VA SSVF
Data Guide

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Table Of Contents

A. VA Programs & HMIS Participation 1

B. Data Guide Introduction and Overview 3

C. Description of HMIS Trainings 4

D. SSVF Data Collection 5
HMIS Guidance for SSVF Grantees Operating in Multiple CoCs 5
SSVF Data Elements 10
SSVF Data Quality and Completeness Policy 11
SSVF Data Security Policy 12
HMIS Project Descriptor Data for an SSVF Program 13

E. SSVF Data Reporting 16
HMIS Monthly Repository Uploads 16
Quarterly Reports and Coversheets 17
VA Repository Data Upload Criteria 18
Repository User Notes 29

F. Data Quality Management 47
SSVF Data Quality Policy and Thresholds 52

G. HMIS Privacy & Security Requirements 54

H. Continuum of Care Integration & Planning 56
Continuum of Care (CoC) Overview 56
Coordinated Assessment 56
Homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) Count 57
Housing Inventory Chart 57

I. Toolkit Materials 59
Checklist & Discussion Guide for New Grantees 59
Data Collection Templates 62
Additional Resources for Data Quality Management 72
Sample Data Quality Plan 73
Privacy & Security- Additional Resources 77
Sample Client Notification Forms 78

A. VA Programs & HMIS Participation

In June of 2010 the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released a Strategic Plan that identified thirteen major initiatives, one of which is the Elimination of Veteran Homelessness. This major initiative promotes the use of robust management systems to monitor outcomes for individual Veterans as well as the outcomes of programs that serve homeless Veterans. This initiative is consistent with the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Federal Strategic Plan and also coincides with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Strategic Planning efforts. As a result of this federal strategic direction and coordination, VA-funded homeless assistance providers will participate in local Homeless Management Information Systems within each Continuum of Care.

Given this new VA mandate, CoC leadership and HMIS project staff will need to consider the following:

- The VA released guidance to all VA-funded homeless assistance providers regarding their required participation in HMIS. VA Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Grant program, HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) and Grant and Per Diem (GPD) programs began HMIS participation as of January 2011.
- Local CoC and HMIS staff will need to coordinate with local VA officials and VA-funded providers to initiate HMIS participation for those VA-funded community-based service providers who have not yet begun HMIS participation.
- As with any new Contributory HMIS Organization (CHO) that enters Protected Personal Information (PPI) into an HMIS, all applicable privacy and security standards apply. It is good practice to review these standards as new CHOs come on-line with HMIS. In some cases local privacy and security policies may need to be amended. Applicable HMIS Data and Technical Standards mandating privacy, security, data quality, and software systems requirements can be found at HUD's OneCPD website (https://www.onecpd.info/resource/2917/2013-draft-hmis-data-standards/).
- VA plans to provide ongoing webinar training to SSVF, GPD, and HUD-VASH providers throughout 2014. Training topics will include a general HMIS overview, HMIS participation requirements, and a review of revised HUD Data and Technical Standards.
- Currently all VA-funded homeless assistance programs submit client-level data to the VA. This practice of client-level data disclosure to the VA will continue as VA-funded providers participate in HMIS. Although HUD does not expect CoCs to release HMIS client-level data on Veterans served in non-VA funded programs to the VA, CoCs and HMIS staff are expected to coordinate with VA officials to complete regular HMIS data extracts of Veteran data from VA-funded homeless assistance providers.
- HUD understands that new CHOs often have costs associated with HMIS licenses, training, technical support, data storage, system maintenance, and HMIS administration. As with any new initiative, HUD expects HMIS project staff and CoC leadership to assess any HMIS participation costs associated with new users, document the allocation of those costs, and assess any participation fees in a fair and equitable manner.

VA staff and other federal partners will work together to provide additional training materials and technical assistance (TA) support as the VA extends HMIS requirements to all VA-funded homeless assistance providers.

B. Data Guide Introduction and Overview

Deliverable Context

The purpose of the document is to convey all data management requirements to SSVF grantees while providing the necessary tools to properly meet these requirements and manage program data. The reporting requirements in 38 CFR 62.71 have been designed to provide VA with the information required to assess the outcomes associated with grantees' programs. As a result of this, VA anticipates grantees' programs will assist in reducing the number of Veteran families who are homeless and those at risk of homelessness.

Audience and Scope

The guide is designed for use by SSVF grantees, staff, HMIS Administrators and Continuum of Care partners. The purpose of the guide is to provide information and instructions on all aspects of managing SSVF data. The guide is divided into six primary sections to include the following:

Section D: Data Collection. This section includes information on all specific data elements that must be collected on program participants, when they must be collected, and on whom they must be collected, as well as data collection templates for program entry and exit. Also included are frequently asked questions on data collection.

Section E: Data Reporting. This section details SSVF reporting requirements, including HMIS, quarterly reports and cover sheets. Also included are the upload and integration specifications and Repository user notes, which include step-by-step instructions on uploading HMIS data into the VA's Repository.

Section F: Data Quality. This section describes the necessary components of a comprehensive data quality plan. The data quality policy and thresholds are detailed, which outline the minimum acceptable data quality standards for program data. Links to the U.S. Interagency Council on the Homeless resources on developing a sound data quality plan as well as a sample plan are also included.

Section G: HMIS Privacy and Security. This section describes the standards for privacy and security with SSVF client-level data. Included are external links to resources and toolkits in addition to sample client notification forms.

Section H: CoC Integration & Planning. This section contains an overview of the function of the Continuum of Care and specific opportunities for collaboration between the SSVF program and the CoC. Topics covered include coordinated assessment, homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) and Housing Inventory Chart (HIC).

Section I: Toolkit. This section provides grantees with sample forms, templates, checklists and other resources that can be used and adapted for each program to facilitate an HMIS implementation for a SSVF program.

C. Description of HMIS Trainings

In addition to the Data Guide, listed below are five recorded 30 minute trainings available on the SSVF University Web site at http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvfuniversity.asp?page=/program_requirements/hmis_and_data

1. Data Collection and Reporting: The Basics

- Intended target audience: New grantees, new staff of renewal grantees or any staff of renewal grantees desiring a review of the basics of SSVF data collection and reporting.
- Topics include description and goals of HMIS, roles and responsibilities, HMIS set-up, data collection requirements, reporting requirements, and tools and resources for grantees.

2. Data Collection and Reporting: Understanding your SSVF Data Better

- Intended target audience: All grantees.
- Topics include description of data quality policy and threshold limits, reading validation results, interpreting validation results, identifying and correcting data errors, creating and implementing data quality plans and working with data from multiple CoCs and HMIS implementations.

3. SSVF Data: The Bigger Picture

- Intended target audience: All grantees.
- Topics include privacy and security requirements, VA HMIS participation, CoC coordination, and using data for program improvement.

4. Data Collection and Reporting: HMIS Administrator and Software Solution Providers

- Intended target audience: HMIS administrators and software solution providers
- Topics include program setup in HMIS, data collection, export requirements, upload validation
- Basics about how Extensible Markup Language (XML) is parsed to CSV, basics about how we report on data
- Data collection (bonus elements from future data standards)

5. Developing a Comprehensive Data Quality Plan

- Intended target audience: All grantees.
- Topics include the importance of data quality and how to achieve and maintain it.

D. SSVF Data Collection

HMIS Guidance for SSVF Grantees Operating in Multiple CoCs

Overview

A Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a community-based application that collects and reports on the characteristics and needs of people who are served by programs intended to prevent and end homelessness in a particular geographic area or Continuum of Care (CoC). VA is committed to participation in HMIS to support community-based service planning and coordination for Veterans and others who are homeless and at risk of homelessness; as such, SSVF grantees are required to participate in HMIS.

Many SSVF grantees provide services in more than one CoC and more than one HMIS implementation. In the first two years, VA required that grantees participate in the HMIS implementations for every CoC in which they were providing direct services. The logistics and expense of complying with this requirement, however, have proven to be impractical in some cases.

HUD has recently indicated that forthcoming revisions to the HMIS Data and Technical Standards will facilitate associating data with a particular CoC and data exchange between HMIS implementations. In anticipation of these revisions, VA has established this interim policy for HMIS participation.

Requirements

- Every SSVF grantee is required to participate in at least one HMIS implementation; that HMIS implementation must be operated by a CoC in which the grantee is providing direct services.
    - An HMIS implementation is community-based. Simply entering data into an HMIS application that is not affiliated with a CoC does not satisfy the requirement to participate in an HMIS implementation unless data are exported to and accepted by an HMIS implementation.
- Information about every participant served must be entered into an HMIS, exported from HMIS, and uploaded to the VA Repository on at least a monthly basis. The only exception to this is for grantees who are victim services providers as defined by the Violence Against Women Act. Information about every participant served must be correctly associated in HMIS with the CoC in which the participant / household is located.

- Every program in an HMIS is associated with a CoC (Program Descriptor Data Element 2.7). Grantees operating in multiple CoCs must have at least one program set up in HMIS for each CoC in which they operate.
- Each SSVF participant must be entered into a program associated with the CoC in which the participant household is located on the program entry date. Households with members located in more than one CoC on the program entry date should be entered into the program associated with the CoC where the eligible Veteran is located.

- While SSVF grantees operating in more than one CoC are no longer required to participate in the HMIS implementation of every CoC in which they provide services, it remains the ideal.
- SSVF grantees operating in multiple CoCs must develop a plan for HMIS participation. HMIS participation arrangements are subject to approval by grantees' Regional Coordinators and the National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans.

HMIS Participation Planning

As noted above, participation by SSVF grantees in the HMIS implementations of each of the CoCs in which they provide direct services is the ideal where it is practical. Many SSVF grantees are successfully participating in multiple HMIS implementations and this may be the most practical alternative in many cases.

There are many factors to consider in establishing an HMIS participation plan; some of these factors are outlined below.

Other SSVF Grantees in the Same CoC

HMIS can be invaluable in reducing duplication of services in CoCs where there are multiple SSVF programs. If your program is operating in any CoC in which there are other SSVF grantees providing services, talk to the other grantees about HMIS. The use of an HMIS that is either open or supports data-sharing agreements between programs such that it is possible to see if an applicant is already being served by another SSVF grantee is ideal. Your regional coordinator may be able to assist you in collaborating with other grantees to use a common HMIS.

Percentage of Participants in a CoC

This is a simple common sense consideration. If you're operating in six CoCs but 90% of your participants are concentrated in a single CoC, you should be participating in that CoC's HMIS unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Location of Service Providers

It is relatively easy to support participation in multiple HMIS implementations when there is a one-to-one relationship between an organization (grantee or subgrantee) and a CoC, i.e., when

services in different CoCs areas are provided by organizations physically located in those CoCs. In many cases, when service providers are physically distributed across multiple CoCs, the provider organizations may have other programs that are already entering data into the HMIS implementations for the CoCs where they operate. In these cases, participating in multiple HMIS implementations might make more sense than entering all data into a single HMIS.

