

# Minnesota's HMIS Policies and Procedures

*Minnesota's Homeless Management  
Information System will provide standardized  
and timely information to improve access to  
housing and services and strengthen our efforts  
to end homelessness*

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# Acknowledgments

The original version of this document was produced by Minnesota's HMIS Governing Group, led in this effort by Richard Wayman. This document was approved by the Governing Group on January 31, 2005.

The first major revision took place on December 2012, following recommendations discussed in a meeting of the HMIS Governing Group on December 6, 2012. Another major revision occurred in January 2014, following recommendations discussed in a meeting of the HMIS Governing Group on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

# Contact Information

## **Web site information on Minnesota's HMIS:**

<http://www.hmismn.org>

## **HMIS help desk:**

HMIS@wilder.org

651-280-2780, or 1-855-280-2780

Wilder Research  
451 Lexington Parkway North  
St. Paul, MN 55104

## **HMIS Grievances (reported to HMIS Governing Group):**

Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless  
Attention: HMIS Grievance  
2233 University Avenue West, Suite 434  
St. Paul, MN 55114  
651-645-7332



# Background

## *Introduction*

Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) enable data from a variety of service providers to be combined to reveal a more comprehensive picture of client needs. In Minnesota and elsewhere this is accomplished via the internet, using software that can enable inter-agency case management within a context of strict data privacy protections.

## *History*

The decision to implement an HMIS in Minnesota grew out of a desire to obtain standardized, regularly updated information about homelessness for advocates, planners, and policymakers – all of whom were interested in doing something about the consistently growing and stubbornly persistent problem of homelessness. The idea was to broaden a data tracking initiative started among Ramsey County shelters and transitional housing providers in the early 1990s.

Coinciding with this local activity was a Congressional mandate to implement HMIS. In 2000 Congress instructed the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to take measures to improve available data concerning homelessness in the United States. In response, HUD obligated all Continuum of Care regions to implement region-wide databases that would allow an unduplicated count of service users.

Specifically, Congress mandated to HUD to collect information on the number of persons assisted through the McKinney-Vento Act. The Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2003 (Pub. L. 108-7) in its conference committee report noted:

HUD is directed to begin collecting data on the percentage and number of beds and supportive services programs that are serving people who are chronically disabled and/or chronically homeless. . . HUD should continue its collaborative efforts with local jurisdictions to collect an array of data on homelessness in order to analyze patterns of use of assistance, including how people enter and exit the homeless assistance system, and to assess the effectiveness of the homeless assistance system.

Previously in FY 1999 HUD Appropriations Act, Congress directed HUD to collect data from representative samples of existing HMIS systems,

collect, at a minimum, the following data: The unduplicated count of clients served; client characteristics such as age, race, disability status, units (days) and type of housing received (shelter, transitional, permanent); and services rendered. Outcome information such as housing stability, income, and health status should be collected.<sup>1</sup>

The state Inter-Agency Task Force on Homelessness, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, the Metro-wide Engagement on Shelter, and others responded to this mandate by convening a series of open meetings in spring 2002. By general consensus a statewide, rather than region-by-region, approach was adopted and an “Implementation Group” was convened to oversee the project. The Implementation Group consisted of representatives from all of Minnesota’s Continuum of Care regions, at-large members who represent various populations and provider groups (e.g., agencies for homeless youth, veterans, domestic violence victims, those with HIV/AIDS, and consumers of homeless services), and representatives of state government.

The Implementation Group guided development and implementation of Minnesota’s HMIS. Early on the group adopted a vision for Minnesota’s HMIS (see next section), selected a system administrator (Wilder Research), trainer (Minnesota Housing Partnership), and software for the system (Bowman System’s ServicePoint). The group also developed various system policies and worked on system funding. The group continues to meet regularly to advise Wilder Research on nearly every aspect of the HMIS project, including budgetary matters and annual fees, system policies, and training procedures.

### ***Eligible programs***

Programs which may use HMIS include, but are not limited to:

- Emergency shelters serving homeless adults, families, and youth<sup>2</sup>
- Transitional housing programs
- Supportive Housing Programs (whether scattered site or on-site)

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<sup>1</sup> See Fed. Register, Vol. 68, No. 140 (July 22, 2003) for further overview of federal mandates for HMIS.

<sup>2</sup> In general, domestic violence shelters are prohibited from participation in HMIS by federal legislation, under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Please see [hmismn.org](http://hmismn.org), or contact Wilder Research for additional information.

- Street and Community outreach programs to persons who are homeless
- Supportive Service programs serving persons who are homeless

In addition, HMIS participation is a requirement of various funders. On the Federal level, HMIS participation is mandated for all service and housing providers that receive HUD funding under the McKinney-Vento Act, which includes:

- Supportive Housing Program (SHP)
- Shelter plus Care
- Section 8 Moderate Rehab for Single Room Occupancy
- Emergency Solutions Grant
- Housing for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)

Satisfying the HMIS requirement is also factored into the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) scoring of annual Continuum of Care applications – the more programs that participate in HMIS, the higher the Continuum is scored on that aspect of their application. In Minnesota this means that implementing and maintaining a widely-used HMIS improves the state's chances of continuing to receive the over \$20 million annually in federal funding that we now receive under the McKinney-Vento program.

On the state level, the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency require HMIS participation for their grantees under the following programs:

Minnesota Department of Human Services/Office of Economic Opportunity

- Transitional Housing Program (THP)
- Emergency Services Program (ESP)
- Emergency Solutions Grant Program (ESGP)
- Runaway and Homeless Youth Act
- Healthy Transitions for Youth
- Ending Long-Term Homelessness Supportive Services

## Minnesota Housing Finance Agency

- Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP)
- Projects funded under the Plan to End Long-Term Homelessness

Agencies that receive funding from these state programs use HMIS to satisfy their reporting requirements.

Ideally all emergency shelters, transitional and supportive housing program, and homeless outreach programs in the state will participate in HMIS. The more agencies, and the more users within agencies, that participate in the system the better. More agencies equal more comprehensive data, and therefore improved information for planning and policymaking. More users within agencies means that clients will more likely receive appropriate services, since their caseworks may have an opportunity to see relevant case history from prior service episodes, and will have an opportunity to rely upon the systems case planning, referral, and data protection capacities.

### ***Why is this important?***

Because agencies that serve people experiencing homelessness work for the public welfare of our communities, they must remain accountable to their program participants, funders, and community partners. One way to remain accountable is to be driven and focused on a mission and to report progress on accomplishing that mission. Programs should be transparent about what outcomes and goals they have achieved. HMIS allows programs to manage data in a secure and standardized environment that also offers an aggregate view of our state-wide efforts to end homelessness. We hope that with better information we will be able to plan, work, and achieve greater success in serving participants with meaningful services and housing options and end a social problem that can be fixed.



