Open HMIS Release of Information – Implementation Notice

June 3, 2022

Good afternoon,

The Continuum of Care (CoC) is currently working to improve our community’s Coordinated Entry System (CES) in 2022. Please refer to the attached fact sheet for more information on the CES. This effort requires transitioning the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) from a “closed” to an “open” system June 6, 2022.

Currently, only clients’ identification information (i.e. name, date of birth, social security number, and military veteran status) is shared between HMIS participating providers. This is considered a “closed” system. An “open” HMIS allows for clients’ HMIS identification, assessment, and service transaction information to be shared between HMIS participating providers and their HMIS end users, provided that they have signed an “open” HMIS Inter-agency Data Sharing Agreement and end user agreement, respectively; and that clients have signed an “open” HMIS Consent for Release of Information (ROI). These documents serve to confirm provider and end user compliance with HMIS Privacy Notice approved by the CoC May 6, 2020. The “open” HMIS will allow our community to better understand its homeless population and the CES will rely on shared HMIS data to effectively connect clients with services through our partners.

This message serves to inform you that the CoC approved the aforementioned “open” HMIS ROIs on June 2, 2022. The “open” HMIS ROI has been vetted by the Homeless Services Oversight Counsel and is available on the HMIS website. Please familiarize yourselves with the “open” HMIS ROIs and have all new and existing clients sign the document beginning June 6, 2022 the previous iteration of the ROI also known as the 815(designed for a “closed” HMIS) should no longer be used as of the same date. To be clear, all clients with an ROI start date of June 6, 2022 or later must have signed the “open” HMIS ROI. The data of clients who have signed the “open” HMIS ROI will start being shared between providers in June 6, 2022 as the “open” HMIS comes online. For existing clients who do not sign an “open” HMIS ROI, providers will continue to share only identification information.

Please note the following:

- I have attached a document briefly summarizing the intent of the “open” HMIS ROI, which I hope you’ll find useful. Please be advised that the “open” HMIS ROI allows for a client’s data that was previously entered into HMIS (under the “closed” HMIS ROI) to be shared as well. Please be sure to explain this to clients;
- Please be sure to enter a client’s ROI into HMIS. Make sure you enter an ROI start date and end date (2 years after start date unless indicated otherwise).
• A client must sign an ROI before their data can be entered into HMIS; and
• If you have any HMIS technical assistance questions, please submit an email to HMIS Support at ss_hmissetup@co.slo.ca.us.

Thank you for your help on this very important matter! Please email me if you have any questions.

Best,

Jessica Lorance

HMIS Program Manager
What is a Coordinated Entry System?

A Coordinated Entry System (CES):

- Is a community-wide system to standardize and expedite the process by which people experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of homelessness, access housing and homeless resources.
- Connects the community’s network of homeless services and housing resources while streamlining, standardizing and coordinating the homeless intake, assessment, and referral processes.
- Will focus on the most vulnerable, who are often resistant to services, the most visible in the community, and who tend to be high users of first responder and emergency room services.
- Will reduce barriers, improve program accessibility, limit restrictive program criteria and turnaways, and focus on matching the person in need to the right resources.
- Will use multiple “entry points” throughout the County to meet homeless people where they are, including on the streets, and in shelters, hospitals, drop-in centers, jails and other locations frequented by the homeless.
- Will use a develop a communication and affirmative marketing plan, including branding and a distribution strategy in order to educate consumers, providers and the community about CES.
- Will bring a new level of coordination and efficacy to the San Luis Obispo Continuum of Care, eliminating silos and bringing providers from multiple disciplines into the homeless service delivery system.
- Will rely on data from the Homeless Management Information System to facilitate case conferencing and connect people experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of homelessness, with resources.
- Is a requirement of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for all housing and homeless funding. Other Federal and State programs for homeless services, including those provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs and State funding for developing permanent, supportive housing, require recipient agencies to participate in CES.
As a San Luis Obispo County HMIS Partner Agency, it is important we collect and share your personal information to:

- Best connect you with the services you need;
- Better understand the needs of homeless persons;
- Improve planning to eliminate homelessness; and
- Improve services for homeless persons.

We collect information such as your name, whereabouts, services you’ve received, and health and income data. The only people who will be allowed to see your data are HMIS trained staff for homeless service providers who have agreed to keep your data confidential. You have the right to refuse to share your data and this will not disqualify you from receiving services. However, without your data, we may be unable to tell which programs you qualify for, and so you may lose out on some opportunities to receive services.