On the other hand, if services in multiple CoCs are provided from a single location by the same group of people, and participating in each of the HMIS implementations would require staff to remember multiple usernames and passwords as well as which system a participant's record is in every time a service is recorded, it you should probably consider entering all of your data into a single HMIS.

On the other hand, if your grant covers three CoCs and services for each of the CoCs are provided from separate locations, you should consider participating in each of the CoC's HMIS implementations.

Participation Fees

HMIS participation fees are a covered expense for SSVF grantees. The overall cost of HMIS participation is a practical consideration in deciding whether or not to participate in the HMIS implementations for all of the CoCs in which you operate, but it should not be the primary factor.

It's important to be aware that the cost of HMIS participation varies from CoC to CoC and may have no relation to the level of support available or the quality of the HMIS software. Funding can be a big factor; some very advanced HMIS implementations have secured additional funding and charge minimal participation fees.

When comparing the participation fees of various HMIS implementations, be aware of what the fees include and what might cause them to increase. What kind of training and technical support is included? Does the cost of participation depend on the number of users you have, the number of programs you need, the number of client records you create, or some other factor?

HMIS Software

Each HMIS implementation selects its own HMIS application. HUD publishes minimum standards for HMIS applications, but there are big differences in workflow, reporting, and additional features. Software that is easy to use can have a big impact on data quality and save a lot of staff time. Using software that data entry personnel are already familiar with can also be helpful. When comparing two HMIS implementations that use different HMIS applications, it can be helpful to ask for a demonstration of the software.

The workflow for data entry is important; some applications have features that prevent users from creating duplicate records or to help ensure that all of the required data are entered. The ability to report on data from the HMIS may also be important; some applications offer a wide variety of reporting options – including data quality reports – while others do not. For SSVF

grantees – particularly those who export and upload their own data to the Repository – the export process is also critical. Some applications produce a single file within a few minutes that can be uploaded to the Repository as is; others require a multi-step process, manual changes, and/or overnight processing.

If two HMIS implementations use different HMIS applications and one appears to be easier to use and/or to have additional useful features that the other does not offer, the software might be a deciding factor. If two HMIS implementations use the same software, it may be that data could be entered into one and exported to the other with relative ease.

HMIS Implementation

Some HMIS implementations are more advanced and/or have more capacity to support HMIS users than others. A number of SSVF grantees export and upload their own SSVF data to the Repository; in some HMIS implementations, however, HMIS administrators or software vendors manage this process on behalf of SSVF grantees.

Entering Data into One HMIS and Exporting Data to Another

Some HMIS implementations accept data exported from another HMIS implementation. SSVF grantees operating in multiple CoCs may choose to do direct data entry into a single HMIS and to participate in the HMIS implementations for other CoCs by providing them with exports of data for clients located in their jurisdiction.

Your program will only be participating in an HMIS implementation if your data is accepted and integrated into the HMIS database. An HMIS implementation is not required to accept an extract of data and their ability to do so may depend on the capacity of their software. Your data is also subject to all of the policies and procedures of the HMIS implementation that receives it.

Questions to Consider for Each CoC

The following is a list of some questions you may wish to consider for each of the CoCs in which you are operating in developing an HMIS participation plan.

- Does your organization already have other programs participating in this CoC's HMIS?
- If you have subgrantees, do any of them have other programs participating in this CoC's HMIS?
- Are there other SSVF grantees operating in the CoC?
    - If yes, is the HMIS open or does it support data-sharing agreements between programs?
- What percentage of your clients do you expect will be located in this CoC? Less than 10%? More than 75%?
- Which HMIS software does the CoC use?

  - Are any of your staff already familiar with the software?
  - Does it have any features that make it easier or more difficult to use than the software used by other CoCs?
- Given the number of users you need and the number of programs required, what is the annual cost of participation by direct data entry in this CoC's HMIS?
- What kind of user training and support of provided to HMIS users? Are they included with the participation fee or are there additional costs?
- Can the HMIS export HMIS data in the HUD HMIS XML 3.0 and/or the HUD HMIS CSV 3.02/3.03 format? (It must be able to export data in at least one of these formats)
- Does the HMIS accept imports of HMIS data from other HMIS implementations?
  - Can it accept HUD HMIS XML 3.0 data?
  - Can it accept HUD HMIS CSV 3.02 / 3.03 data?
- Does the HMIS have the capacity to create programs associated with CoCs other than the CoC operating the HMIS?
- Has the HMIS implemented the two new separate Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing program types identified by HUD?
- Who would export SSVF data and upload it to the Repository each month?
  - If the HMIS administrator / vendor: Is there a backup in the event that s/he is not available?
  - If the SSVF grantee: What steps are required to export / upload the data?

SSVF Data Elements

SSVF grantees participate in HMIS on a local level and upload program and client-level data into the Repository. The data elements listed below are based upon the March 2010 HMIS Data Standards. It is expected that a new version of the HMIS Data Standards will be published by HUD with an effective date for compliance of October 1, 2014. VA will publish updated data collection requirements for SSVF grantees consistent with the new standards prior to the effective date.

Data Elements	SSVF Required	Subjects	When collected
Name	Yes	All Clients	Once per client
Social Security Number*	Yes	All Clients	Once per client
Date of Birth	Yes	All Clients	Once per client
Race	Yes	All Clients	Once per client
Ethnicity	Yes	All Clients	Once per client
Gender	Yes	All Clients	Once per client
Veteran Status	Yes	All Adults	At Program Entry
Disabling Condition	Yes	All Clients	At Program Entry
Residence Prior to Program Entry	Yes	All Adults	At Program Entry
Housing Status	Yes	All Clients	At Program Entry and Exit
Project Entry Date	Yes	All Clients	At Program Entry
Project Exit Date	Yes	All Clients	At Program Exit
Destination	Yes	All Clients	At Program Exit
Household Identification Number	Yes	All Clients	At Program Entry
Zip Code of Last Permanent Address	Yes	All Adults Served	At Program Entry
Income and Sources	Yes	All Adults Served	At Program Entry, Update, and Exit
Non-Cash Benefits	Yes	All Adults Served	At Program Entry, Update, and Exit
Services Provided	Yes	All Clients	As provided
Financial Assistance Provided	Yes	All Clients	As provided

SSVF Data Quality and Completeness Policy

SSVF grantees are required to attempt to collect every data element for every person served; grantees are required to enter data into HMIS for every person served. National-level counts of SSVF participants and tracking of outcomes are based on HMIS data. Only clients for whom data is entered into HMIS and successfully uploaded to the Repository can be counted by VA as having been served by SSVF grantees.

Some data elements in HMIS include options for 'Don't know' and 'Refused.' In some cases, these responses are unacceptable for SSVF clients.

Mandatory Data Elements

First name, last name, date of birth, veteran status, and housing status are mandatory for all clients. Clients may not decline to provide this information and it must be entered into HMIS.

Social Security Numbers

For Veterans, SSN is relevant to eligibility; any Veteran applying for services from an SSVF program must provide an SSN in order to receive services and grantees must enter it into HMIS. A Veteran who declines to provide an SSN is not eligible for SSVF; the final counts of people served by your program will include only people in households with a Veteran who has a valid SSN.

Grantees must also ask for an SSN for all non-Veteran household members; however, non-Veterans are legally entitled to decline to provide an SSN. When that happens, it must be accurately reflected in HMIS data. Regardless of the reason, missing / don't know / refused / invalid SSNs will always have a negative impact on data quality.

HMIS Data Collection for SSVF Participants with History of Domestic Violence

Only programs whose primary mission is to serve victims of domestic violence are prohibited by VAWA from entering client data into HMIS. All other SSVF grantees are required to collect and enter data for 100% of SSVF participants into HMIS. Grantees who perceive this SSVF requirement to be in conflict with state law, local law, or local HMIS policy must contact regional coordinators with documentation of the specific law and/or policy. VA will review and, when possible, take additional action to facilitate the entry of this data into HMIS. If there is any doubt about a conflict, grantees should contact regional coordinators immediately rather than waiting until a participant with a history of domestic violence requests SSVF assistance.

SSVF Data Security Policy

It is the responsibility of the grantee to take precautions to protect client information for all persons served; this applies to both hard copies and electronic data. Information in HMIS tends to be more secure than information in paper files. There are basic information security practices that grantees should follow to keep all personally identifying information secure:

1. Protect any computer that stores or accesses identifying information about any client – which includes accessing HMIS or data exported from HMIS for upload to the Repository – with a username and password.
2. Do not share the username and password for your computer or your HMIS account with anyone, and don't keep them written down in a place where anyone else could find them.
3. Log out or lock your computer when you are not at your desk.
4. The only VA-approved method of transmitting exported HMIS data for SSVF clients is by upload to the Repository; exported files may not be emailed.

SSVF grantees should coordinate with the HMIS Lead to ensure that they are aware of and compliant with all security and privacy policies and procedures established by the HMIS implementation(s) in which they participate.

Additional Security Measures for Sensitive Data

While data in HMIS is typically highly secure, there are some very rare circumstances in which it may be vulnerable. These circumstances include instances in which a participant who has been a victim of domestic violence has an abuser who either has access to HMIS data or is a proficient hacker.

Grantees who have reason to believe that information pertaining to a particular participant or household is especially vulnerable in HMIS must contact their regional coordinator, who will help to develop a plan to enter data without compromising the participant's safety. It may be appropriate to delay data entry until after the participant has been discharged.

In addition, although data required by VA for SSVF participants does not include an address or other contact information, some HMIS applications have the capacity to track such data, as well as information about employers, etc. In instances where there is reason to believe that an abuser may have access to HMIS data, none of that additional information should be entered into HMIS.

HMIS Project Descriptor Data for an SSVF Program

Overview

This section provides guidance to HMIS administrators and HMIS vendors on how to complete the Program Descriptor Data Elements in HMIS to set up a Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program.

The data elements and responses outlined are based on the HMIS Data Standards published by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in March 2010. The single exception to this is for data element 2.8 Program Type Code; HUD has notified HMIS vendors that there will be a change to this data element that is relevant to SSVF programs in the forthcoming revision of the HMIS Data Standards and has asked HMIS vendors to implement the change in advance of publication of the final standards document. The Project Descriptor Data Elements are outlined below.

2.1 Organization Identifier

This is generated by the HMIS software; it serves to uniquely identify the organization that received the SSVF grant.

2.2 Organization Name

This is the name of the SSVF grantee; the Organization Name is associated with the Organization Identifier. In the event that the organization is operating other programs already participating in HMIS, there may already be a record for the organization in the HMIS. It is not necessary that the Organization Name in HMIS is an identical match to the grantee name as identified in the SSVF grant, only that the organization is correctly identified.