# Expectations for HMIS Partner Agencies

Social service agencies that participate in Minnesota's HMIS are referred to as "partner agencies." Each partner agency needs to follow certain guidelines to help keep the project on track and to maintain data privacy and accuracy. The guidelines below do not replace the more formal and legally-binding agency agreement that each agency signs when joining the project.

## *Implementing HMIS*

To prepare for participating in Minnesota's HMIS, agency administration should:

- Familiarize themselves with HMIS (see [www.hmismn.org](http://www.hmismn.org)).
- Decide how many system end-users they will need. "End users" are the people who will actually enter data into the HMIS and use the system to run reports that the agency may need for funding purposes, or find useful for internal management. Typical end users include intake workers and case managers. Typically, the more end-users in an agency, the more useful the system becomes. There are, however, additional costs for each end-user in an agency. Volunteers should only be designated as end-users as a last resort, and will be subject to the same training and legal requirements as all other end-users.
- Familiarize prospective end-users with basic computer skills if necessary (e.g., windows, using a mouse, navigating the internet).
- Designate a primary HMIS contact within the agency.
- Develop a clear understanding of current reporting needs and funding streams. For example, does the agency receive SHP funds? THP? FHPAP?
- Understand the agency's data privacy requirements. For example, is the agency covered by HIPAA?
- Have access to a computer. Nearly any computer purchased within the past 5 years will be adequate. (See [hmismn.org](http://hmismn.org) for current technical requirements and recommendations.)
- The computer must have access to the internet and an up-to-date a web browser. (See [hmismn.org](http://hmismn.org) for current technical requirements and recommendations.)

The steps for implementation include the following:

- 1. Initial contact.** Agency is contacted by Wilder Research (or contacts Wilder Research) and agrees to send its end-users to a day-long introductory group training on HMIS and using ServicePoint. Agency administrators, IT staff, or others may also attend the training for a fee if there is space available. Agencies should not sign up for training unless they are willing and able to complete the following steps and begin entering actual client data within one month of attending training.
- 2. Paperwork and payment.** Before attending training: (a) Agency must review and sign an agency agreement before the training. (b) If the agency is covered by HIPAA, the agency should send Wilder Research a Business Associates Agreement. (c) The agency must pay any training and end-user fees.
- 3. Training.** All end-users within must complete initial training with Wilder Research.
- 4. Work flow.** Agency program administrators and system end-users should designate a process for integrating the HMIS into its regular flow of work. Ideally information in ServicePoint will be updated in real time, whenever clients are entering or leaving programs, but this is not always possible. Planning how to incorporate ServicePoint in the agency's workflow should be done before the walk through so that the agency is ready to use ServicePoint immediately after the walk-through. Necessary decisions include:
  - a. Will the data be directly entered into ServicePoint during intake or case management sessions? (If so, what is our back-up plan if the power is out or the internet connection goes down?)
  - b. Will the information be recorded by paper forms and entered later? If so, can we adapt our existing forms so that there is no confusion when entering data into ServicePoint? Note that electronic versions (MS Word format) of data entry forms that mirror screens in ServicePoint are available at [www.hmismn.org](http://www.hmismn.org)
  - c. Who will run reports? Which ones? How often? Note that we strongly recommend running reports on a monthly or weekly basis to help check for data entry errors. The agency is responsible for maintaining accurate data, and regularly running reports is a good way to double check that information has been properly recorded in the system. Regular reporting may also provide the agency with important information about its clients and programmatic goals.

5. **Data privacy practices and client informed consent.** Before entering data into Minnesota’s HMIS, agencies must implement any necessary client notice, consent, and release of information forms associated with Minnesota’s HMIS (see appendix for current examples), as well as their own written data privacy policy. This can be done prior to training, and should be ready to implement by the time of the walk through or even shortly before, so that the agency can begin entering actual data as soon as possible. Note that agency should be able to explain to clients the data privacy practices associated with Minnesota’s HMIS.
6. **Set-up.** After training the agency’s designated HMIS contact will be called by Wilder Research, to gather information necessary to configure ServicePoint to meet the agency’s reporting and data privacy needs. The Agency’s end-users cannot be given access to the system until the system set-up is complete, so it is important that the agency respond to Wilder’s requests for information as soon as possible. Agencies that do not follow through with set-up after attending training may be required to attend an additional training session, at added cost.
7. **Walk through.** After set-up is completed (and confirmed with the agency’s HMIS contact person), Wilder Research will contact the agency for a “walk through” session that serves as a sort of refresher on how to use the HMIS and demonstrates the way that the system has been configured for the agency. Usernames and passwords are issued at this point.
8. **Using the system.** Agencies should record in the HMIS at least three actual client entries into their programs within 2 weeks of completing set up with Wilder Research. On an on-going basis agencies must enter and update information on all current clients in their HMIS-relevant programs (homeless prevention, outreach, shelter, and housing programs) on at least a quarterly basis. Information must be updated by the end of the second week after each quarter’s end (by April 15 for Q1; by July 15 for Q2; by October 15 for Q3; and by January 15 for Q3).
  - a. **Reporting:** Agencies are required to run reports in the system as directed by their funding sources, and should run these reports prior to actual report due dates to check for data entry errors. Agencies are strongly encouraged to use the systems reporting features on a more frequent weekly or monthly basis to check for data entry errors. Agencies are responsible for the quality of the data that they report.

## ***General on-going commitments***

Participating agencies should be prepared to commit to the following:

- Collecting and updating minimum data elements on all clients, and updating on a quarterly basis as necessary. Information must be updated by the end of the second week after each quarter's end (by April 15 for Q1; by July 15 for Q2; by October 15 for Q3; and by January 15 for Q3). This is necessary for Wilder Research to be able to issue accurate quarterly reports.
- Maintaining accurate data. The agency should run system reports on a regular weekly or monthly basis to check for errors. The agency should contact Wilder Research ([HMIS@wilder.org](mailto:HMIS@wilder.org), 651-280-2780, or 1-855-280-2780) if needing assistance with data correction, including deleting any client records that were entered by mistake.
- Obtaining necessary client consent and releases of information for data sharing.
- Agencies covered by HIPAA, domestic violence agencies, youth providers, and HIV/AIDS providers must develop joint legal agreements with other partner agencies if they will be sharing client records via the HMIS. Such agencies must work with Wilder Research to enable restricted data sharing.
- Posting a Notice of Uses and Disclosures for Minnesota's HMIS (see exhibits at end of this manual). Agency staff should be able to provide a basic explanation of the notice and the agency should be able to provide a copy to each of its clients.
- Cancel HMIS access of any end-user who is terminated from employment, leaves the agency, or needs to be restricted from the system for any other reason. The agency should contact Wilder Research as soon as possible and no more than 24 hours after the end-user is terminated.

