

Data Quality 101

Training for CoC- and ESG-funded providers and other HMIS users

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PA pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY
& ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Housekeeping

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Agenda

- What is Data Quality?
- Why Should You Care About Data Quality?
- Universal Data Elements
- Program Specific Data Elements for CoC- and ESG-funded projects
- Key Data Collection Points
- Common Data Quality Issues
- Practical Tips to Improve Data Quality
- Q&A

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Polls

On a scale of 1-5, how experienced are you with using HMIS?

How often do you access/work in HMIS?

On a scale of 1-5, how confident do you feel about your ability to ensure strong HMIS data quality for your program?

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Data Quality: What is it?

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What is Data Quality?

The diagram features three interlocking gears of different sizes and colors. The largest gear at the bottom right is orange and labeled 'Complete'. The medium-sized gear at the top left is light green and labeled 'Timely'. The smallest gear at the top left is lime green and labeled 'Accurate'. Curved arrows indicate a clockwise flow from the 'Accurate' gear to the 'Timely' gear, and from the 'Timely' gear to the 'Complete' gear.

Source: <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/coc-data-quality-brief.pdf>

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What is Data Quality?

Complete

- **The degree to which all required data is known and documented**
- For projects, the completeness of each client's HMIS record for a given project enrollment, as measured by completed response categories for Universal and Program-Specific Data Elements.
- Projects should attempt to have as few null, missing, "data not collected," "client refused," and "client doesn't know" options as possible.
 - *We will talk through when to use these appropriately.

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What is Data Quality?

Accurate

- **The degree to which data reflects the real-world client or service**
- A few common examples of inaccuracies include:
 - Fake data entered when data is missing (e.g., fake name such as Jane Doe, fake date of birth, fake SSN)
 - Multiple open entries into different programs for the same client
 - No defined head of household
 - Multiple heads of household

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What is Data Quality?

Timely

- **The length of time that elapses between an event (such as enrollment or exit) and that event being documented in HMIS.**
- The sooner data is entered into HMIS, the sooner it is available for reporting purposes, prioritization purposes, data analysis purposes, and making data-informed decisions.
- **The timeliness standard for the Eastern and Western PA CoCs is 7 days** – all client entries and exits should be documented in HMIS within 7 days.

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Why should you care about data quality?



Quality data allows programs, agencies, and CoCs to make accurate statements and findings about persons served or about program outcomes.

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Why should you care about data quality?

Why does data quality matter?

Missing identifiers (name, date of birth) make unduplicated counts unreliable. Inaccurate counts may impact funding.

Missing clients or missing move-in dates make it impossible to tell which clients are being served by which programs/projects and whether clients have exited homelessness.

Missing annual assessments or exits can look like poor program or system performance (i.e., it looks like clients did not have positive outcomes even though they may have)

Misrepresenting or missing client characteristics can lead to misdirected resources or priority given to certain types of programming. Unable to accurately analyze system needs.

Incomplete entry and exit data prevents the ability to see how people move in and out of the homeless system.

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Universal Data Elements

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HUD Universal Data Elements

HMIS Universal Data Elements are elements required to be collected by all projects using HMIS. Projects funded by any of the federal partners must collect the Universal Data Elements AS WELL AS projects that are not funded by any federal partner but are entering data as part of the CoC's HMIS.

- 3.1 Name
- 3.2 Social Security Number
- 3.3 Date of Birth
- 3.4 Race
- 3.5 Ethnicity
- 3.6 Gender
- 3.7 Veteran Status
- 3.8 Disabling Condition
- 3.10 Project Start Date
- 3.11 Project Exit Date
- 3.12 Destination
- 3.15 Relationship to Head of Household
- 3.16 Client Location
- 3.20 Housing Move-in Date
- 3.917 Living Situation

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Name:

- To avoid duplicate record creation, the full first name and full last name should be recorded.
- Name Data Quality
 - Select 'Partial, street name, or code name reported' in any of the following circumstances:
 - a partial, short, or nickname was used instead of the full first name;
 - a street name or code name was used for street outreach clients at initial intake and until the client was able to supply their full legal name;
 - a name modification was used for security reasons

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Social Security Number:

- SSN Data Quality
 - Approximate or partial SSN reported - Any SSN other than a complete and valid 9-digit SSN, regardless of the reason, is provided.
 - Client doesn't know - A client does not know or does not have a SSN.
 - Client refused – A client refuses to provide any part of their SSN, regardless of the reason.