2.3 Program Identifier

This is generated by the HMIS software; it serves to uniquely identify the SSVF program(s) being operated by the grantee organization.

2.4 Program Name

This is the name of the SSVF program being operated by the grantee organization; the Program Name is associated with the Program Identifier.

> ***SSVF Special Issues***
>
> Although each SSVF grant might be thought of as a single program, there are many instances in which it is necessary to create multiple programs in HMIS to represent a single SSVF grant (see the SSVF Special Issues section for 2.7 Continuum of Care Number and 2.8 Program Type Code).
>
> Program names should make it as simple as possible for users to distinguish between the various HMIS programs created to represent a single SSVF grant, e.g., Community Homeless SSVF RRH (ST-600 CoC) or Community Homeless SSVF Prevention (ST-500 CoC).

2.5 Direct Service Code

This identifies whether or not the program provides direct services to clients. For an SSVF program, the response should always be **1 = Yes**.

2.6 Site Information

This data element should be completed consistent with policies of the HMIS implementation. For an SSVF program, the response for *Site Type* should be **1 = Non-residential: services only** and the response for *Housing Type* should be **7 = Not applicable: non-residential program**.

2.7 Continuum of Care Number

Each program in HMIS must be associated with a single Continuum of Care (CoC). Each CoC is associated with a geographic area and has a number assigned by HUD.

> ***SSVF Special Issues***
>
> SSVF grantees operating in multiple CoCs should be set up in HMIS with a separate program each CoC, even when entering all data into a single HMIS. Program participants should be entered into the program associated with the CoC in which the participant or household is located at the time of program entry.
>
> Until September 2013, SSVF programs operating in multiple HMIS jurisdictions were required to participate in each HMIS implementation. While this is no longer required, it is still mandatory that enrollment records can be matched to the CoC in which each household is served. See separate document titled *HMIS Guidance for SSVF Grantees Operating in Multiple CoCs*.

2.8 Program Type Code

Under the March 2010 HMIS Data Standards, SSVF programs would be identified as '5 = Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing.' However, HUD has notified VA that this program type will no longer be valid when the next revision of the HMIS Data Standards takes effect. In anticipation of this change, HUD has asked HMIS vendors to create two new program types: **12 = Homelessness Prevention** and **13 = Rapid Re-Housing**.

> ***SSVF Special Issues***
>
> Where the HMIS application has been updated to include the two new program types, SSVF grantees that will be serving both Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing clients should have two separate programs set up in HMIS.
>
> At the point of enrollment, participants should be entered into either the Homelessness Prevention or the Rapid Re-Housing program, depending on the Housing Status at Entry of the eligible Veteran. It will still be necessary to collect and enter Housing Status for all participants.
>
> VA reporting for SSVF grantees will continue to categorize participants into Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing regardless of regardless of Program Type.

2.9 Bed and Unit Inventory Information

This data element should be completed consistent with the policies of the HMIS implementation.

2.10 Target Population A

This data element should be completed consistent with the policies of the HMIS implementation.

2.11 Target Population B

The response category for SSVF programs should be **2 = VET: Veterans**.

2.12 Method for Tracking Residential Program Occupancy

This data element is not applicable for SSVF programs.

2.13 Grantee Identifier

This data element may optionally be used to record the SSVF grant number (e.g., 14-ST-015).

E. SSVF Data Reporting

HMIS Monthly Repository Uploads

Grantees are required to enter data on all participants into the HMIS project associated with the CoC geography where the client is physically located at the time of entry. The only exception to this is for grantees who are victim services providers as defined by the Violence Against Women Act[1]. Some SSVF grantees serve areas larger than a single CoC which may encompass more than one HMIS project. If this is the case, SSVF grantees will need to distribute client data into the appropriate HMIS – the specific HMIS project where the client is located. Client data from separate HMIS projects will be aggregated within the Repository to create a consolidated accounting of total client activity for each SSVF grantee. Other reports such as the Quarterly Report and the Coversheet should reflect total grantee activity regardless of the number of separate HMIS projects involved.

During the first five business days of every month, grantees are required to upload client-level SSVF data from the HMIS system in which SSVF Program data are managed to a secure SSVF Data Repository ("Repository") managed by VA. Each upload of SSVF data to the Repository will contain a complete data set reflecting program activity from program inception to the date of export.

The preferred format for the upload of SSVF Program data to the Repository is the HUD HMIS Comma-Separated Value (CSV) Format; a subset of the complete set of CSV files will be required. Each of the fields defined in the HUD HMIS CSV documentation must be present in the uploaded files, although not all of the fields must contain data.

The Repository will also accept data in the HUD HMIS XML Format. Data uploaded in the XML format will be automatically parsed into the CSV format after uploading prior to further processing.

Data exported from HMIS systems should be packaged in a ZIP file prior to upload to the Repository. For detailed specifications, upload operating instructions, data quality standards, and data use and disclosure descriptions, please see the VA Repository Data Upload Criteria available in Section 3, Data Reporting Toolkit.

[1]Grantees who are not victim services providers may delay entry of data for participants who are victims of domestic violence until after discharge. Contact your regional coordinator for guidance on how to handle specific instances.

Quarterly Reports and Coversheets

Quarterly Reports

In addition to use of HMIS, grantees are also expected to complete quarterly reports addressing programmatic and financial information. The quarterly reports consist of a series of questions related to grantees' program operations over the course of the quarter – e.g., requests for information concerning significant events that have occurred in the program, major sources of participant referrals, lists of services provided directly and by referral, participant safety issues, best practices, etc. In addition, the quarterly financial report template asks grantees to identify and explain all budget variances, quarterly spending by subcontractor, quarterly draw downs, numbers of participants served, and non- VA funding sources used for SSVF Program activities. Copies of the report template and companion guide for completing these reports can be found on the SSVF University Web site, (http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvfuniversity.asp?page=/program_requirements/hmis_and_data).

Coversheet

The Coversheet report is an Excel spreadsheet used to collect the supplemental data to those elements collected in the Repository. The elements collected in the coversheet may not be collectable in HMIS, so you may have to collect these outside of HMIS. This data is divided into prevention, rapid re-housing, report period and year to date. This report will be submitted until the new data standards are finalized and integrated into HMIS.

This data is required to be sent to the Regional Coordinator on a monthly basis and is due during the first five business days of the month unless otherwise specified by a grantee's regional coordinator. For more information on what data should be included in the Coversheet, see the Program Requirements, Reporting section of the SSVF University Web site (http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvfuniversity.asp?page=/program_requirements/reporting).

VA Repository Data Upload Criteria

Each upload of SSVF data to the Repository must contain a complete data set reflecting program activity from the grant start date to the date that the data set is exported from the HMIS. This document identifies the data upload format criteria that an uploaded data set must meet in order to be accepted by the Repository.

Data Upload Format

The Repository will accept data in either of the two HMIS data exchange formats that have been defined by HUD: HUD HMIS Comma-Separated Value (CSV) Format[2]; (version 3.02 or 3.03) or the HUD HMIS XML Format (version 3.0). Data is to be exported from HMIS applications in one of these two standard formats, packaged in a ZIP file, and uploaded to the Repository.

The Repository will also accept data in the HUD HMIS XML Format. Data uploaded in the XML format will be parsed into the CSV format by the Repository prior to further processing. Once the data is parsed, the resultant CSV files are validated using the same criteria described in this document.

Data exported from HMIS systems should be packaged in a ZIP file prior to upload to the Repository.

HUD HMIS CSV Format

The complete CSV standard includes a broader range of information than is required by the Repository. Only the following files are required when uploading CSV data:

- Export.csv
- AgencyProgram.csv
- Client.csv
- ProgramParticipation.csv
- ClientHistorical.csv
- IncomeBenefits.csv
- ServiceEvent.csv

The Repository will ignore any files other than those that are required. It will also ignore data in fields that are not required. This document does not constitute documentation of the complete HUD HMIS CSV format, nor does it contain all of the information needed to produce a valid CSV export from HMIS data; the documentation published by HUD must be referenced when programming a CSV export.

[2] For complete documentation of the current HUD HMIS CSV format, see http://www.hudhdx.info/Resources/Vendors/HUDHMISCSVFormatV3_02.pdf

Data Integration Criteria

Upon upload of a dataset, the Repository will extract the CSV files from the zip file and run a series of validation checks to determine whether or not the uploaded data is compliant with the HUD CSV specifications and with the data quality requirements established by VA for SSVF grantees.

File Names

File names for a CSV data set must match the names as they are included in this document. For purposes of matching, the Repository will disregard underscores in file names; matching is not case sensitive.

For example, files named ClientHistorical.csv, Client_Historical.csv, client_historical.csv, and even C_L_ienT_HiS_ToRi_CaL.csv are acceptable (and all the same) under the matching criteria and would be accepted for processing by the Repository. Client-Historical.csv and ClientHostorical.csv, however, would not meet the matching criteria (because of the dash in the first and the misspelling of Historical in the second) and would be disregarded by the Repository.

Data Structure

Each of the required CSV files must be included in the uploaded dataset, and each of the files must contain headers (field names) for all of the fields defined for that particular file in the HUD HMIS CSV specifications, however, fields listed in the sections that follow that are in greyed out cells need not contain data, regardless of whether or not data was entered into HMIS for those fields. If the greyed out fields do contain data, the data will be disregarded by the Repository.

Each file should include a header row with field names. Any field that might, under any circumstances, contain a comma must be padded with quotation marks, e.g., “Cheyenne, WY.”

Field Names

Field names in the CSV dataset must match the field names as they are included in this document. For purposes of matching, matching is not case-sensitive and will ignore the presence or absence of question marks (?) and virgules (/).

The Repository will scan uploaded datasets to verify that all of the fields are present and that the field names are as defined in the HUD CSV specifications. In the event that one or more fields are missing, the user will be notified that the upload has been rejected (along with the reason).

Data Types

Data values for fields in the CSV files are established by the HUD HMIS Comma-Separated Value (CSV) Format Documentation. Allowable types include dates, numbers (whole numbers with no decimal), money (numbers with a decimal), or variable (text fields with no pre-defined format.

Dates should be in the format MM/DD/YYYY (i.e. 10/09/2011). Money data should include digits, an optional decimal, and a maximum of two optional digits after the decimal. In instances where the data types do not align between the uploaded data set and the HUD CSV specifications, the user will be alerted that the upload has been rejected (along with the reason).

The documentation also defines pick lists – sets of values that correspond to a list of pre-defined responses – for many of fields. In most cases, the pick lists are based on the response categories defined for a given field by the HMIS Data Standards. Where the documentation defines a pick list for a required field, values in uploads must correspond to a value in the pick list or the user will be notified that the data set has been rejected.