## ***Information entry standards***

- Information entered into Minnesota's HMIS will be truthful, accurate and complete.
- Agency staff will not enter information about clients into Minnesota's HMIS database unless the information is required for a legitimate business purpose such as to provide services to the Client, to conduct evaluation or research, to administer the program, or to comply with regulatory requirements.
- When adding to- or modifying data in- an existing client's HMIS record, end users should check to see if that client is currently receiving services from a different HMIS partner agency (e.g., entered into, but not yet exited from another program). If the client is active elsewhere, end-users should not alter or over-ride information possibly used by staff of that agency without first verifying the change with staff of the other agency.

## ***No conditioning of services***

Agencies shall not decline to provide any services to a client based upon a client's refusal to sign a Release of Information form or refusing to allow entry of information into Minnesota's HMIS. (Note: This does not over-ride agency policies or funding restrictions that may require certain data from a client before an agency is able to serve the client. However, if this is the case and HMIS is the only data base, then the client may be offered the opportunity to be entered as anonymous client – e.g., entered with a system generated code and no social security number or other identifying information.)

## ***Accountability for noncompliance***

The HMIS Governing Group will receive updates from Wilder Research on progress made by participating programs with HMIS. The Governing Group will provide notice to agencies and funders (the state of Minnesota, HUD, or local Continuum of Care Committees) when agencies are found not to be in compliance with data entry or have violated the code of ethics or privacy concerns.

The HMIS Governing Group and Wilder Research would like to make compliance with system policies and expectations as easy as possible, and welcomes agency requests for assistance. Agencies that fail to comply, however, should be aware of the potential for penalties under data privacy laws (e.g., HIPAA, the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act); potential impacts on funding from state and federal sources; and the

possibility of additional charges from Wilder Research to cover costs associated with rectifying substantial problems.

## Privacy Plan

*According to standards put forward by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Homeless Management Information Systems are encouraged to have privacy plans that at the minimum include: data collection limitations; purpose and use limitations; allowable uses and disclosures; access and correction standards; and protections for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.*

The Privacy Plan for Minnesota's HMIS consists of the following documents:

- **Agency Agreement**  
This form obligates organizations that participate in Minnesota's HMIS to abide by all applicable rules and regulations, and to oversee proper use of the HMIS by their staff.
- **User policy, responsibility statement & code of ethics**  
This form, signed by all system end-users, specifies responsibilities of individuals who access Minnesota's HMIS, and includes limitations on collecting data and accessing data. End users must agree to honor the wishes of the persons whose information is interested into the HMIS; access only information for which they have a clear business purpose; and keep their username and passwords private.
- **Client data privacy notice and consent form**  
This form, given to all persons (or their parents or guardians) whose information is entered into the HMIS, outlines allowable uses and disclosures of individually-identifiable data maintained in HMIS. It also informs clients of their rights to view and correct data held in Minnesota's HMIS, including a method for filing grievances.
- **Client release of information form**  
This form, while not currently in wide use, specifies organizations that an organization may share data with via Minnesota's HMIS. Clients may elect to share data or to limit data sharing.
- **HMIS grievance procedure form**  
This form provides a grievance process for those who feel that they have been somehow wronged by Minnesota's HMIS.

Finally, all end-users are trained to protect the privacy of individually-identifiable data entered into Minnesota's HMIS

## **Program Participant Rights**

Program participants have a clear right to:

- Keep their personal information held private. All clients have the right to choose to have their data entered in the system anonymously and refuse to have certain information recorded about them in the system. This can provide protections for clients who have experienced domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking at some point in their lives or who are uncomfortable having information entered about them for any other reason.
- Have their preferences with regard to the entry and sharing of client information within Minnesota's HMIS respected, whether they prefer their data to be shared with other partner agencies or not.
- Request a change in their information sharing preferences.
- Refuse to allow entry of identifiable information into Minnesota's HMIS without being denied services (except if entry of identifiable information is necessary for program operation).
- Have only truthful and accurate information about them entered into the system.
- Not be asked for information unless the information is required for a legitimate business purpose such as to provide services to the client.
- Inspect and obtain a copy of their own information maintained within Minnesota's HMIS (except for information that is used in preparation for a criminal or civil court case under release by subpoena).
- File grievances related to the HMIS without retaliation.

## **Data sharing**

One of the potential benefits – and potential risks – of Minnesota's HMIS is the ability to easily share data between agencies in a standardized format. Certain agencies, like youth providers, HIV/AIDS providers, and HIPAA-covered agencies, will only share data with other service providers if they have developed specific agreements allowing them to do so. Others will choose to share data routinely with other HMIS partner agencies. In either case, clients have the right to control access to their data and must sign a Client Release of Information form before an agency can share information about the client with other agencies via Minnesota's HMIS (see appendix or electronic forms at

[www.hmismn.org](http://www.hmismn.org) ). Note that agency staff must be prepared to explain the HMIS system and agency privacy policies upon request.

Additionally, please note that:

- Agency staff have the ability to designate information entered into the HMIS as “open” – meaning shared with other partner agencies, or “closed” – meaning hidden from other partner agencies. While Wilder will set defaults for data sharing in consultation with the agency, it is the responsibility of the agency staff to make sure that the data they are entering is secure consistent with agency practices and client preferences.
- HMIS project staff at Wilder Research and Bowman Systems, LLC. will have access to all information entered into the system. Wilder and Bowman routinely deal with sensitive data and abide by strict data privacy practices. Wilder and Bowman will only access identifying information for business-related reasons, including administering the database, conducting research, and preparing reports (only aggregate information will be included in reports).
- Minnesota’s HMIS is not a government database. Federal agencies, including HUD, do NOT have direct or routine access to the HMIS. State government employees do not have direct access to the system, but in some cases do see client-level information about persons served under the grant programs that they monitor.

## Security Plan

*According to standards put forward by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Homeless Management Information Systems are encouraged to have security plans that: ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of all HMIS information; protect against any reasonably anticipated threats or hazards to security, and; ensure compliance by end users.*

The security plan for Minnesota’s HMIS includes the documents and protections outlined in the privacy plan. In addition, the security plan includes security and backup technology provided by the system’s vendor, currently including:

- End-user authentication via username and complex password, including temporarily inactivating licenses with more than 3 consecutive failed logins.
- Automatic logout after a specified period of inactivity on the system (currently 15 minutes).
- Secured Socket-Layer certification of data sent over the internet.
- Database-level encryption.



- Firewall protection against attempted system hacks.

In addition the availability of the system and data contained therein is provided the system vendor via redundant servers and nightly off-site system back up, as specified in the Disaster Recovery Plan.

Finally, administrative staff for Minnesota's HMIS run security reports on an at least monthly basis, to help ensure that end-users are properly following data privacy and sharing procedures. Failure to comply with procedures may result in denial of access to Minnesota's HMIS, as outlined in the Policies and Procedures manual.