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Date of Birth:

- When enrolling a client who already has a record in the HMIS, verify that the date of birth on the record is accurate and correct it if it is not.
- Date of Birth Data Quality
 - Approximate or partial DOB reported - The client cannot provide their full or exact date of birth but is able to provide their age within one year.
 - Client doesn't know - Use 'Client doesn't know' rather than 'Approximate or partial DOB reported' if the client did not know their date of birth within one year.
 - Client refused - Use 'Client refused' rather than 'Approximate or partial DOB reported' if the client refused to provide their date of birth or their age for staff to approximate.

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Race:

- Record the self-identified race(s) of each client served. Staff observations should never be used to collect information on race. Provide all options to every client.
- Race Data Quality
 - Client doesn't know - "Client doesn't know" should only be selected when a client does not know their race(s) from among the five listed races.
 - Client refused - "Client refused" should only be selected when a client refuses to identify their race(s) from among the five listed races.

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Ethnicity:

- Record the self-identified ethnicity of each client served. Staff observations should never be used to collect information on Ethnicity.
- Ethnicity Data Quality
 - Client doesn't know "Client doesn't know" should only be selected when a client does not know their ethnicity from among the responses.
 - Client refused - "Client refused" should only be selected when a client refuses to identify their ethnicity from among the responses.

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Gender:

- Record the self-reported gender of each client served. **Gender identity is a person's internal perception of themselves and may not match the sex they were assigned at birth. The gender data element is asking about gender identity and not sex assigned at birth.**
- Staff observations should never be used to collect information on gender.
- Asking, "Which of these genders best describes how you identify?" is appropriate and focuses on the person's own internal knowledge of their gender. Provide all options to every client.
- Gender Data Quality
 - 'Client doesn't know' should only be selected when a client does not know their gender and should not be used interchangeably with the response option 'Questioning.'
 - 'Client refused' should only be selected when a client refuses to identify their gender.

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Veteran Status:

- Record whether the client is a veteran. When enrolling a client who already has a record in the HMIS, verify that the veteran status recorded is accurate and correct it if it is not.
- Veteran Status is not dependent on discharge status. A dishonorable discharge limits eligibility for certain VA benefits and programs, but it does not mean that the person is not a veteran for HMIS and PIT purposes.
- This data element is only required for adult clients. If a client turns 18 when in the program, this information needs to be updated.

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Disabling Condition:

- This data element is used with other information to identify whether a client meets the criteria for chronic homelessness.
- A disabling condition is one or more of the following:
 - A physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or brain injury that:
 - **Is expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration;**
 - **Substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently; and**
 - **Could be improved by the provision of more suitable housing conditions.**
 - A developmental disability;
 - The disease of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) or any condition arising from the etiologic agency for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV).
- **It is not necessary to provide documentation to complete this data element.** If a screening indicates that a client has a disabling condition, enter "Yes." Projects that are required to document disability for eligibility (e.g., PSH projects) will request documentation for program enrollment.

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Project Start Date:

- The project start date indicates a client is now being assisted by the project. Different project types use Project Start Date differently:
 - **Street Outreach:** Date of first contact with the client.
 - **Emergency Shelter:** Night the client first stayed in the shelter. Night by night shelters will have a project start date and will allow clients to re-enter as necessary without "exiting" and "restarting" for each stay for a specified period.
 - **Transitional Housing:** Date the client moves into the residential project (i.e. first night in residence).
 - **Permanent Housing, including Rapid Re-Housing:** Date the client was admitted into the project. To be admitted indicates the following factors have been met:
 1. Information provided by the client or from the referral indicates they meet the criteria for admission;
 2. The client has indicated they want to be housed in this project;
 3. The client is able to access services and housing through the project. The expectation is the project has a housing opening (on-site, site-based, or scattered-site subsidy) or expects to have one in a reasonably short amount of time.
 - **Other Service Projects (including but not limited to: Services Only, Day Shelter, Homelessness Prevention, Coordinated Entry):** Date the client first began working with the project and generally received the first provision of service.