When an upload is rejected, the Repository will provide a specific reason (or reasons) for the rejection.

Required Fields (Allow Null = "N")

Mandatory fields such as PersonalIdentificationNumber and EntryDate are defined in the HUD CSV specifications with "Allow Null?" set to N (No) in the data formats. Optional fields are marked with Y (Yes). The upload will be rejected in its entirety if there are NULL values in required fields.

Data Quality

The Repository will evaluate the files for data quality. There are set data quality thresholds for critical fields at two levels: Notify and Reject.

At the Notify level, the Repository will generate a data quality alert to notify the user that the data quality is below the expected threshold.

At the Reject level, where data quality is excessively poor, or where missing data indicates that there is a potential defect in the export process, the entire uploaded dataset will be rejected by the Repository. In order to comply with the upload requirement, reject level errors must be corrected in HMIS and the data set must be exported and uploaded again.

Export.csv

This file provides basic information about the export, such as the date that it was generated and the date range that the export covers, along with an identifier (ExportIDStr) for the export itself that must be present in each of the other files. This identifier helps to verify that each of the files was generated by the same export process.

CSV Export File Specifications

EXPORT.CSV	
Field	Notes
ExportIDStr	Required; uploaded dataset will be rejected if this field is blank.
SourceID	(n/a)
SourceName	(n/a)
SourceContactFirst	(n/a)
SourceContactLast	(n/a)
SourceContactPhone	(n/a)
SourceContactExtension	(n/a)
SourceContactEmail	(n/a)
ExportDate	Required. This is the date that the export was generated.
ExportPeriodBegin	Required. This is the start data of the SSVF grant. If the date in this field is blank or is later than the Repository's recorded start date for the program, the uploaded dataset will be rejected.
ExportPeriodEnd	Required; should be equal to the ExportDate.
ExportHashing	Although optional, if there is a value in this field it must be 0 (Not Hashed). Hashed data will not be accepted. This data will not be stored.
SoftwareVendor	Required. This field should contain the name of the HMIS software vendor.
SoftwareVersion	(n/a)
AgencyProgramFile	(n/a)
BedInventoryFile	(n/a)
ClientFile	(n/a)
ClientHistoricalFile	(n/a)
IncomeBenefitsFile	(n/a)
OutcomeMeasuresFile	(n/a)
RegionsFile	(n/a)
ProgramParticipation	(n/a)
ServiceEventFile	(n/a)
SiteInformationFile	(n/a)
DeltaOrRefresh	Although optional, if there is a value in this field, it must be 1 (Refresh). This data will not be stored.

AgencyProgram.csv

This file provides basic information about the program(s) for which data is included in the export.

CSV Agency Program File Specifications

AGENCYPROGRAM.CSV	
Field	Notes
OrganizationID	Optional; may be up to 16 characters long.
OrganizationName	Optional; may be up to 125 characters long.
ProgramID	Required; may be up to 16 characters long.
ProgramName	Required; may be up to 125 characters long.
DirectServiceCode	(n/a)
SiteID	(n/a)
SiteConfigurationType	(n/a)
ProgramTypeCode	(n/a)
TargetPopulationA	(n/a)
TargetPopulationB	(n/a)
TrackingMethod	(n/a)
GranteeIdentifier	(n/a)
ReceivesMcKinneyFunding	(n/a)
DateCreated	(n/a)
DateUpdated	(n/a)
ExportIDStr	Required; must match the ExportIDStr in Export.csv.

Client.csv

This file provides information about the individuals served by the program(s) identified in AgencyProgram.csv during the date range identified in Export.csv.

Client records without a corresponding record of program enrollment (in ProgramParticipation) will be ignored by the Repository. The Repository will notify the user if there are any such records found at the time of upload.

CSV Client File Specifications

CLIENT.CSV	
Field	Notes
OrganizationID	(n/a)
Personal Identification Number	Every client record must include a value in this field or the upload will be rejected.
LegalFirstName	Every client record must include a first name.
LegalMiddleName	(n/a)
LegalLastName	Every client record must include a last name.
LegalSuffix	(n/a)

CLIENT.CSV	
Field	Notes
SocialSecurityNumber	Every client record must include a complete Social Security number.
SocialSecNumberQualityCode	Required.
DateOfBirth	Every client record must include a date of birth. Data sets with any information in this field that is not formatted as a date (MM/DD/YYYY) will be rejected.
DateOfBirthQualityCode	Required.
PrimaryRace	Required.
SecondaryRace	(optional)
Ethnicity	Required.
Gender	Required.
DateAdded	(n/a)
DateUpdated	(n/a)
UpdateOrDelete	(n/a)
IdentityVerification	(n/a)
ReleaseOfInformation	(n/a)
ExportIDStr	Required. Must match the ExportIDStr in Export.csv.

ProgramParticipation.csv

This file provides information about program participation (enrollments) during the date range identified in Export.csv for the program(s) identified in AgencyProgram.csv by clients identified in Client.csv.

Validation of some of the fields in this file is contingent on whether or not the client was an adult at the time of program entry. For each record in ProgramParticipation.csv, a client is an adult if s/he was at least 18 years old on the EntryDate in ProgramParticipation. Where there is no valid date in the DateOfBirth field in Client.csv, error checking will assume that the client is an adult.

CSV Program Participation Specifications

PROGRAMPARTICIPATION.CSV	
Field	Notes
PersonalIdentificationNumber	Every record must contain a value in this field or the upload will be rejected. Records with a value not included in Client.csv will be ignored.
OrganizationID	(n/a)
ProgramID	Every record must contain a value in this field or the upload will be rejected. Records with a value not included in AgencyProgram.csv will be discarded.

PROGRAMPARTICIPATION.CSV	
Field	Notes
SiteID	(n/a)
EntryDate	Every record must contain a value in this field or the upload will be rejected.
ExitDate	Required for clients who have been discharged. Uploads with values in this field that are earlier than the EntryDate or are not in the format MM/DD/YYYY will be rejected.
DateUpdated	(n/a)
VeteranStatus	Required for all adults.
DisablingCondition	Required.
PriorResidence	Required for all adults.
LengthOfStayAtPriorResidence	Required for all adults.
ZIPCode	Required for all adults.
ZIPQualityCode	Required for all adults.
HousingStatusAtEntry	Required. Records with missing, don't know, or refused values will not be included in reporting.
HousingStatusAtExit	Required for clients with an ExitDate.
HouseholdIdentificationNumber	Required.
Destination	Required for clients with an ExitDate.
ReasonForLeaving	(n/a)
RelationshipToHeadOfHousehold	(n/a)
HUDChronicHomeless	(n/a)
ExportIDStr	Required. Must match the ExportIDStr in Export.csv.

ClientHistorical.csv

This file includes information about whether or not clients are receiving income and/or non-cash benefits and, in some cases, about whether or not clients have specific disabilities.

Collection of data in fields with an asterisk (*) before the field name in the table below is optional for SSVF programs; if the data is entered into HMIS, however, the data should be included in the export consistent with HMIS Data Standards.

CSV Client Historical Specifications

CLIENTHISTORICAL.CSV	
Field	**Notes**
PersonalIdentificationNumber	Every record must contain a value in this field or the upload will be rejected. Records with a value not included in Client.csv will be ignored.

CLIENTHISTORICAL.CSV	
Field	**Notes**
OrganizationID	(n/a)
ProgramID	Every record must contain a value in this field or the upload will be rejected. Records with a value not included in AgencyProgram.csv will be discarded.
SiteID	(n/a)
AssessmentDate	Uploads with values in this field that are not in the format MM/DD/YYYY will be rejected. In general, the value in this field must match the value in the EntryDate field in ProgramParticipation in order to be considered data collected at program entry and must match the value in the ExitDate field in order to be considered data collected at program exit.
DateUpdated	(n/a)
IncomeTotalMonthly	Values in this field must be in the format of a number with an optional decimal, e.g., 123.45. No dollar signs, letters, or other symbols may be included.
IncomeLast30Days	Required.
NonCashBenefitsLast30Days	Required.
* *PhysicalDisability*	(n/a)
* *ReceivePhysicalDisabilityServices*	(n/a)
* *HasDevelopmentalDisability*	(n/a)
* *ReceiveDevelopmentalDisabilityServices*	(n/a)
* *HasChronicHealthCondition*	(n/a)
* *ReceiveChronicHealthServices*	(n/a)
* *HasHIVAIDS*	(n/a)
* *ReceiveHIVAIDSServices*	(n/a)
* *HasMentalHealthProblem*	(n/a)
* *MentalHealthIndefinite*	(n/a)
* *ReceiveMentalHealthServices*	(n/a)
* *HasSubstanceAbuseProblem*	(n/a)
* *SubstanceAbuseIndefinite*	(n/a)
* *ReceiveSubstanceAbuseServices*	(n/a)
* *DomesticViolenceSurvivor*	(n/a)
* *DVOccurred*	(n/a)
CurrentlyEmployed	(n/a)
HoursWorkedLastWeek	(n/a)
EmploymentTenure	(n/a)

CLIENTHISTORICAL.CSV	
Field	**Notes**
LookingForWork	(n/a)
CurrentlyInSchool	(n/a)
VocationalTraining	(n/a)
HighestSchoolLevel	(n/a)
Degree	(n/a)
HealthStatus	(n/a)
PregnancyStatus	(n/a)
DueDate	(n/a)
ServiceEra	(n/a)
MilitaryServiceDuration	(n/a)
ServedInWarZone	(n/a)
WarZone	(n/a)
MonthsInWarZone	(n/a)
ReceivedFire	(n/a)
MilitaryBranch	(n/a)
DischargeStatus	(n/a)
ChildCurrentlyEnrolledInSchool	(n/a)
ChildSchoolName	(n/a)
ChildMcKinneyVentoLiaison	(n/a)
ChildSchoolType	(n/a)
ChildSchoolLastEnrolledDate	(n/a)
ChildEnrollmentBarrier	(n/a)
ExportIDStr	Required. Must match the ExportIDStr in Export.csv.
DataCollectionStage	(Optional; identifies the point in the enrollment when data was collected, e.g., at program entry, during enrollment, at program exit, or after program exit.)

IncomeBenefits.csv

This file provides information about specific sources of income and non-cash benefits.