### **Agency Responsibilities**

Agencies are responsible for the actions of their users. Among the steps Agency will take to maintain data privacy and security are:

- **Access.** Agencies will permit access to Minnesota's HMIS or client-level information obtained from it only to paid employees or supervised volunteers who need access to Minnesota's HMIS for legitimate business purposes (such as to provide services to the Client, to conduct evaluation or research, to administer the program, or to comply with regulatory requirements). Volunteers should only be designated as system users as a last resort, and are subject to the same training and legal requirements as all other system users.
- **Computers.** Agencies will allow access to Minnesota's HMIS only from computers which are (a) physically present on Agency's premises; (b) owned by the Agency; or (c) approved by Agency for the purpose of accessing and working with Minnesota's HMIS. The latter (c) shall apply only in extra-ordinary circumstances, when it is not feasible to meet conditions (a) or (b). Agency shall maintain written statements of any approvals of computers not owned by or located in the agency. Additionally, agencies should protect computers used to access Minnesota's HMIS with commercially available virus protection software.
- **Username and passwords.** Usernames and passwords shall not be stored or displayed in any publicly accessible location. Usernames and passwords may only be used by the person to whom they are assigned; licenses may not be shared under any circumstance.
- **Change in Employee status.** Any employee that is terminated or quits should have their user name and password immediately removed by contacting Wilder Research (651-280-2780; HMIS@wilder.org).

- **Training.** Agency will only allow their staff to access Minnesota’s HMIS only after the authorized user receives appropriate confidentiality training including that provided by Wilder Research. Licenses granted to approved staff must not be shared; each staff who accesses HMIS must have a unique username and password.

# Data Quality Plan

Wilder Research, in preparing to develop a data quality and monitoring plan, reviewed HUD guidelines as well as existing data quality plans from other HMIS implementations around the country. All these include at least the following 5 elements; Timeliness, Completeness, Accuracy, Monitoring, and Incentives/Enforcement. The data quality plan has also been reviewed and approved by the HMIS Governing Group.

## Timeliness

- Current applicable policy: *Collect and update minimum data elements on all clients, and updating on a quarterly basis as necessary. Information must be updated by the end of the second week after each quarter's end (by April 15 for Q1; by July 15 for Q2; by October 15 for Q3; and by January 15 for Q4).*
- Purpose: is to ensure data is accessible for agency, community level, and federal reporting and to improve data accuracy. Reducing the time period between data collection and data entry will increase the accuracy and completeness of client data.
- Proposed Standard (may vary by program type):
  - Emergency Shelter (ES): within 10 days of service start date
  - Transitional Housing (TH): within 2 weeks of program entry
  - Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH): within 2 weeks of program entry
  - Services Only: within 10 days of program entry
  - FHPAP/Prevention/Rapid Rehousing only: within 10 days of program entry
  - ALL programs: All data must be entered and updated as required by funders. Data for each quarter must be entered, complete, and current by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month following each quarter. (*April 15 for Q1; July 15 for Q2; October 15 for Q3; and January 15 for Q4.*)
    - Included data elements that will be monitored are:
      - Universal data elements (HUD and MN required)
      - Entry/Exits
      - Services
    - Funder-required updates to assessment information (disabilities, income, non-cash benefits, residence, etc.) will continue to be required on the already established funder-required schedule.

## Completeness

- Current applicable policy: *Information entered into Minnesota's HMIS will be truthful, accurate and complete.*
- Purpose is to ensure that MN and each CoC can accurately describe the clients and services provided to clients who are accessing services. A complete record also is important for reporting for the use of data in any community level reporting as well as

for HUD required processes such as NOFA and AHAR which can affect funding for the CoC and its providers.

- Proposed Standard:
  - All clients receiving homeless, prevention, and outreach services have a record in HMIS
    - Goal of less than 5% of clients are anonymous
      - Exception for providers who must enter all clients anonymous such as domestic violence and legal services providers
      - Exception for outreach clients. Up to 10% of outreach clients may be entered anonymously.
    - Client choice in signing the consent form takes precedent and staff should not pressure clients into agreeing to have their information identifiable if the client does not do so. However, high percentages of anonymous clients may indicate staff or agency understanding of the consent form process may need review and/or clarification.
  - All data entered into HMIS is complete (based on funder requirements)
    - Universal Data Elements: “Missing”, is less than 2% and “don’t know or refused” is less than 3% in any one field.
      - Exception for SSN#. This may have up to 2% missing, and 8% don’t know, or refused.
        - Exception for providers who must enter all clients anonymously. All SSN# will be listed as Refused. All other elements will be completed with up to 5% “don’t know or refused”.
      - Exception for Date of birth. Less than 1% of client records shall be missing date of birth. If client declines to give his/her DOB, an approximate DOB will be entered.
    - Program Specific Data Elements: “Missing”, is less than 2% and “don’t know or refused” is less than 3% in any one field
  - Bed Utilization rates: Emergency Shelters, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing programs and CoC Coordinators will review utilization rates quarterly using data in HMIS.
    - Wilder HMIS staff will send quarterly utilization reports to CoC Coordinators to review and pass on to programs. This process can help determine whether or not data is being completely entered. Low utilization or utilization over 100% can be a sign that data is not being entered or exited correctly. It can also indicate changes in programs, such as bed counts, that must be accurately counted.

### **Accuracy/Consistency**

- Current applicable policy: *Clients have the right to: Have only truthful and accurate information about them entered into the system*
- Purpose: To ensure that data in HMIS is collected and entered in a common and consistent manner.
- HMIS users should focus on accuracy of program start and end dates. To support this CoC Coordinators, state and private funders, and HMIS staff review reports:
  - CoC Coordinators review APRs to verify client counts are correct/as expected.
  - State and Private funders review reports that are required for their programs to verify client counts are correct/as expected
  - HMIS staff periodically verifies bed counts and program counts through the Bed Inventory Reporting process associated with the AHAR reporting process.

### **Data Quality Process/Monitoring**

- Purpose: To ensure that the standards for timeliness, completeness, and accuracy are met and that data quality issues are identified and resolved.
- Proposed Standard:
  - Agencies and CoC Coordinators provide timely updates to CoC HMIS staff regarding any changes to programs
  - HMIS will run quarterly data quality reports and bed utilization rate reports and will provide these reports to the CoC Coordinator to review.
    - HMIS will send reports to CoC Coordinators on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the month, or next business day thereafter, following the end of each quarter. (January, April, July, October)
  - CoC Coordinators will review the reports and request that program providers make any necessary changes to their data.
  - Program providers will review their data and make necessary corrections to meet the above data standards.
    - Program providers/agencies which had data quality errors will be asked by their CoC coordinators to send a copy of the report to the CoC Coordinators showing that the errors have been corrected. (See Data Quality Monitoring Plan Report Instructions for more details on running data quality reports.)
  - HMIS staff will assist providers in correcting data and updating program information as needed.