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Project Exit Date:

- Each individual client in a household will have their own *Project Exit Date*. If one member of a household leaves the project before the rest of the household, their exit date should reflect the actual day that they left the project.
- **Site based Residential projects:** The last day of continuous stay in the project before the client transfers to another residential project or otherwise stops residing in the project.
- **Tenant-based Permanent Housing projects:** The last day the client receives rental assistance or supportive services (RRH only, see note below) or is provided rental assistance (tenant-based PSH or other permanent housing).
 - **RRH** - If eligible RRH case management services are provided past the final date of receiving rental assistance, for example, the client must not be exited until those services end. For CoC- and ESG-funded RRH, services may be provided for up to 6 months after the rental assistance ends.
- **Non-residential projects:** the last day a service was provided or the last date of a period of ongoing service.

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Destination:

- Record where the client is expected to stay after they complete or stop participating in project activities.
- For residential projects that expect a client to move out upon exit (Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Safe Haven, project-based Permanent Supportive Housing), record where the client is expected to move immediately after leaving.
- For projects where a client is not expected to relocate upon exit (Homelessness Prevention, Rapid Re-housing, SSO projects), record where the client is expected to stay after they complete or stop participation in project activities. This may be the same place that they were staying during their project enrollment or prior to starting in the project.
- 'Other' should be used only as a last resort if the client's destination cannot be even loosely described by any of the available options. Any response of 'Other' will not count in any HMIS-based reporting as a positive outcome.
- **If data collection staff receive corrected information about a client's exit destination from the client (because the original entry was incorrect), destination responses may be corrected in HMIS.**

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Relationship to Head of Household:

- Identify one member of a household to whom all other household members can be associated. A household is a single individual or a group of persons who apply together to a continuum project for assistance and who live together in one dwelling unit, or, for persons who are not housed, who would live together in one dwelling unit if they were housed.
- There must be one head of household for each enrollment and there cannot be more than one head of household for any given enrollment.
- If the head of household leaves the project while other household members remain, another member of the household currently participating in the project must be designated as the head of household (retroactively to the beginning of the household's enrollment) and the other members' relationship to head of household should be corrected to reflect each individual's relationship to the newly designated head of household.

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Client Location:

- This is the HUD assigned CoC code for the client's location. This is used to link client household data to the relevant CoC.

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Housing Move-In Date (slide 1 of 2):

- Required for Permanent Housing Projects (PSH, RRH, OPH)
- This data is critical to point-in-time and housing inventory counts as it differentiates households which have already moved into permanent housing from households which are enrolled in a Permanent Housing project but are still literally homeless (in Emergency Shelter, Safe Haven, Transitional Housing or on the street) as they prepare to move into an available unit.

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Housing Move-In Date (slide 2 of 2):

- **Clients moving to a new unit:** In the event that the client vacates a housing situation (to move to a new unit) and the project stops paying rental assistance, staff should exit the client from the project with an accurate *Project Exit Date* and *Destination* and create a new *Project Start Date* in a second enrollment for the client on the same or following day. The project would continue working with the client until a new unit is found, at which point a new housing move-in date would be recorded on the second project record. This will ensure that the client's history of housing is preserved.
- If the client moves directly from one unit into another unit, with no days of homelessness in between, it would not be necessary to exit and re-enter them, because their housing move-in date would still accurately reflect the day they entered permanent housing according to that enrollment record.

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HUD Universal Data Elements

Prior Living Situation:

- This field is used to identify the type of living situation and length of stay in that situation **just prior to project start** for all adults and heads of households. This data element is used with other information to identify whether a client appears to meet the criteria for chronic homelessness.
- The responses are intended to reflect from the client's last living situation ***immediately prior to Project Start Date***.

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Questions so far?