CSV Income & Benefits Specifications

INCOMEBENEFITS.CSV	
Field	**Notes**
PersonalIdentificationNumber	Every record must contain a value in this field or the upload will be rejected. Records with a value not included in Client.csv will be

INCOMEBENEFITS.CSV	
Field	**Notes**
	ignored.
OrganizationID	(n/a)
ProgramID	Every record must contain a value in this field or the upload will be rejected. Records with a value not included in AgencyProgram.csv will be discarded.
SiteID	(n/a)
AssessmentDate	Uploads with values in this field that are not in the format MM/DD/YYYY will be rejected. In general, the value in this field must match the value in the EntryDate field in ProgramParticipation in order to be considered data collected at program entry and must match the value in the ExitDate field in order to be considered data collected at program exit.
DateUpdated	(n/a)
IncomeBenefitType	All records must have a value in this field.
SourceCode	Uploads that include values not defined in the HMIS Data Standards will be rejected.
SourceOther	(n/a)
MonthlyAmount	Values in this field must be in the format of a number with an optional decimal, e.g., 123.45. No dollar signs, letters, or other symbols may be included.
ExportIDStr	Required. Must match the ExportIDStr in Export.csv.
DataCollectionStage	(Optional; identifies the point in the enrollment when data was collected, e.g., at program entry, during enrollment, at program exit, or after program exit.)

ServiceEvent.csv

This file includes data about specific services provided to clients by SSVF grantees.

CSV Service Event Specifications

SERVICEEVENT.CSV	
Field	**Notes**
PersonalIdentificationNumber	Every record must contain a value in this field or the upload will be rejected. Records with a value not included in Client.csv will be ignored.
OrganizationID	(n/a)
ProgramID	Every record must contain a value in this field or the upload will be rejected. Records with a value not included in AgencyProgram.csv will be ignored.
SiteID	(n/a)

SERVICEEVENT.CSV	
Field	**Notes**
ServiceEventType	Required.
ServiceEventStartDate	Uploads with values in this field that are not in the format MM/DD/YYYY will be rejected. Records with no value in this field will be ignored.
ServiceEventEndDate	Uploads with values in this field that are not in the format MM/DD/YYYY will be rejected. Uploads with values in this field that are earlier than ServiceEventStartDate will be rejected.
ServiceCode	Required
ServiceAIRSCode	(n/a)
IsReferral	(n/a)
QuantityFrequency	(n/a)
FinancialAssistanceAmount	Required for records of financial assistance. Values in this field must be in the format of a number with an optional decimal, e.g., 123.45. No dollar signs, letters, or other symbols may be included.
FundingCategory	(n/a)
GrantIDNumber	(n/a)
IsRecurring	(n/a)
PeriodInterval	(n/a)
AdvanceArrears	(n/a)
ContactTime	(n/a)
ContactSite	(n/a)
ClientEngaged	(n/a)
AssetListID	(n/a)
AssetID	(n/a)
DomainIDCode	(n/a)
DateUpdated	(n/a)
ExportIDStr	Required. Must match the ExportIDStr in Export.csv.

HUD HMIS XML Format

Data uploaded in the XML format must be consistent with the current HMIS XML schema (version 3.0 or later). The Repository will parse XML data into the CSV format prior to further processing. Acceptance of uploaded data will require that the resultant CSV files meet all of the data quality criteria established by VA for SSVF grantees. In order for this to occur, all of the required data must be collected, entered into HMIS, and included in the export.

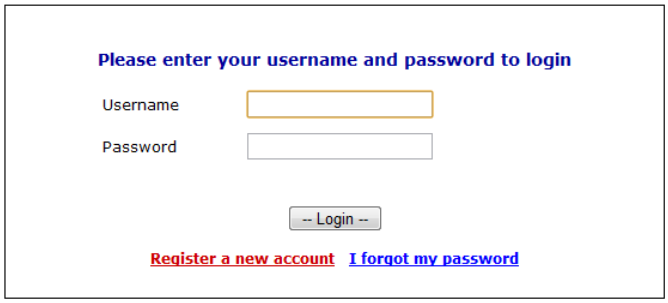
Repository User Notes

Accessing the Repository

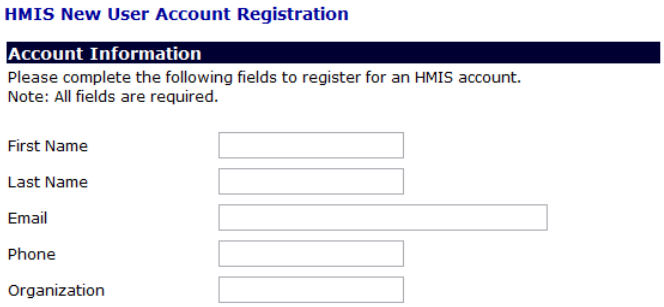
To access the Repository, go to http://www.hmisrepository.va.gov and click on the 'Click here to log in' link.

Creating an Account

1. From the log in page, click on the 'Register a new account' link.

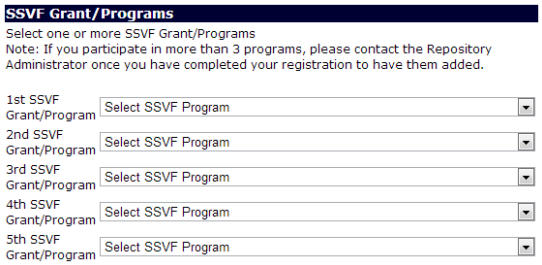


2. Enter your first name, last name, the email address the Repository should use to send your account confirmation, your work phone number, and the name of the organization that employs you. All of these fields are required. The phone number should include an area code.

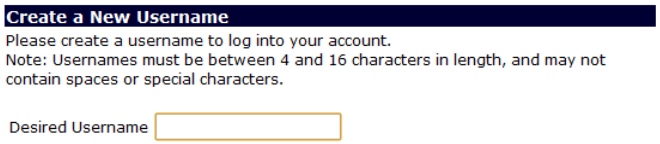


3. Select the name of the program(s) for which you will be uploading data. In order to create an account, you must select at least one program, and if you only select one program, it must be in the field labeled '1st SSVF Grant/Program.' If you will be

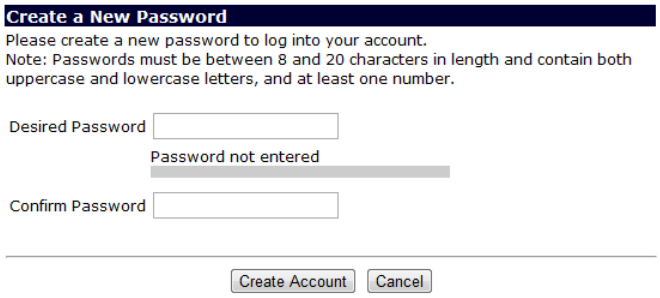
uploading more than five data sets each month, select five programs at the time of registration. After your account is created, you will need to contact a Repository Administrator to add the additional grantee programs to your account.



4. Enter your desired username. Usernames must be between 4 and 16 characters in length and contain only letters and numbers – no spaces or special characters (such as @, $, or &, etc.). Each user must have a unique username, so if the name you choose is a duplicate of an existing username, you will be asked to choose a different one.



5. Create a password for your account. The password must be between 8 and 20 characters in length, contain at least one lowercase letter, at least one UPPERCASE letter, and at least one number. Once you've created your password, enter the same password a second time and click 'Create Account.'



Within a few minutes, you should receive an email asking you to confirm your email address.

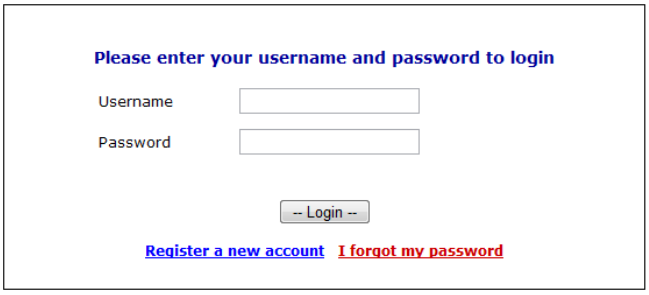
After you have confirmed your email address, a Repository Administrator will authorize your account to log in. You may e-mail ssvfhmis@abtassoc.com if you cannot login to your account within one business day of confirming your email address.

Logging In to the Repository

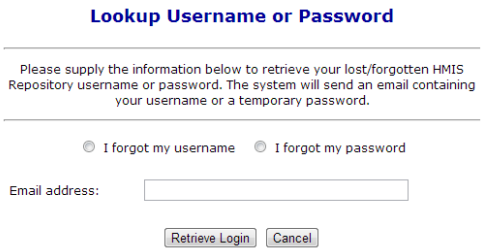
The Repository is open during the first five business days of each month, at which time you are free to login as many times as necessary. After the fifth business day, the Repository will be closed and you will only be able to gain access by appointment.

Enter your username and password, and click 'Login'.

Forgotten Username or Password



If you've forgotten your username or your password, click the "I forgot my password" hyperlink on the login page.



Specify whether you've forgotten your username or your password and enter your email address (the same one you used to register). You will receive an email with the information that you need to log in.

Generating an Export of HMIS Data

First, you will need to export your SSVF data from HMIS. The export should include all SSVF data entered into HMIS, regardless of date – the most current and complete picture of your program from the start date of your grant right up to the day you generate the export.

Only data related to the SSVF program should be included in the export.

When you are exporting data, if your HMIS asks you for a start date and an end date for the export:

- **The start date should be the start date of your grant.**
- **The end date should be the date on which you are generating the export – today's date, whatever today is.**

Handling More than One Export

Every time you successfully upload a file, it replaces any and all data previously uploaded for your program.

If your program is participating in more than one HMIS implementation or if producing a complete data set for your program requires more than one export for any reason, the Repository must be set up ahead of time with a separate upload program for each of the files that you're going to upload.

Contact ssvfhmis@abtassoc.com to get set up for multiple uploads.

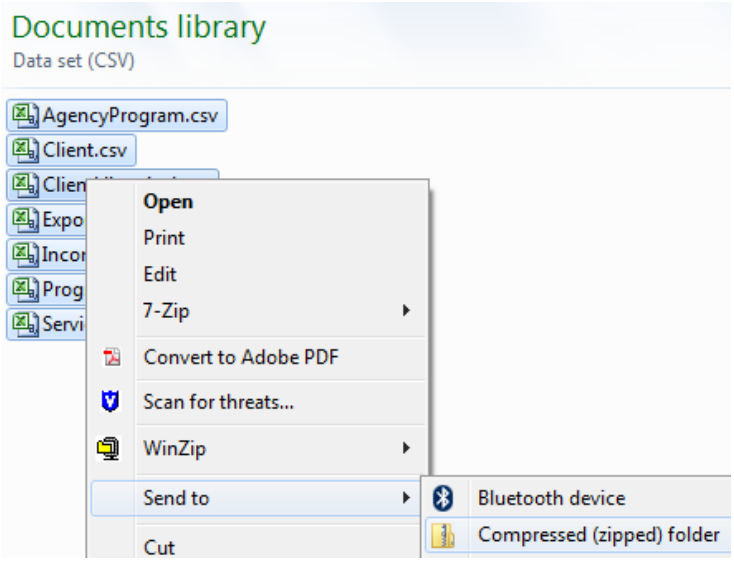
Preparing CSV Data for Upload

A CSV export should include, at a minimum, files with the following names:

- Export.csv
- AgencyProgram.csv
- Client.csv
- ProgramParticipation.csv
- ClientHistorical.csv
- IncomeBenefits.csv
- ServiceEvent.csv

The CSV files generated by your HMIS application must be packaged in a ZIP file. ZIP files decrease the amount of space required to store data and make it faster to upload. Some HMIS applications zip the files as part of the export process. If your HMIS does not zip the files for you, you will need to zip them prior to upload to the Repository.