### **Incentives/Enforcement**

- *To be developed with input from system funders, CoC Coordinators, agencies, and users.*

# Oversight of Minnesota's HMIS

## *Composition of HMIS Governing Group*

The Governing Group currently is a 26 member body, made up of the following:

- 13 representatives appointed by Continuum of Care regions in Minnesota.
- 1 representative of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
- 1 representative of the Metro-wide Engagement on Shelter and Housing (MESH)
- 2 representatives from the state's Inter-Agency Task Force on Homelessness
- 1 representative from each of the following groups: youth, veterans, domestic violence, AIDS/HIV, homeless or formerly homeless (5 members total)  
Representative from first four groups (youth, veterans, domestic violence, and AIDS/HIV) may be a service-provider with expertise on the population, or a client member of the population. These members are nominated and elected by current members.
- 2 additional at large representatives, nominated and elected by current members.
- 2 representatives with expertise in the field of technology.<sup>3</sup>

Representatives shall be appointed for two year cycles.

## *Additional provisions*

- A chairperson (or co-chairs or "officers") will be elected from the membership serve as the main point of contact between the oversight body and project staff, and to set meeting agendas.
- Decisions will be made by consensus when possible, by majority vote when necessary. Proxy voting is allowed and encouraged if members are unable to attend meetings, but a quorum is not required for group meetings or decisions.
- Project staff will staff meetings and will not serve as voting members.

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<sup>3</sup> Originally the Governing Group was a 25-member body. On August 28, 2006 the Governing Group passed a motion to include an additional technology representative.

- Subcommittees shall be appointed as needed.

## ***Governing Group roles and responsibilities***

### **Budget and Financing**

- Periodically reviews HMIS system budget
- Sets goals for user-based fees
- Assists with fundraising

### **System Policies**

- Data element oversight (resolving the manner in which specific elements are collected when there is disagreement among users; approval of any questionable or controversial data elements)
- Development of standardized reports (resolving disagreements between regions, providers, etc. concerning standardized reporting)
- Approval of necessary forms
- Approval of agency participation
- Deciding on the appropriate system rights for participating agencies and staff
- Penalizing agencies that do not comply with system policies
- Hearing client grievances, and recommending appropriate remedy
- Approval of data requested by non-participants (e.g., academic researchers)
- Approval of requested narrative reports (special or first-time requests)

Current membership, including contact information, is available at [www.hmismn.org](http://www.hmismn.org).

# Expectations for HMIS System Administrator

## **Providing an HMIS**

As system administrator for Minnesota's HMIS, Wilder Research provides all of the necessary equipment, staff, and technology to operate and maintain the central site. This may be done directly or through contracts with outside vendors. Bowman Systems currently provides software (ServicePoint) and application service provider (ASP) services, including hosting and maintaining central servers, for Minnesota's HMIS.

In addition, system administrator will work with Continuum of Care Coordinators, participating agencies, end-users, vendors, and other HMIS stakeholders to ensure compliance with HMIS-related rules and standards enacted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.<sup>4</sup>

## **HMIS Governing Group**

Wilder Research utilizes the HMIS Governing Group to provide general oversight and guidance to the project.

## **Training**

Wilder Research provides ongoing training on the system, either directly or through agreements with others. Each user of the system is required to complete basic user training in order to begin using the system. Wilder Research may deliver on-site training in the event that an agency has a large number of staff to train, but generally will not deliver one to one training on-site without an additional contract for this service.

## **Right to Deny Access**

Wilder Research retains the right, subject to the HMIS Governing Group's review, to suspend or revoke the access of any agency or individual to the system for consistent or egregious violation of Minnesota HMIS policies.

## **Availability of Project Staff**

Wilder Research staff are available during normal business hours to respond to service requests from either the Agency Director or identified site contact person.

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<sup>4</sup> HUD periodically updates data standards for HMIS, these standards currently include "Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Data Standards: Revised Standards" Published in March 2010.



## **Notice of Planned Interruption in Service**

Whenever possible, Wilder Research will notify participating agencies of planned interruptions to service at least 3 business days prior to the interruption.

# HMIS Policy Considerations

## **Individual access and corrections to personal information maintained in HMIS**

Agencies will respond to all data requests submitted by individual program participants served by that particular agency. Any requests received by an agency that the agency is unable to fulfill will be forwarded to Wilder Research.

Requests for inspection or copies of personal data or private information or by individual program participants shall be accommodated with no service charges or fees. Agency or Wilder may deny access to information that is legally protected due to current or pending legal activity. An agency or program may deny inspection or copies of personal information if the individual program participant has requested the same data or information more than two times in a calendar year (unless substantive change have been made to the record – program participants may request another copy upon substantive change to their records).

Program participants may request amendments or corrections to their record. Any such requests shall be honored unless program staff have a justifiable reason for not making the change, including that the requested change would misrepresent client characteristics, service dates, or the like. Requests for changes that are not honored may be recorded under client case notes in the HMIS. Requests for multiple alterations in any calendar year may be denied due to administrative burden or harassment by the individual program participant (unless substantive change have been made to the record – program participants may request additional alterations following substantive changes to their records).

Any denial of a request for inspection or alterations by programs/agencies may be taken by the individual program participant to the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless who shall bring the matter (in a confidential manner) before the HMIS Governing Group.

## **Grievance procedures for individual program participants**

Users must permit clients to file a written complaint regarding the use or treatment of their information within Minnesota HMIS (an example grievance form is provided in the appendix). Clients may file a written complaint with either the Agency/program or with the Wilder Research. Clients may not be retaliated against for filing a complaint. Clients unsatisfied with agency- or administrator-level grievances are free to file a grievance to the HMIS Governing Group (mail to: Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, in care of “HMIS Grievance,” 122 West Franklin Avenue, Suite 306, Minneapolis, MN 55404).

A written response must be prepared by either the party receiving the grievance (Agency/program, Wilder Research), or the Governing Group.

Clients also may choose to pursue complaints through the legal system.

### **All agencies are encouraged to complete Data Privacy and Protection training**

The HMIS Governing Group encourages all participating agencies or programs to routinely train their personnel on best practices in data privacy and protection. Data privacy is emphasized in HMIS training sessions, but more general training on this topic is encouraged.

### **Ensuring Data Accuracy**

Agencies are responsible for the accuracy of the data they enter into the HMIS. Agencies are strongly encouraged to run reports on a monthly or weekly basis to check data and consult with Wilder Research to correct any problems.

Wilder Research shall regularly check data quality in Minnesota's HMIS. Agencies, or particular end-users, that make repeated errors may be required to attend more training, or may be barred from using HMIS if they are unwilling to improve data entry practices.