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Program-Specific Data Elements

CoC- and ESG-funded projects

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Program-Specific Data Elements

CoC- and ESG-Funded Projects (slide 1 of 4):

- **Income and Sources** (start, annual, exit) – *all project types except CE*
 - If a client's income information was recorded incorrectly at project start, update, assessment, or exit, correct the existing record, rather than adding an "update" record.
 - Head of households and adults
- **Non-Cash Benefits for head of households and adults** (start, annual, exit)– *all project types except CE*
 - If a client's benefits information was recorded incorrectly at project start, update, assessment, or exit, correct the existing record, rather than adding an "update" record.
 - Head of households and adults
- **Health Insurance** (start, annual, exit)– *all project types except CE*
 - If a client's health insurance information was recorded incorrectly at project start, update, assessment, or exit, correct the existing record.
 - All clients (including children)

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Program Specific Data Elements

CoC- and ESG-Funded Projects (slide 2 of 4):

- **Information on disabling conditions (type of disabling condition, etc.)** (start, update, exit) – *all projects except CE (HOWEVER, CoCs can build this into their CE assessment)*
 - If a client's disability status was recorded incorrectly at entry, update, or exit, correct the existing record rather than creating a new update record.
 - For physical disability, chronic health conditions, mental health condition, and substance use disorders: Must respond to question about whether the disability is expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration and substantially impair the client's ability to live independently.
 - All clients (including children)

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Program Specific Data Elements

CoC- and ESG-Funded Projects (slide 3 of 4):

- **Domestic Violence questions** (start, update)– *all projects except CE (HOWEVER, CoCs can build this into their CE assessment)*
 - Indicate (1) if the client is a survivor of domestic violence, (2) when the experience occurred, and (3) if the client is currently fleeing domestic violence.
 - Head of households and adult

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Program Specific Data Elements

CoC- and ESG-Funded Projects (slide 4 of 4):

- **Current Living Situation (collected at time of contact)– CE and Street Outreach only.**
 - Head of household and adults
 - To be updated at the following times:
 1. A Coordinated Entry Assessment or Coordinated Entry Event is recorded; or
 2. The client's living situation changes; or
 3. If a Current Living Situation hasn't been recorded for longer than a community-defined length of time (i.e., longer than 90 days). The CoC must be involved in the determination of "community-defined length of time;" or
 4. Project Start

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Program Specific Data Elements

CoC-Funded Projects ONLY:

- **Well-being data elements** (start, annual, exit) (*PSH ONLY*)
 - Head of household
- **Moving On Assistance Provided** (recorded at time of occurrence) (*PSH ONLY*)
 - *Must be recorded as a service if Moving On Assistance is provided*
 - Head of household
- **General Health** (start, exit) (*PSH ONLY*)
 - Head of household and adults

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Program Specific Data Elements

ESG-Funded Projects ONLY:

- **Date of Engagement** (recorded at time of occurrence) (*Street Outreach Only*)
 - Head of household and adults
- **Housing Assessment at Exit** - (exit) (*Homelessness Prevention Only*)
 - All clients

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Questions so far?



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Key Data Collection Points

- Project Start (ALL Projects)**
- Housing Move-in Date (RRH and PSH)**
- Annual Assessment (CoC- and ESG-funded projects – anyone who stays 365 days or more in the project)**
 - Must be no more than 30 days before or after the anniversary of the head of household's *Project Start Date*.
 - Annual assessments are based solely on the head of household's anniversary date.
 - The annual assessment must include updating both the head of household's record and any other family member's record at the same time.
- Update (During Program) – if information about a participant changes (such as income, benefits, insurance, etc.), you can complete an update.**
- Project Exit (ALL Projects)**

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Key Data Collection Points

Why are Annual Assessments so important?

- Regardless of whether the responses have changed since project start or the previous annual assessment, a new record must be created for each subsequent annual assessment.
- Missing or late annual assessments seriously impact how a program's outcomes look, particularly for income, mainstream benefits and health insurance. To determine whether someone has increased income, or whether someone has mainstream benefits or health insurance, HUD and the CoC look at:
 - **Income:** Whether someone increased income from project start to annual assessment (stayers) OR increase income from project start to exit (leavers). If someone has not been in the program for at least a year they are excluded from calculation. ***This looks at all adults.***
 - **Mainstream benefits:** Benefits recorded at annual assessment (stayers) or exit (leavers). ***This looks at all adults.***
 - **Health insurance:** Health insurance recorded at annual assessment (stayers) or exit (leavers). ***This looks at ALL household members.***

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Key Data Collection Points

Why are Annual Assessments so important?

