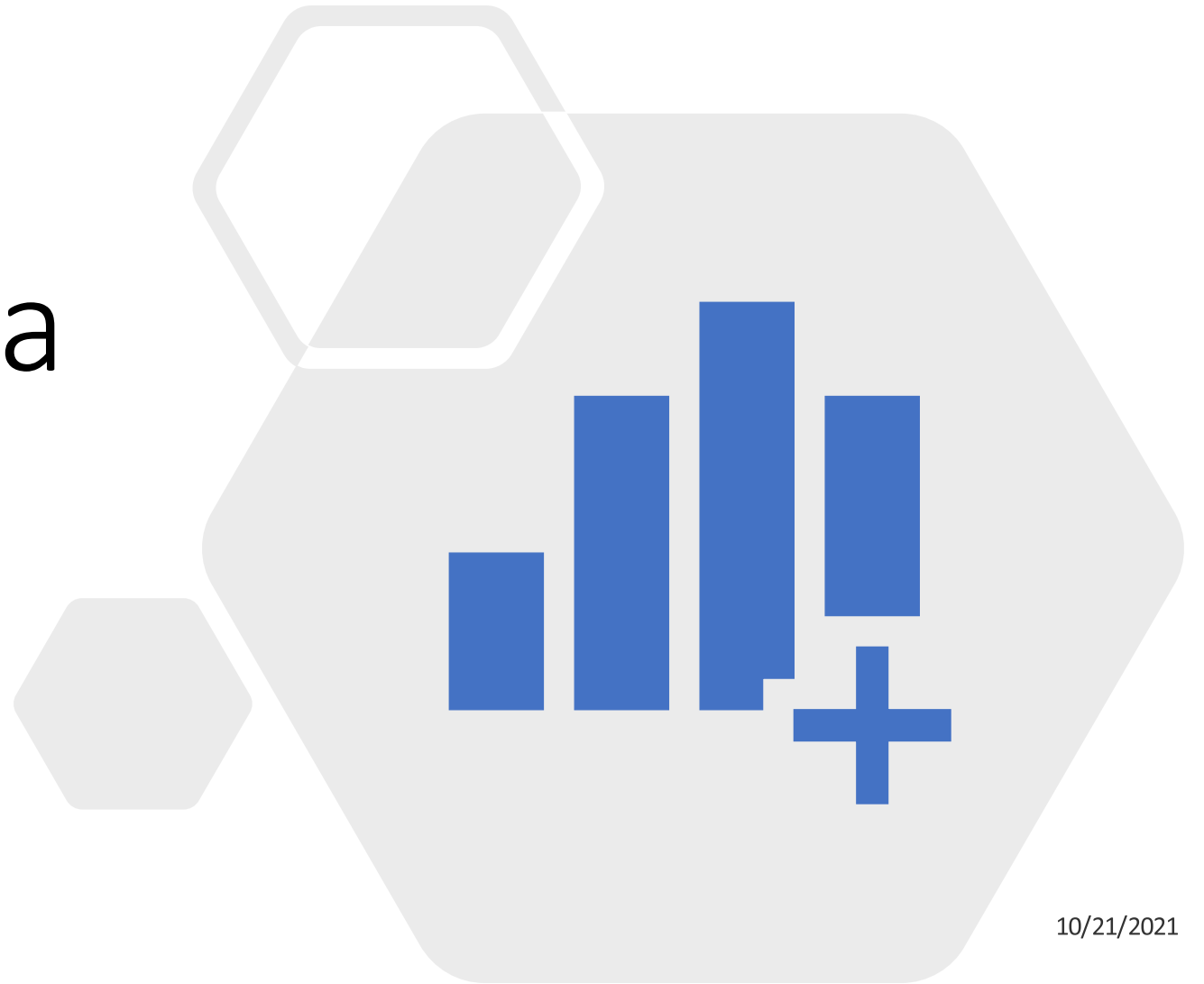
To third parties (ie.  
conduct data match,  
or approved research  
by DHS IRB)

# Privacy Policy Notice

- Client knowledge or consent of data collection: post sign where data collection occurs
- Privacy Policy accessible to clients & public
- CHO Privacy Policy posted on CHO website
- Language & Disability accommodations

*We collect personal information about homeless individuals in a computer system called a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for reasons that are discussed in our privacy policy. We may be required to collect some personal information by law or by organizations that give us money to operate this program. Other personal information that we collect is important to run our programs, to improve services for homeless individuals, and to better understand the needs of homeless individuals. We only collect information that we consider to be appropriate. If you have any questions or would like to see our privacy policy, our staff will provide you with a copy.*

# Section 5: Data Quality



10/21/2021

# Data Quality Overview

- What does data quality mean?
  - To record the most complete, accurate and timely information in order to draw reasonable conclusions about the extent of homelessness and the impact of homeless services
- Why does data quality matter?
  - For more accurate reporting on homelessness
  - Reliability and validity of HMIS data for Annual CoC Program Application: funding for NYC
  - To measure projects' success in meeting HUD and/or CoC priorities

# Data Quality Plan: Timeliness

## Data Uploads to NYC HMIS Data Warehouse:

- by the 10<sup>th</sup> business day of the following month

## Data Entry within 3 business days of:

- Entry Date, Exit Date, and Contact or Service
- 3 Month Enrollment Date
- 1 Year Enrollment Date
- Learning of a material change (active clients)

# Data Quality Plan: Accuracy

Goal: Data entered correctly and can be verified with documentation

CHO will:

- Assess client truthfulness, accuracy of data collected by staff, and accuracy of data entered by staff
- Logic checks and compare with paper records
- Update and/or correct data



# Additional HMIS Resources

- HMIS Policies & Procedures and Appendices  
[https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycccoc/downloads/pdf/HMIS\\_PP\\_v5.0\\_2019-Appendices\\_Amended.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycccoc/downloads/pdf/HMIS_PP_v5.0_2019-Appendices_Amended.pdf)
- Appendices B-F should be updated annually
- For issues accessing HMIS, please contact Roxanna Deleon at [deleonr@dss.nyc.gov](mailto:deleonr@dss.nyc.gov)
- For more information on NYC HMIS, please visit the CoC's website: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nycccoc/hmis/hmis.page>