If Wilder Research or a funding entity that requires HMIS participation determines that an agency has committed fraudulent activity in the submission or alteration of data, the violation shall be brought before the HMIS Governing Group who shall determine a response after the agency or program has had an opportunity to respond to the allegation or information. The HMIS Governing Group has the authority to take ameliorating action or expel an offending agency from Minnesota's HMIS.

### **Third party access to data**

No request for private, personal information about an individual program participant from a third party or entity shall be honored unless the request is legally binding and complies with the policy for research uses of HMIS data (see appendix).

All requests for system-wide aggregate data or information shall be forwarded to Wilder Research. Wilder Research may charge a reasonable recovery fee.

# Appendix

*Glossary*

*Goals of HMIS In Minnesota*

*Sample HMIS grievance procedure form \**

*User policy, responsibility statement & code of ethics \**

*Client data privacy notice and consent form \**

*Client release of information form \**

*Policy for Research uses of HMIS data\**

*\* For the most recent version of forms, see: <http://www.hmismn.org/>*

## ***Glossary***

AHAR – Annual Homeless Assessment Report. A national report produced by HUD that uses HMIS data.

CoC – Continuum of Care. Geographically designated groups that annually file a joint application to HUD for homeless funding. CoCs also work together to develop plans, policies, and initiatives related to homelessness.

DHS – Minnesota Department of Human Services.

End User – Any person in an agency in possession of a valid user license who directly accesses the HMIS.

HIPAA – Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. A federal law that applies to the data practices of agencies that provide medical and medically-related services.

HMIS – Homeless Management Information System

HUD – United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

MHFA – Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, also referred to as Minnesota Housing.

McKinney-Vento Act – Federal law that allows for funding for HMIS and Housing and Supportive Service programs which serve individuals who are homeless

ServicePoint – The software behind Minnesota’s HMIS. An internet-based client information management system developed by Bowman Systems, LLC.

## ***Goals of HMIS in Minnesota***

*In the Spring of 2002 Minnesota Housing Finance Agency convened an open meeting on HMIS that included an in-depth brainstorming session on what the state wants out of our HMIS. The following summary was later adopted by the HMIS Implementation Group as the vision for Minnesota's HMIS.*

### **Overall vision and goal**

Minnesota's Homeless Management Information System will provide standardized and timely information to improve access to housing and services and strengthen our efforts to end homelessness.

### **Goals from the perspective of those experiencing homelessness:**

Minnesota's Homeless Management Information System will:

- Help us find and access shelter and housing—quickly and accurately
- Help us identify other services for which we are eligible
- Protect the privacy of our personal data, and strip away personally-identifying information as soon as possible
- Improve the accessibility to housing and services for those who do not speak English and those who have disabilities
- Get the job done with the minimum number of questions
- Eliminate the need for us to repeatedly give the same information to service providers
- Enhance the effectiveness of our working relationships with case workers and others who may be accessing the system
- Include protections against using the system's data to deny service, or to abuse civil rights
- Provide us with a printout of our personal data upon request
- Gather data that demonstrates our needs to others—hopefully resulting in improved housing and services
- **In sum, improve access to shelter, housing, and services**

### **Goals from the service provider perspective:**

Minnesota's Homeless Management Information System will:

- Be user friendly, and include adequate training and available help for users
- Easily provide accurate agency-level data, including client demographics, needs, and trends over time
- Cost little
- Be useful for us even if we do not have computers or much technical capacity
- Cover our reporting requirements
- Protect our clients' confidentiality—and us from liability
- **In sum, provide an affordable, user-friendly tool to accurately track client service usage.**

### **Goals from the continuum of care perspective:**

Minnesota's Homeless Management Information System will:

- Provide accurate regional data on demands, migration, capacity, and gaps
- Easily summarize data for the continuum of care
- Include as many providers as possible
- Be affordable and adequately staffed
- **In sum, strengthen continuum of care planning by providing improved data on demands, migration, capacity, and gaps.**

### **Goals from the state agency perspective:**

Minnesota's Homeless Management Information System will

- Interface with (or replace) state data systems
- Produce state and federal reports
- Improve service delivery to clients
- Provide improved, standardized, and timely statewide data for planning
- Provide a good return on the investment
- Help identify gaps in mainstream resources and the barriers that those experiencing homelessness face when trying to access these goals
- **In sum, help coordinate statewide data collection to improve public policy.**

## ***Minnesota's HMIS: grievance procedure form***

If you believe that you have not received the assistance you desire concerning your personal or private data held in Minnesota's HMIS, please send a written complaint to:

1. Your Agency
2. Wilder Research  
c/o HMIS Administrator , Attention: Grievance  
451 Lexington Parkway North  
St. Paul, MN 55104

This Agency and Wilder Research are prohibited from retaliating against you for filing a complaint. Your information and complaint will be kept confidential! This Agency and Wilder are required by law to maintain the privacy of your protected personal information and to provide you with a grievance procedure.

If you believe your grievance has not been sufficiently resolved by either your agency or the Wilder Research you may make a complaint to:

3. Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless                      612-870-7073  
Attention: HMIS Grievance  
2233 University Avenue West, Suite 434 St. Paul, MN 55114.

The Coalition will bring your complaint to Minnesota's HMIS advisory group, which will attempt a voluntary resolution of the complaint.

Please note that the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless is available to help if you would like assistance filling out this form. Also note that the Coalition does *not* directly provide legal services.

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### **GRIEVANCE FORM**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Complaint:

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# *User Policy, responsibility statement, & code of ethics*

## **Minnesota's HMIS User Policy, Responsibility Statement & Code of Ethics**

For: \_\_\_\_\_ from: \_\_\_\_\_  
User (print name) (print Agency Name)

### **USER POLICY**

Partner Agencies who use Minnesota's HMIS and each User within any Partner Agency is bound by various restrictions regarding the Client information.

It is a **Client's** decision about which information, if any, is entered into Minnesota's HMIS and whether that information is to be shared and with any Partner Agencies. If your agency is covered by HIPAA or 42 CFR Part 2 (federally-defined treatment facility), it is also Client's decision about whether Wilder may use information for research purposes. The appropriate **Minnesota's HMIS Client Informed Consent and Release of Information Authorization** shall be signed by Client before any Client information is designated for sharing with any Partner Agencies, or, in the case of HIPAA covered entities, authorized for research use. User shall insure that prior to obtaining Client's signature, the Agency's Notice of Uses and Disclosures was fully reviewed with Client in a manner to insure that Client fully understood the information (e.g. securing a translator if necessary).

### **USER RESPONSIBILITY**

A User ID and Password give a user access to the Minnesota HMIS system. **User must initial each item below** to indicate User's understanding and acceptance of the proper use of User's ID and password. Failure to uphold the confidentiality standards set forth below is grounds for immediate termination from Minnesota's HMIS.

