



Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency
Gavin Newsom, Governor | Alexis Podesta, Chair

Exploring Development of a California Homeless Data Integration System

Background Information

At the July 11, 2018 Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (Council) meeting, Chris Pitcher, an expert in HMIS and a consultant for the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), made a presentation to the Council regarding a state-level homeless data integration system. Mr. Pitcher's assessment included three salient observations: (1) California has provided an unprecedented amount of funding toward the statewide homeless crisis; (2) California lacks the appropriate data infrastructure to measure the impact and effectiveness of various homelessness programs; and (3) without statewide data, California is trying to solve a problem that it does not have the data to fully understand. The Council's Chair, Secretary Alexis Podesta, directed staff to explore options for developing a California Homeless Data Integration System (CHDIS), including a state-level Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Since that time, HCFC staff have:

- Held vendor demonstrations with vendors currently providing HMIS solutions to Continuums of Care (CoCs) in California to gain a better understanding of the functions and capabilities of current HMIS operating in the state.
- Reached out to various CoCs to learn more about how local jurisdictions administer their HMIS and how best practices and lessons learned at the local level could inform the state in developing a CHDIS.
- Collaborated with the California Department of Technology (CDT) to identify challenges and opportunities related to a CHDIS project.
- Submitted Stage I and Stage II Business Analysis documents required by CDT as part of the state IT project development process.
- Published a Request for Information (RFI) that invited vendors to provide their proposed solutions to meet the goals of a CHDIS, as well as a cost estimate for their solution. Thirteen responses to the RFI were received on or before November 9, 2018, when the responses were due.

As currently envisioned, the CHDIS would consist of two phases:

- Phase I would include developing a state-level data warehouse that could import and integrate client-level data from all of California's existing local HMIS and provide an option for CoCs to participate in a state HMIS if they choose to do so. The state HMIS would comply with HUD standards to facilitate federal reporting. Additionally, the proposed system would feature data analytics reporting tools, which would be available to both the state and CoCs. This would give the CoCs additional information to assist in policy setting and prioritizing services provided to

homeless and at-risk individuals and families. In addition, it would allow the state to better understand the scope and characteristics of homelessness throughout California and begin to align state resources more effectively and efficiently with the needs of local communities. The Council would be in a position to provide data-driven advice on formulating sound policy and make recommendations on the most effective and efficient use of funds.

- Phase II would include the development of an integrated platform that could import and link other client-level data from various state and local homeless programs, which would serve as a powerful, data driven tool used to inform policy and resourcing decisions.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Would CoCs be required to give up their current HMIS system?

Answer: The CoCs **would not** be required to give up their current HMIS system.

The proposed solution would include an option for CoCs to use a state-supported HMIS, which may reduce the burden felt by under-resourced CoCs currently maintaining an independent local HMIS. The state-supported HMIS would allow CoCs to directly enter data into the system, and the proposed system would comply with HUD standards to facilitate federal reporting.

Whether individual CoCs decided to keep their own system or use the state-supported HMIS system, the Council envisions that client level data would be exported to the state's database on a quarterly basis. If Phase II was implemented, the CoCs' data would be integrated with the data from state departments that have programs or funding to address homelessness, which would provide critical insights into homelessness issues in California.

Question: Would the state's proposed data system track individual-level data?

Answer: Yes, the system would include the capacity to track individual-level data. This data is important to provide a comprehensive picture of the scope and demographics of homelessness in California, as well as the services and supports being provided. Council staff are working in close collaboration with CDT and data privacy/security experts to ensure the data system requirements would provide sufficient safeguards to protect sensitive data, as well as ensure compliance with all state and federal privacy and security laws.

Question: What would be the benefit to CoCs participating in this project?

Answer: The CoCs would be able to opt into the state HMIS as an alternative to administering their own CoC-level HMIS. All CoCs would gain access to a system that could integrate data and produce reports that provide feedback and local insights into homelessness, including alignment between programs and needs, opportunities for collaboration across programs, gaps in funding and services, and effective community strategies. The system would enhance both state and local entities' ability to identify and develop effective strategies to reduce homelessness and better direct resources to ensure they have maximum impact in addressing the needs of California's homeless.