If no annual assessment is done or it is done late, it looks like a client (who has been in program 365 days or more) has no income, no benefits, and no health insurance – *even if they do!*

Also, this is REQUIRED for CoC and ESG projects!

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Key Data Collection Points

Why are Housing Move In Dates so important?

- If a PSH or RRH program does not input a housing move-in date, it looks like the household has not moved into housing and is still homeless. This negatively impacts things like:
 - **Point in Time Count**
 - A household is showing as homeless in HMIS but is actually housed.
 - **Unit Utilization rates**
 - If a program is funded for 10 units and there are 10 households currently housed in the program, but only 8 have move-in dates, it looks like your utilization rate is only 80%.
 - **Understanding system needs**
 - It is impossible for the CoC to understand system needs and gaps if households are missing move-in dates (look like they are homeless, but in fact they are housed).
 - Without move-in dates, we don't know how long it is taking for clients to move into housing. This impacts the CoC's ability to direct resources to critical needs, such as landlord engagement.

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Common Data Quality Issues

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Common Data Quality Issues

- **Duplicate Clients:**
 - **Solution:** Always search for clients in the system before creating a new record. This might include searching by only the first few letters of the last name and first few letters of the first name to try to find a match.
- **Missing housing move-in dates:**
 - **Solution:** Program staff can run the Housing Move-in Date Data Check report in HMIS on a regular basis to check for missing move-in dates. Program staff can also check for this in the APR or CAPER validation file (by looking at the Housing Move in Date column (if the column is blank, the client does not have a Move In Date in HMIS).
- **Missing or late annual assessments:**
 - **Solution:** Program staff can run the Annual Assessments Data check report in HMIS on a regular basis to review annual assessment due dates and the allowable range for completing the assessment.

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Common Data Quality Issues

- **Households not exited**
 - This is a common issue with emergency shelters or programs that see a high volume of folks coming and going.
 - This is also an issue with programs that close/lose funding/cease operations, but do not exit the clients in HMIS.
 - **Solutions:**
 - Programs can run the Clients in Programs report in HMIS on a regular basis to check that a) the census is correct for a single point in time, b) old clients/households have been exited with a proper exit destination.
 - If your program is closing, reach out to the HMIS team BEFORE this happens to let them know, and make a plan for exiting all clients from HMIS and closing out the program in HMIS.
- **Missing exit destinations (Data Not Collected)**
 - This is a common issue with emergency shelters or programs that see a high volume of folks coming and going and is sometimes unavoidable.
 - **Solution:** Programs should try to enter accurate exit destinations whenever possible, and if you find out the destination later (even after you completed the exit assessment) you can go back and update it.

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Common Data Quality Issues

- **Inputting incomplete or inaccurate PII**
 - E.g., Jane Doe, or Jane Anonymous, or 123-45-6789 for SSN.
 - In the Eastern and Western PA CoCs, Coordinated Entry projects enter info anonymously for DV participants due to confidentiality on the By Name List. **This practice should continue to be followed.**
 - Once a participant is enrolled in a housing/service project, you should enter accurate Personally Identifiable Information unless the client declines/refuses.
 - **Solutions:**
 - If PII is not known (for example: do not know Social Security Number), enter the appropriate data quality field (client doesn't know, client refused, partial).
 - Programs should enter accurate PII for clients once they enter a housing program, unless client declines to provide. Housing/service programs can restrict access to a record only to their organization.
 - If client does not want their name entered in HMIS for confidentiality reasons, the Name Quality field should be entered as Partial, Street Name, or Code Name Reported.
- **CONTINUED ON NEXT SLIDE**