Both Windows and Mac operating systems have built-in functionality to create ZIP files. To use the built-in functionality, select all seven of the CSV files and then right-click on them. In Windows, click 'Send to' and then 'Compressed (zipped) folder' to create a ZIP file. In Mac OS, click 'Compress 7 items' to create a ZIP file. In both Windows and Mac OS, the ZIP file will be created in the same folder as the CSV files.



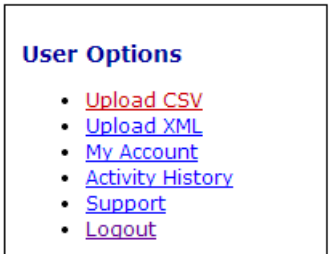
When you zip your files, make sure to zip ONLY the CSV files.Don't zip up the folder that they're in; if they're in a folder inside the ZIP file, the Repository will not be able to find them.

You can name the ZIP file anything you want – just make sure that the name includes the .zip extension and does not contain any special characters such as #, $, %, @, etc. Letters, numbers, dashes (-), underscores (_), and periods (.) are the only characters you should use when you name your ZIP file.

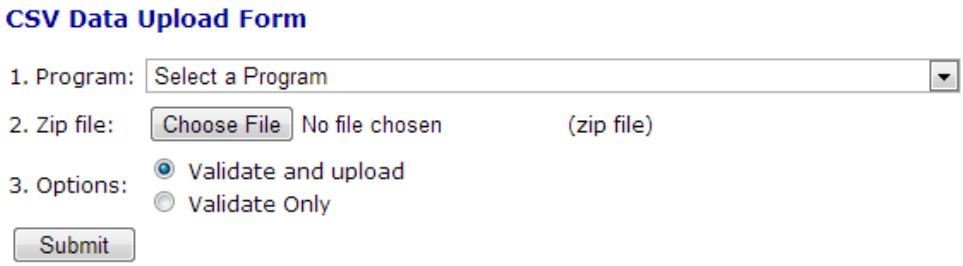
There are also several software applications that will create ZIP files, including 7-zip, WinZip, WinRAR; or MagicRAR. If you have one of these installed on your computer, you are welcome to use it to zip your files.

Uploading CSV Data

From the list of User Options on the left-hand side of the page, click on *Upload CSV*.



Next, enter the following information about your upload.



1. **Program** – Select the name of the specific SSVF program for which you are uploading data.
2. **Zip file** – Selecting "Choose File" will open a dialog box in which you can select the zip file from your network or hard drive.
3. **Options** – You have two options:
    a. Validate and upload – This is the default; it will validate your file and – if the file meets the data quality requirements – transmit the data to the Repository database.
    b. Validate only – This option will validate your file but WILL NOT upload it. You can use this to check your data quality if you'd like to review it before deciding whether or not to upload your file. *If after validating your data, you would like to proceed with uploading it, select "Upload Data" at the bottom of the validation page.*

The validate and upload option is a single step process, but it may take several minutes to complete; please wait for the Repository to display the results without clicking Back or closing your browser window.

The Repository will process your files and check them for data quality and to make sure that the files include all of the necessary columns. When it's done, it will display a file validation report. See the File Validation section for more information about how to read the results.

If the uploaded data is successfully transmitted to the Repository database, you will see this message at the bottom of the validation report:

Step 4. DB Insert

The upload was successful and the data has been accepted.

If you see this message, congratulations! You're done uploading until next month.

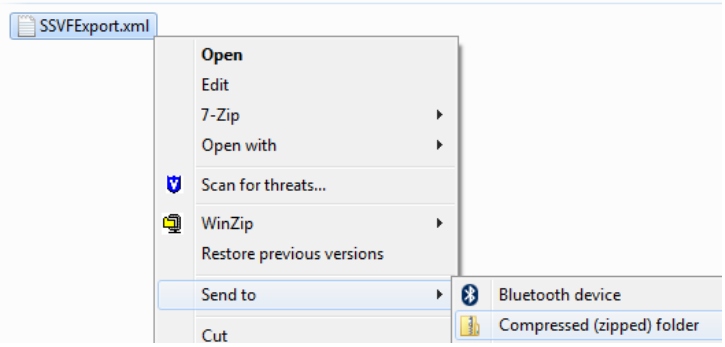
If you do not see this message, your upload was not successful and you will need to fix any issues with your data and try again.

Preparing XML Data for Upload

An XML export should consist of a single file with a filename extension of .xml.

The XML file generated by your HMIS application must be packaged in a ZIP file prior to upload to the Repository. ZIP files decrease the amount of space required to store data and make it faster to upload. Some HMIS applications zip the file as part of the export process. If your HMIS does not zip the file for you, you will need to zip it prior to upload to the Repository.

Both Windows and Mac operating systems have built-in functionality to create ZIP files. To use the built-in functionality, select the XML file and then right-click on it. In Windows, click 'Send to' and then 'Compressed (zipped) folder' to create a ZIP file. In Mac OS, click 'Compress 1 item' to create a ZIP file. In both Windows and Mac OS, the ZIP file will be created in the same folder as the XML file.



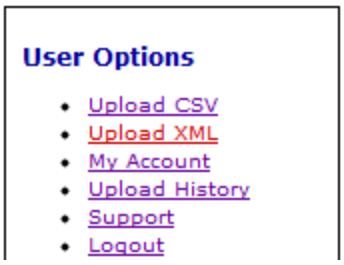
When you zip the XML file, make sure to zip ONLY the XML file.Don't zip up the folder that it's in; if it's in a folder inside the ZIP file, the Repository will not be able to find it.

You can name the ZIP file anything you want – just make sure that the name includes the .zip extension and does not contain and special characters such as #, $, %, @, etc. Letters, numbers, dashes (-), underscores (_), and periods (.) are the only characters you should use when you name your ZIP file.

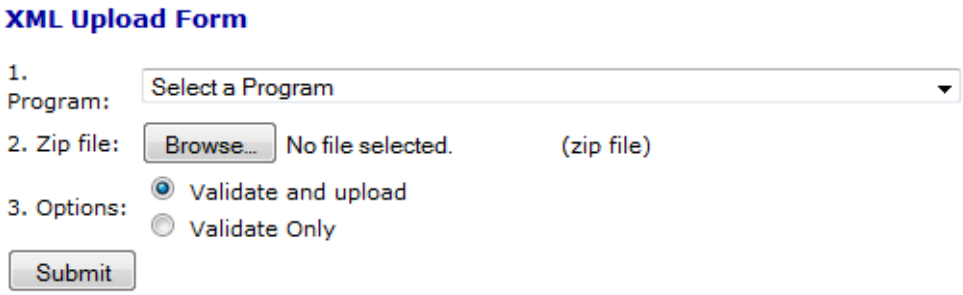
There are also several software applications that will create ZIP files, including 7-zip, WinZip, WinRAR; or MagicRAR. If you have one of these installed, you are welcome to use it to zip your XML.

Uploading XML Data

From the list of User Options on the left-hand side of the page, click on *Upload XML*.



Next, enter the following information about your upload.



1. **Program** – the name of the specific SSVF program for which you are uploading data.
2. **Zip file** – this will open a dialog box in which you can select the zip file from your network or hard drive.
3. **Options** – You have two options:
    a. Validate and upload – This is the default; it will validate your file and – if the file meets the data quality requirements – transmit the data to the Repository database.
    b. Validate only – This option will validate your file but WILL NOT upload it. You can use this to check your data quality if you'd like to review it before deciding whether or not to upload your file. *If after validating your data, you would like to proceed with uploading it, select "Upload Data" at the bottom of the validation page.*

When you've entered all of the required information, click 'Submit.'

> Depending on the size of the file you're uploading, it might take up to 5 minutes before you get the file validation report. Please give the Repository some time to process and validate your data.

Once processing is complete, you'll get a summary of the results for each file and if the data is successfully added to the database, you'll see this:

Step 4. DB Insert

* AnXMLUpload.zip with file id 4507 has been inserted successfully to the database.
* Program Status has been updated as completed.

The upload was successful and the data has been accepted.

If you see this message, congratulations! You're done uploading until next month.

If you do not see this message, your upload was not successful and you will need to fix any issues with your data and try again.

File Validation

In order for the Repository to process the data set, the export must be compliant with HUD's XML or CSV standards. In order for VA to be able to use the data to report on SSVF program activity, the data quality must meet minimum thresholds.

Data collection and HMIS data entry is mandatory for SSVF grantees. If too many client records are missing critical data elements, the data set will be rejected by the Repository.

If your upload is in the CSV format, the Repository will unzip your data files and evaluate them immediately. If your upload is in the XML format, the Repository will first transform your XML data into the seven required CSV files, and then evaluate the data quality. The data quality criteria are the same for both CSV and XML.

There are four sections in the validation report: the Data Summary, Data Quality Alerts, Validation Errors, and File Errors.

Data Summary

Data Summary
13 client records
    8 adult record(s)
    4 child record(s)
    1 missing DOB
13 program entries
11 program exit(s)
54 service record(s)

The data summary is a very brief review of the records in your upload – the number of clients, the number of program entries, the number of program exits, and the number of service records.

Data Quality Alerts

Data quality alerts identify instances where data quality for a particular field or fields is below the expected level for SSVF grantees. These are not issues that will prevent you from uploading your data, but they should be addressed with program staff.

Data Quality Alerts

[Client.csv] :

1. Data quality warning. Missing or invalid date of birth for client with Personal ID 86756. Date of birth data must be collected for 100% of clients, including household members. Error checking will assume the client is an adult.
(row #2 pid: 86756)

[ProgramParticipation.csv] :

1. ZIPQualityCode has a value of 2, which does not correspond to a valid response in the HMIS Data Standards.
(row #7 pid: 86763)

Validation Errors

Validation errors identify instances where data quality for one or more fields does not meet acceptable levels and the upload is rejected. Missing data at these rates is a serious problem. SSVF program staff will have to update client records in HMIS. Once the HMIS data has been updated, the data must be export and uploaded again.

Validation Errors

[Client.csv] :

1. Upload rejected. 5 of 13 records are missing values for SocialSecurityNumber, which exceeds acceptable levels. Please correct this in your HMIS application and try the upload again.