_____	My User ID and Password are for my use only and must not be shared with anyone (except the Minnesota's HMIS system administrator (Wilder) and Agency's HMIS administrator or executive director). I must take all reasonable means to keep my Password physically secure.
_____	I understand that the only individuals who can view information in Minnesota's HMIS are authorized users who need the information for legitimate business purposes of this Agency and the Clients to whom the information pertains.
_____	I may only view, obtain, disclose, or use the database information that is necessary to perform my job.
_____	If I am logged into Minnesota's HMIS and must leave the work area where the computer is located, I <b>must log-off</b> before leaving the work area.
_____	A computer that has Minnesota's HMIS open and running shall never be left unattended.
_____	Any hard copies of personally identifiable (client-level) information printed from Minnesota's HMIS must be kept in a secure file, and destroyed when no longer needed.
_____	If I notice or suspect a security breach, I must immediately notify the executive director of the Agency and the System Administrator for Minnesota's HMIS (Wilder Research at 651-647-4600).

**USER CODE OF ETHICS**

- A. Users must be prepared to answer client questions regarding Minnesota's HMIS.
- B. Users must faithfully respect client preferences with regard to the entry and sharing of client information within Minnesota's HMIS. Users must accurately record Client's preferences by making the proper designations as to sharing of Client information and/or any restrictions on the sharing of Client information.
- C. Users must allow client to change his or her information sharing preferences at the client's request.
- D. Users must not decline services to a client or potential client if that person (i) refuses to allow entry of information into Minnesota's HMIS (except if that policy is over-ridden by agency policy); or (ii.) refuses to share his or her personal information with other service providers via Minnesota's HMIS.
- E. The User has primary responsibility for information entered by the User. Information Users enter must be truthful, accurate and complete to the best of User's knowledge.
- F. Users will not solicit from or enter information about clients into Minnesota's HMIS unless the information is required for a legitimate business purpose such as to provide services to the client.
- G. Users will not alter or override information entered by another Agency.
- H. Users will not include profanity or offensive language in Minnesota's HMIS; nor will Users use Minnesota's HMIS database for any violation of any law, to defraud any entity or conduct any illegal activity.
- I. Upon client request users must allow a client to inspect and obtain a copy of the client's own information maintained within Minnesota's HMIS. Information compiled in reasonable anticipation of or for use in a civil, criminal or administrative action or proceeding need not be provided to Client.
- J. Users must permit Clients to file a written complaint regarding the use or treatment of their information within Minnesota's HMIS. Client may file a written complaint with either the Agency or Wilder Research (c/o HMIS Admin, 1295 Bandana Blvd, No., Suite 210, St. Paul, MN 55108). If not satisfied, clients may file a complaint with the HMIS advisory body via the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless. Clients may *not* be retaliated against for filing complaints.

*I understand and agree to comply with all the statements listed above.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

User signature

Preferred ServicePoint Login (username): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information

Work phone: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Witness signature ( MHP or WRC )

<p><b>WRC/MHP</b></p> <p>User's access level (circle): Case Worker Agency Admin Other: _____</p> <p>(if multiple "providers" in agency)</p> <p>User's home provider: _____</p> <p>Other providers this user may enter data as: _____</p>
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# *Client Data Privacy Notice and Consent Form, and Release of Information Form (with instructions to agency)*

## **Instructions**

### **PLEASE READ BEFORE USING CONSENT FORMS**

**\*\*THIS PAGE NOT MEANT FOR DISTRIBUTION TO CLIENTS\*\***

These forms were developed based on federal rules governing Homeless Management Information Systems (Federal Register, Vol. 69, No. 146, July 30, 2004), and additional guidance from Minnesota's HMIS Governing Group.

#### **How to use the HMIS consent forms and notices**

- 1. Minnesota's HMIS: Data Privacy Notice & Consent Form** should be given to all adult clients or single unaccompanied youth. Parents can give consent for their children. Clients who do not sign the form should be entered only using ServicePoint's "Enter as Anonymous" feature. Drop-in shelters, street outreach programs, and telephone-only services may substitute a brief verbal notice and consent for use of this form.
- 2. Minnesota's HMIS: Release of Information** is *only* for agencies that would like to provide their clients with the option of sharing data with other service-providing agencies that use Minnesota's HMIS. **This page is not necessary for DV agencies, Youth agencies, HIV/AIDS agencies, HIPAA-covered agencies, and others that do not intend to share data.** If using the form, please be sure to include a list of up to ten agencies with whom you would like to share data in the space provided, and communicate these "closed exemption" agencies to Wilder Research ([hmis@wilder.org](mailto:hmis@wilder.org)). Note that we are not allowing a share with all ServicePoint agencies option.
- 3. Minnesota's HMIS: Posted Data Privacy Notice** is not intended for distribution to clients. Please post this sign in an area viewable by clients.

Note that throughout the forms the phrase "this agency" can be replaced with the actual name of your agency. This document can be further modified and/or incorporated into an agency's existing data privacy forms and notices, but modifications should only be made in consultation with legal counsel.

Also note that **these forms apply only to data maintained in Minnesota's HMIS**. They are NOT meant to serve as an agency's complete privacy policy or sole consent forms. The following situations, for example, require some additional privacy-related provisions for your clients:

- **Agencies covered by Minnesota's Government Data Practices Act**, need to provide clients with a Tennessee warning that lists the specific governmental agencies that fund the programs and, therefore, may view client data (e.g., Minnesota Department of Human Services, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development). Consult your funder and see the Minnesota Department of Administration's Information Policy Analysis Division (<http://www.ipad.state.mn.us/>) for further information.
- **HIPAA covered agencies**: The federal government's "Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act" (for more info, see <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/>) supersedes federal HMIS regulations. By law, these agencies are not required to provide clients with "Minnesota's HMIS: Data Privacy Notice & Consent Form," but they are encouraged to do so, since the form provides information about the system. In addition, **HIPAA covered agencies need to provide clients with an opportunity to opt-out of including their data in research**. A check-box such as the following should be added somewhere to either the HMIS Notice & Consent forms, or the agency's forms:

Consent for research uses of information in Minnesota's HMIS. Please check (✓) one:

- Yes, include in research. I understand that information about me that is in Minnesota's HMIS may be used by Wilder Research to conduct research related to homelessness and housing programs, service needs, income supports, education and employment, and program effectiveness. My name, social security number or other information that would identify me personally will **never** appear on a research report.
- No, do not include in research. I do not want my information used for research purposes.

- **HUD-Funded agencies** need to explicitly list HUD as having rights to view client data entered into Minnesota's HMIS. Please replace the second bullet under "who can see information entered into HMIS?" (currently "Auditors or others who have legal rights to review the work of this agency") with, "Auditors or others who have legal rights to review the work of this agency, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development."

# Minnesota's HMIS: Data Privacy Notice & Consent Form

## What is Minnesota's HMIS?

HMIS stands for Homeless Management Information System. It is a computer system used by this agency and other agencies that provide services.