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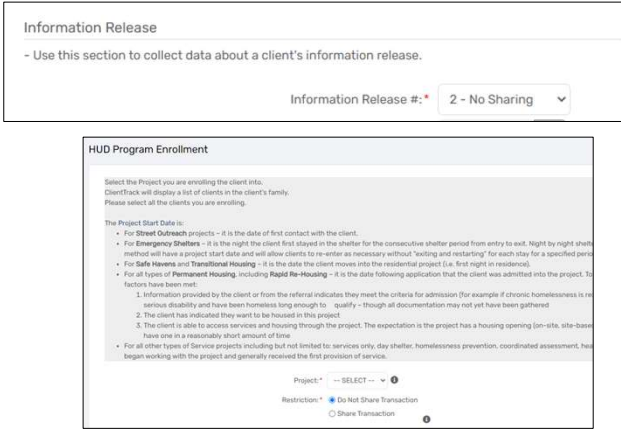
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Common Data Quality Issues

- **Inputting incomplete PII**
 - **Solutions (continued):**
 - If a client does not want their information shared outside the program, they should select "Not Sharing" under Information Release question and "Do Not Share Transaction" on the program enrollment screen. This will restrict the record to your organization (and HMIS administrators)

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Questions so far?



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Practical Tips to Improve Data Quality

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Practical Tips to Improve Data Quality

• **Define Program-Level Roles and Responsibilities**

- Who is your agency's main HMIS contact person?
- Who is responsible for collecting data from clients?
- Who is responsible for HMIS data entry?
- Who is responsible for running reports to check data quality (accuracy, timeliness, completeness)?

We recommend writing down your program-level roles and responsibilities, so that everyone in your organization/program is aware.

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Practices Tips to Improve Data Quality

• **Define Program-Level Processes**

▪ **Onboarding/System Access/Training**

- When staff leave or new staff start, who is contacting the HMIS team to close out an account or request access for a new user?
- Programs should request access and training for new users as quickly as possible when they start (this should be part of the onboarding process)
- Agencies should always have more than 1 user trained in HMIS

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Practical Tips to Improve Data Quality

- **Define Program-Level Processes**

- **Flow of Data Collection and Data Entry**

- What is the timeline between collecting data from clients and entering the data in HMIS?
 - Do you collect the data on paper and then enter it into HMIS, or do you enter the data directly into HMIS when meeting with a client? What technology is needed?
 - How are you keeping track of annual assessments that are due? Creating a master calendar or system to flag when these are due for each household.
 - What is the process and timeline for exiting clients?

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Practical Tips to Improve Data Quality

- **Define Program-Level Processes**

- **Monitoring Data Quality**

- Who in your agency is responsible for monitoring data quality? Examples:
 - All program entries entered?
 - Housing Move-In Dates added?
 - Annual assessment due and completed?
 - All program exits completed?
 - How often are you running reports to check for data quality? Examples:
 - Clients in Programs
 - Annual Assessment Data Check
 - Housing Move-In Date Data Check
 - HUD APR/CAPER

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Practical Tips to Improve Data Quality

• Define Program-Level Processes

▪ Monitoring Data Quality

- When reviewing reports and data, is someone responsible for flagging data issues and providing feedback to staff?
- Who follows up to make sure data issues are corrected in a timely fashion?

▪ Requesting TA and Training

- Who reaches out to the HMIS team or DMA for additional TA and training
 - DCED HMIS team: HMIS system issues; HMIS tickets; Training
 - DMA: Understanding your data, CoC scoring, PIT Count

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Practical Tips to Improve Data Quality

• Define Program-Level Processes

▪ Submitting HMIS tickets and monitoring response

- Who is responsible for submitting HMIS tickets related to issues in the HMIS system?
- Do you have a process for monitoring the responses to tickets?
It is very important to look out for the system generated emails that a note has been added to your ticket, and log into HMIS to review the note and respond. Often the HMIS team may need additional information from you to follow up on your ticket and have added in a note to request this information.



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TIP

WRITE IT DOWN & SHARE ACROSS YOUR AGENCY

We recommend writing down who is assigned to which program-level HMIS roles and responsibilities and when those tasks need to be completed so everyone on your team is aware!

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Practical Tips to Improve Data Quality

Knowing who is responsible for what in HMIS and creating regular processes for reviewing your data for accuracy goes a long way! Agencies that are regularly reviewing their data and fixing errors tend to perform better in CoC evaluation processes.