File Errors

If the export is not compliant with the published standards, the data set will be rejected by the Repository, and information about the specific issue(s) will be provided.

File Errors

[Client.csv] :

1. Upload rejected. DateOfBirth is a date field, but the value 9-Oct does not appear to be a date.
(row #2 pid: 86756)

[IncomeBenefits.csv] :

1. Unable to process. The structure of this file is incorrect. There should be 12 columns but the file contains 13 columns.

If a data set is rejected because of the format of a field or the structure of the export, you might be able to fix it by correcting the data in your HMIS, but it may be necessary for your vendor to make corrections. If your vendor has any questions, contact ssvfhmis@abtassoc.com.

Reading the Validation Results

Every once in a while, a program has a 'successful' upload, but the upload doesn't include any client data. The validation results can tell you more than whether or not your data quality is acceptable – they can also help you to verify that all of the data that you intend to upload is there.

Export.csv[2 rows found in the file.]

This file holds data about the export itself – the date that the data was exported, the start date and end date, etc. It should always (and only) include two rows – the first row holds column names and the second row holds the data.

ExportIDS	SourceID	SourceNa	Source	Source	Source	Source	Source(	ExportDate	ExportPeriodBegin	ExportPeriodEnd	ExportHas	SoftwareVenc
100568	1	HMIS Inc.	Molly	McE			molly_r	5/3/2013	9/15/2011	5/3/2013		North Kaibab

Export

AgencyProgram.csv[2 rows found in the file.]

This file holds data about the program(s) as it is set up in HMIS – the organization name, program name, and other info. Most often, there will be two rows – the column headers and data for one program – but sometimes a single SSVF program is split out into multiple 'programs' in HMIS and there are more. Ideally, this file will only contain information about the program(s) whose data is included in the export.

1	OrganizationID	OrganizationName	ProgramID	ProgramName	DirectServiceCode	SiteID	SiteConfiguration
2	506	Ribbon Falls, Inc.	19509	Phantom Ranch, Ltd.	1	2182	

AgencyProgram

Client.csv

This file holds data about clients – name, SSN, DOB, race, gender, and ethnicity, and the PersonalIdentificationNumber (PIN). The PIN is supposed to be unique to each client in an HMIS, and it's how the records in Client.csv are linked to records in ProgramParticipation and the other data files. Household members are considered clients and they all have records.

Once again, the first row is column names, so the raw count of clients is one less than the number of rows in the file. The count is unduplicated in the sense that there should only be one record for each person, regardless of how many program enrollments they have, but sometimes duplicate records are created accidentally in an HMIS.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1	Organizati	PersonalI	LegalFirst	LegalMidc	LegalLastNar	LegalSuffi	SocialSecurityN	SocialSecI	DateOfBirth	DateOfBir	PrimaryRa	Secondary	Ethnicity	Gender
2	506	12	Beric		Dundarrion			8	6/26/1968	1	5		9	
3	506	16	Davos		Seaworth		654654654	1	7/1/1972	1	1		0	1
4	506	452	Lyra		Mormont		987987987	1	9/2/1981	1	5	2	0	0

Client

The fact that there is a record here doesn't necessarily mean that a client will be counted in reporting – there must also be a valid record for that person in ProgramParticipation.csv.

ProgramParticipation.csv[600 rows found in the file.]

ProgramParticipation is central to all reporting. It holds data about program entries and exits and it should have one row per person per program entry.

In addition to the entry and exit dates, it also has fields for which there is only one response per program enrollment – e.g., VeteranStatus, PriorResidence, HousingStatusAtEntry, Destination, etc. The PIN in this file links to the PIN in Client.csv. A person who has been enrolled multiple times should have only one record in Client.csv, but would have multiple records in ProgramParticipation.csv.

As an example, in the file shown below, client 12 has two program entries – one on 10/9/2011 and one on 2/14/2012.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1	PersonalIdentification	Orga	ProgramID	SiteID	EntryDate	ExitDate	DateUpdated	VeteranSt	Disabling(	PriorResic	LengthOfStayAtI	ZIPCode	ZIPQuality	HousingSt	HousingSt H
2	12	506	19509		10/9/2011	12/20/2011	12/20/2011	1	9	22	5	98989	1	2	4
3	16	506	19509		11/2/2011	3/1/2012	3/1/2012	1	1	1	2		8	1	4
4	452	506	19509		12/5/2011		12/5/2011	1	0	1	3	98980	1	1	
5	12	506	19509		2/14/2012		2/14/2012	1	1	16	1	98969	1	1	
6															

ProgramParticipation

The raw count of rows (-1 for the column names) is – when everything is as it should be – a duplicated count of clients, or an unduplicated count of program entries. Things are very often not as they should be, though, for various reasons. If the number of rows in ProgramParticipation is more than 10-15% higher than the number of rows in Client.csv, there may be a problem with the data.

The raw count doesn't take anything into account except the fact that a record is present, and the number you see here might be substantially different from the number you see in reports. One common cause for big discrepancies is records that are missing HousingStatusAtEntry; housing status is required to identify whether a client was served under Prevention or RRH, and clients whose records are missing this information do not get counted in any reporting.

ClientHistorical.csv[1080 rows found in the file.]

This file holds data that might change over the course of a program enrollment and is collected at multiple points, such as total monthly income. For every program entry, there should be at least one record in ClientHistorical. For every program exit, there should be an additional record in ClientHistorical. That's the minimum, but some systems end up creating a lot more records than that. The records in this file are linked to the records in ProgramParticipation by PIN, ProgramID, and the AssessmentDate. If the AssessmentDate in ClientHistorical matches the EntryDate in ProgramParticipation, it's reported out as data collected at program entry. If it matches the ExitDate, it's reported as data collected at program exit. Anything in between is considered an update. Anything with an AssessmentDate that doesn't fall inside the date range of a program enrollment is ignored.

In the sample below, client 12 has 3 different records – one for his program entry on 10/9/2011, one for his program exit on 12/20/2011, and a third for his program entry on 2/14/2012. For the first two, his total monthly income was $540.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	PersonalIdent	Organizati	ProgramID	SiteID	AssessmentDate	DateUpdated	IncomeTotalMonthly	IncomeLast30D	NonCashB
2	12	506	19509		10/9/2011	10/9/2011	540	1	0
3	16	506	19509		11/2/2011	11/2/2011	1224	1	0
4	452	506	19509		12/5/2011	12/5/2011	0	0	0
5	12	506	19509		12/20/2011	12/20/2011	540	1	0
6	12	506	19509		2/14/2012	2/14/2012	0	0	0
7	16	506	19509		3/1/2012	3/1/2012	1576	1	1

ClientHistorical

A Note on XML Validation Results for the ClientHistorical File

There are a few differences in the XML schema and CSV structure that can be a little tricky to resolve. Ultimately, in reporting on HMIS data for the SSVF programs, there are 3 types of data in ClientHistorical that we might look at:

- Data about income and benefits collected at program entry;
- Data about income and benefits collected at program exit;
- Updates to income or benefits data for people who have not yet exited the program.

In order to smooth out the discrepancies between the XML and CSV structures and ensure that no data that might be relevant for reporting is omitted, the Repository creates one ClientHistorical record for each program entry, one ClientHistorical record for each program exit, and one ClientHistorical record for each person who has not yet exited (to hold any updates to income or benefits since the client entered the program), and then populates the fields in those records with the most appropriate data.

However, it's not uncommon – and it's totally acceptable – for clients who haven't yet exited the program to have only the income and benefits data that was collected at program entry. For those clients, TotalMonthlyIncome, IncomeLast30, and NonCashBenefitsLast30 will be blank in the record that was created to accept update data.

The result of this is that for now, the Repository is seeing those blanks as missing data and data quality for ClientHistorical can look pretty alarming. Please do not be alarmed. This 'missing' data will not count against your overall data quality in any way.

IncomeBenefits.csv[1825 rows found in the file.]

This file holds information about specific sources of income and benefits – the records are linked to records in ClientHistorical by PIN, ProgramID, and the AssessmentDate. For each record in ClientHistorical, there should be one record in IncomeBenefits for each income or benefit source that the client has at that time. If the client has no source of income or benefits at the time, there would be no records in IncomeBenefits. As a result, the number of records in this file can vary quite a bit.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	
1	PersonalIdent	Organizati	ProgramID	SiteID	AssessmentDate	DateUpdated	IncomeBer	SourceCode	SourceOtl	MonthlyAmount	Ex
2	12	506	19509		10/9/2011	10/9/2011	1	15		60	
3	12	506	19509		10/9/2011	10/9/2011	2	1			
4	12	506	19509		10/9/2011	10/9/2011	1	10		480	
5	12	506	19509		12/20/2011	12/20/2011	1	15		60	
6	12	506	19509		12/20/2011	12/20/2011	2	1			
7	12	506	19509		12/20/2011	12/20/2011	1	10		480	

IncomeBenefits

The sample file above shows all of the IncomeBenefits records for client 12 – the first three records show that at his first program entry on 10/9/2011, he was receiving $60 in child support (source code 15), $480 in TANF (source code 10), and he was also receiving Medicaid (source code 1). The last three records show that he had exactly the same sources and amounts of income / benefits at the time of his exit on 12/20/2011. When he re-entered the program on 2/14/2012, however, he had 0 income and no benefits (as recorded in ClientHistorical) so there are no records in IncomeBenefits for him that are dated 2/14/2012.

ServiceEvent.csv[3565 rows found in the file.]

This file holds information about specific services, and there's a record for each instance of service. As such, the number of records can vary wildly. Until the next version of the HMIS Data Standards, which will allow for complete recording of services that are funded by the SSVF grant, there isn't a one-to-one correspondence between services funded by SSVF and the services

available in most HMIS applications. None of the current Repository reporting includes any of the data in this table.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
1	PersonalIdenti	OrganizationI	ProgramID	SiteID	ServiceEventType	ServiceEventStartDate	ServiceEventEndDate	Ser
2	12	506	19509		1	10/9/2011	10/31/2011	
3	12	506	19509		1	10/9/2011	10/9/2011	
4	12	506	19509		2	10/10/2011	10/10/2011	
5	12	506	19509		2	10/10/2011	10/10/2011	

ServiceEvent

How to Tell If Your Upload Was Successful

For a successful upload, the Repository will display a message like this:

Step 4. DB Insert

* AnXMLUpload.zip with file id 4507 has been inserted successfully to the database.
* Program Status has been updated as completed.

The upload was successful and the data has been accepted.

The critical part of this message is the part in bold at the bottom: "The upload was successful and the data has been accepted." Until you see that message, your data has not been uploaded to the Repository.