## Why is information collected in Minnesota's HMIS?

- To help us keep track of how many people we serve and the types of people we serve – both as an agency and as a network of service providers.
- To help us understand the types of services people need and plan for services to meet these needs.

## Who can see information entered into Minnesota's HMIS?

- People who work in this agency who need to see your information to help provide services to you or your family, or for billing or funding purposes.
- Auditors or others who have legal rights to review the work of this agency.
- Some employees of Wilder Research (in St. Paul). Wilder maintains Minnesota's HMIS and may see your information as a part of managing the system.
- People using HMIS data to do research. This includes employees of Wilder Research and other people who sign agreements with Wilder or this agency. Your name, social security number, or other information that would identify you will **never** appear on research reports.
- If you or members of your family are in need of protective services because of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence, this agency may be required to file a report with a governmental agency.
- Others, as the law requires. That would include officials with a subpoena, warrant, or court order.
- Your information also may be released if needed to protect the health or safety of others or yourself.

We need your written permission to release your data for other uses.

## Know Your Rights:

- **Tell the intake worker if you do not want your name, social security number, or exact date of birth entered in HMIS.** This agency will **not** refuse to help you because you tell us you do not want information that identifies you entered into HMIS.
- You have the right to a copy of the information about you that is kept in Minnesota's HMIS for as long as it is kept there (except for information that may be kept from you in certain legal proceedings).
- You have the right to correct mistakes if HMIS information is wrong or incomplete.
- You have the right to complain if you believe that this agency or Minnesota's HMIS violated your privacy rights. You can ask a staff person for a complaint and appeals form or write to Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, HMIS Grievance, 122 West Franklin Avenue, Suite 306, Minneapolis, MN 55404.

## Signed consent

For: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print complete name (First, Middle, Last) Birth date

By signing this you are giving us your permission to enter your personal information into Minnesota's HMIS. You do not have to sign this form to receive services from this agency.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF CLIENT OR GUARDIAN DATE Signature of witness Date

# Minnesota's HMIS: Release of Information

For: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Print complete name (First, Middle, Last) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Birth date

With your permission this agency can share information that it enters into HMIS with other agencies. Sharing allows other service providers to look up information about you in Minnesota's HMIS if you go to them for help. Sharing this information may help the other agencies serve you better.

**Please check (✓) a box:**

- DO NOT SHARE:** I do **not** want **any** of the information about me in Minnesota's HMIS shared with any other service providers. *(Data security = Closed)*
- SHARE:** This agency may share my name, date of birth, race, ethnicity, Social Security Number, and the same information from any other members of my family who are being served with me at this time. *(Data security = Closed with exceptions)*

**If you checked SHARE, please check (✓) the agencies that you would like to share with:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Share with all agencies listed below	
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">&lt;Agencies should use this space to&gt;</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">[Please communicate this list to ]</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">&lt;fill in names of up to 10 other programs&gt;</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">[Wilder: <u>hmis@wilder.org</u>], ]</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">&lt;that use ServicePoint, and are most&gt;</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">[subject line: potential exceptions list ]</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">&lt;likely to have some of the same clients&gt;</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">[see <u>www.hmismn.org/agencies/</u> ]</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">&lt;or receive referrals from this agency&gt;</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">[for a current list of HMIS agencies]</a>

**If you checked SHARE, please check (✓) if we should let these agencies see information about...**

<input type="radio"/> Services you receive	<input type="radio"/> Educational background
<input type="radio"/> Your income and income sources	<input type="radio"/> Employment status
<input type="radio"/> If you are homeless or not	<input type="radio"/> Military history
<input type="radio"/> Reasons for seeking services	<input type="radio"/> Other: _____
<input type="radio"/> Living situation and housing history	<input type="radio"/> Other: _____

**When you sign this form it shows that you understand:**

- We will **not** deny you help if you do not want your personal information shared.
- If you want us to share your data, this consent will expire in 1 year.
- If you want us to share your data, you may change your mind and cancel this consent at any time.
- Even if you check “do not share” your information in HMIS may still be seen by the people listed on Minnesota's HMIS Data Privacy Notice, and any others listed on this agency's privacy statements.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SIGNATURE OF CLIENT OR GUARDIAN**      **DATE**      \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of agency witness**      **Date**

## ***Minnesota's HMIS: Posted Data Privacy Notice***

We collect personal information about the people we serve in a computer system used by many social service agencies called Minnesota's HMIS (Homeless Management Information System).

Personal information that we collect is important to run our programs and to help us improve services. Also, we are required to collect some personal information by law or by organizations that give us money to operate this program. We only collect information that we consider to be appropriate.

You do not have to give us information. However, if you do not give us the information, we may not be able to determine whether we can help you, or get help for you from other agencies.

You have a right to review the personal information that we have about you and ask us to correct any mistakes you may find. You have a right to file a complaint with this agency or others if you feel that your data privacy rights have been violated.

Please ask our staff if you have any questions, or if you would like a grievance form or a complete copy of our privacy policy.

## **Minnesota's HMIS Policy for Research uses of HMIS data<sup>5</sup>**

- 1. Discuss project with HMIS staff**, including identifying the way that the least amount of identifiable data can change hands. If the requestor's research/evaluation questions can be answered without transferring identified data to the requestor, step 3 is not necessary.
- 2. Work plan and budget agreed to.** Data and related reporting generally cannot be provided without proper compensation for staff time and other resources.
- 3. Requestor provides a written request outlining uses of data, including research questions, and procedures for protecting data** (including assurances that data will be destroyed after use, and that the data will not be re-used for purposes beyond those outlined in the request).
  - a. Wilder notifies HMIS Governing Group that a request has been received.
  - b. Requestor or Wilder informs or obtains consent from HMIS participating agencies and/or individual clients as necessary/depending on nature of project.
  - c. Requestor clears the project with outside Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) as necessary/depending on nature of project.
  - d. Requestor clears the project with Wilder's Research Review committee for approval or denial.  
[Note: This committee meets quarterly, but sometimes is able to address requests via a virtual meeting between planned meetings.]
  - e. Wilder notifies Governing Group of whether the project is moving ahead.
  - f. At any time throughout the process Wilder reserves the right to consult with the Governing Group (including a subcommittee thereof) for purposes of providing advice to Wilder and the requestor on any issues that may arise from the project, and to more fully inform the group. The Governing Group may pass motions regarding the project, but those motions technically are not legally binding. Any members with a conflict of interest (e.g., those requesting data themselves or working directly with the requestor) should recuse themselves from votes taken on the project in question.
- 4. After the analysis findings from the project are provided to Governing Group via Wilder Research.** The format of this report depends on the nature of the project.

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<sup>5</sup> Developed by Wilder Research in consultation with HMIS Governing Group and its ad-hoc Policy Subcommittee. Accepted by Governing Group on July 15, 2010.