Assigning a lead HMIS Point of Contact within each organization is often a helpful strategy.

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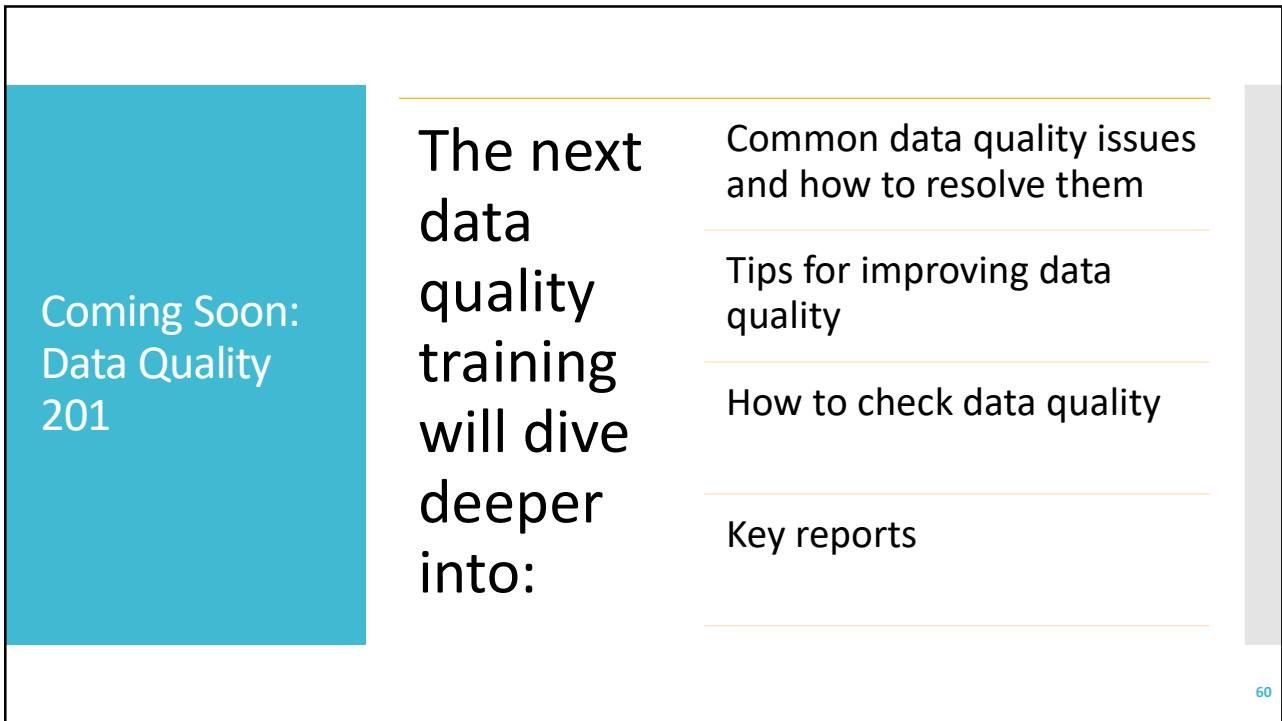
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Wrap Up!

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Coming Soon:
Data Quality
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The next data quality training will dive deeper into:

- Common data quality issues and how to resolve them
- Tips for improving data quality
- How to check data quality
- Key reports

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Polls

How much of this material was new to you?

On a scale of 1-5, how confident do you feel about your ability to ensure strong HMIS data quality for your program?

What other HMIS or data quality trainings would be helpful?


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Questions?



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Contact Info

- DCED HMIS Team Helpdesk (new user requests, training requests, new programs or program closures, HMIS system related issues that cannot be addressed through an HMIS ticket): RA-pahmis@pa.gov
- CoC Email Address (understanding your data, CoC scoring, PIT count, general CoC program/HUD questions):
 - Eastern PA CoC: easterncoc@pennsylvaniacoc.org
 - Western PA CoC: westerncoc@pennsylvaniacoc.org
- **ESG-specific questions** – reach out to DCED

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