Repository User Account Information

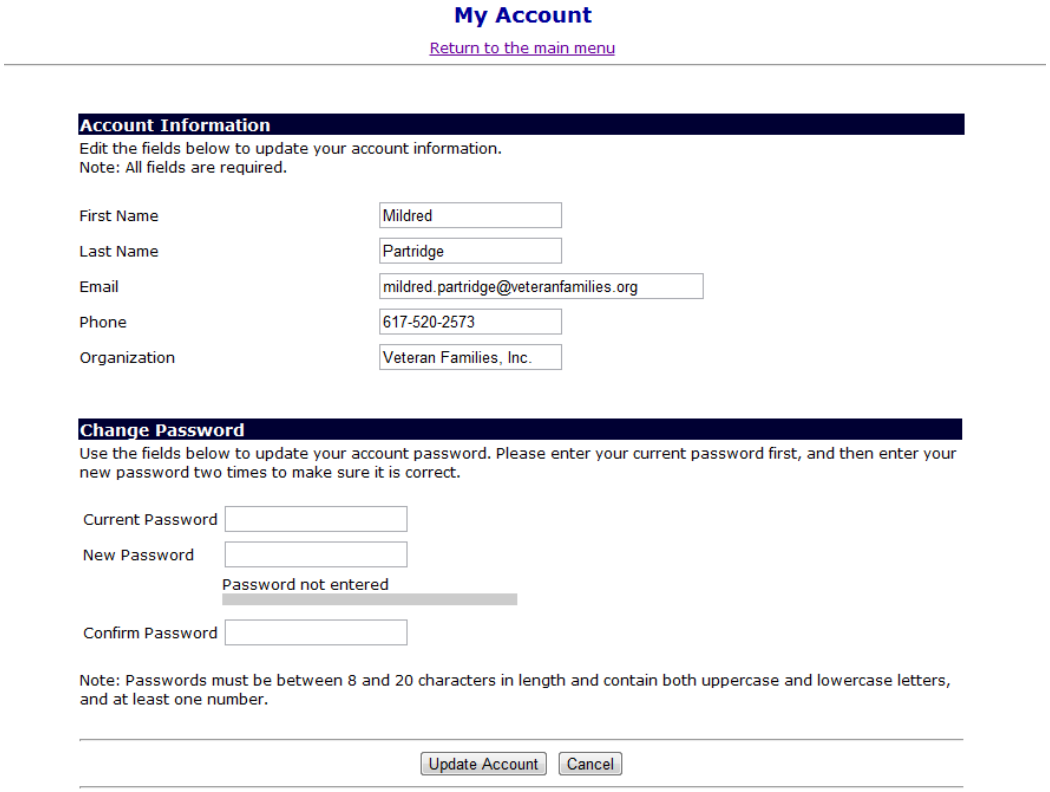
Each Repository user should have his/her own username and password. Please do not ever share your username or password with anyone. There is no charge for these accounts; your organization may have as many as you need to make sure that SSVF program data gets uploaded to the Repository on time every month.

User Options

- Upload CSV
- Upload XML
- My Account
- Activity History
- Support
- Logout

You can update your name, email address, phone number, organization name, and password by clicking 'My Account' on the User Options menu. It's very important that the Repository has a current email address and phone number for you so that we can contact you in the event that there is an issue with your data and so that you can retrieve your login information if you forget your password. Your name is also important to accurately identify you (and so that if we send you an email, we're using the name you prefer).

Please note that if you would like to edit your name, email address or phone number in your Repository user account it's appropriate for you to do so. However, if you are leaving the SSVF program and someone else will be taking over the upload responsibilities, the new person should create his/her own account. It would *not* be appropriate for you to edit your account information to reflect the new user's name and contact information.



Once you've updated your information, click 'Update Account.'

F. Data Quality Management

Data Quality

A data quality plan is a set of policies and procedures designed to assure that all client level information entered into HMIS is complete, accurate and timely. The plan establishes data quality goals, the steps necessary to measure progress toward the goals, and the roles and responsibilities for ensuring the data in the HMIS is reliable and valid.

Data quality plans are developed by the local HMIS Lead Agency and adopted by the Continuum of Care (CoC). All projects participating in HMIS, including SSVF projects, are expected to understand and follow the CoC's data quality plan. The CoC's data quality plan is a baseline standard for all projects participating in the HMIS. SSVF programs must also meet the additional data quality requirements established in their VA SSVF Grant. These additional VA SSVF data quality requirements are discussed later in this section.

SSVF grantees are also responsible for all information entered into HMIS by subgrantees and should develop a plan to assure adequate data entry oversight. A successful upload to the VA SSVF Data Repository requires that Grantees and subgrantees meet or exceed all SSVF data quality thresholds

The following information outlines the concepts of data quality and the recommended process for monitoring. VA providers should understand data quality and how it impacts both community planning and VA needs. They should actively seek to achieve the highest levels of quality possible.

What is Data Quality?

Data quality is a term that refers to the reliability and validity of client-level data collected in the HMIS. It is measured by the extent to which the client data in the system reflects actual information in the real world. With good data quality, the CoC can "tell the story" of the population experiencing homelessness.

The quality of data is determined by assessing certain characteristics such as timeliness, completeness, and accuracy. In order to assess data quality, a community must first think about what data quality means and document this understanding in a data quality plan.

What is a Data Quality Plan?

A data quality plan is a community-level document that facilitates the ability of the CoC to achieve statistically valid and reliable data. A data quality plan is generally developed by the HMIS Lead Agency with input from community stakeholders and is formally adopted by the CoC. At a minimum, the plan should:

- Identify the responsibilities of all parties within the CoC that affect data quality.
- Establish specific data quality benchmarks for timeliness, completeness, and accuracy.
- Describe the procedures that the HMIS Lead Agency will take to implement the plan and monitor progress to meet data quality benchmarks.
- Establish a timeframe for implementing the plan to monitor the quality of data on a regular basis.

In short, a data quality plan sets expectations for both the community and the end users to capture reliable and valid data on persons accessing the homeless assistance system.

Collecting data in the human service field can be challenging; clients presenting for services are often distraught, scared, or confused. It may be difficult to obtain accurate information from them, but case managers and others working with these clients need to understand the importance of obtaining accurate information from all clients they serve. Without good information, it is difficult to assess a client's needs and determine the appropriate level of services for each homeless individual or family.

A plan that sets data quality expectations will help case managers better understand the importance of working with their clients to gather timely, complete, and accurate data. For example, most homeless providers collect information on a client's military service history, or veteran status. Knowing whether a client has served in the military is an important piece of information; it helps case managers make appropriate referrals and alerts them to specific benefits the client may be eligible to receive – benefits that could help the client become permanently housed. If the case manager ***does not*** know the veterans status of a client, a piece of their story is missing.

Each component of a data quality plan includes a benchmark – a quantitative measure used to assess reliability and validity of the data. A community may decide to set the benchmark for a missing (or null) value for a certain data element at 5%. This would mean that no more than 5% of all the client records in the system should be "missing" a response to a particular data element.

"Garbage in, Garbage Out"

Many have heard the phrase "garbage in, garbage out," when referring to data collection. It is well known that the reports generated from a system are only as good as the data that is entered into the system. That is why establishing benchmarks for data quality and implementing ongoing monitoring protocols is critical to ensuring communities have valid and reliable data to make sound informed decisions.

There are 5 components to a good Data Quality Standard: **Timeliness, Completeness, Accuracy, Monitoring, and Incentives**. Although these standards have already been determined by the local CoC, VA programs must comply with local standards. Therefore, VA programs should obtain and review the Standards and Compliance Plan for the local CoC.

Below is a brief overview of each Data Quality Standard component. For more information, a toolkit on how to develop a Data Quality Standard and Compliance Plan is available on HUD's Homeless Resource Exchange (https://www.onecpd.info/resources/documents/HUDDataQualityToolkit.pdf).

Component 1: Timeliness

Entering data in a timely manner can reduce human error that occurs when too much time has elapsed between the data collection (or service transaction) and the data entry. The individual doing the data entry may be relying on handwritten notes or their own recall of a case management session, a service transaction, or a program exit date; so the sooner the data is entered, the better chance the data will be correct. Timely data entry also ensures that the data is accessible when it is needed, either proactively (e.g. monitoring purposes, increasing awareness, meeting funded requirements), or reactively (e.g. responding to requests for information, responding to inaccurate information).

The Standard for entering HMIS data in a timely manner is set by specifying the number of hours or days by which data must be entered. By including timeliness benchmarks for all types of programs that enter or contribute data to the HMIS, such as Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Permanent Housing, Safe Haven, Outreach, Prevention, Rapid Re-housing, and any other programs in the CoC, local communities can ensure that data is available when needed, such as for the SSVF monthly export to the VA Registry.

Timeliness is critical for SSVF Grantees since data must be exported to the VA's SSVF Data Repository by the 5th business day following the end of each month. This requirement often exceeds the general timeliness standards for the HMIS.

Component 2: Completeness

Partially complete or missing data (e.g., missing digit(s) in a SSN, missing the year of birth, missing information on disability or veteran status) can negatively affect the ability to provide comprehensive care to clients. Missing data could mean the client does not receive needed services – services that could help them become permanently housed and end their episode of homelessness. Expectations for completeness expectations include All Clients Entered and analysis of each of the HUD data elements. All Clients Entered is usually a manual process where regularly non-electronic records are compared to records in the HMIS to assess if all clients have been entered along with their associated service provision. For individual data elements, allowable percentages of null/missing data or levels of Unknown, Don't Know and Refused responses is expressed as a maximum percentage. For example, a community may have

determined that an allowable rate for non-VA programs of null/missing values for Veteran status is 0%, meaning that no null or missing values are allowed.

The CoCs goal is to collect 100% of all data elements. However, the CoC recognizes that this may not be possible in all cases.

Therefore, the CoC has very likely established an acceptable range of null/missing and unknown/don't know/refused responses of between two and five percent, depending on the data element and the type of program entering data.

It is important to understand that standards for SSVF Grantees may exceed the CoCs existing completeness standards. For example, while responses of 'Don't Know' and 'Refused' are acceptable responses for some data elements under the HMIS Data Standards, the VA may require additional information to establish program eligibility.

Component 3: Accuracy

The purpose of accuracy is to ensure that the data in the CoCs HMIS is the best possible representation of reality as it relates to persons experiencing homelessness and the programs that serve them. Accuracy of data in an HMIS can be difficult to assess as it depends on the client's ability to provide the correct data and the intake worker's ability to document and enter the data accurately. Accuracy is best determined by comparing records in the HMIS to paper records, or the records of another provider whose information may be considered more accurate. For instance, a Social Security Number that is in question may be compared to a paper case file or an SSI benefit application, where the data is perceived to be more accurate.

A primary way to ensure that data is understood, collected, and entered consistently across all programs in the HMIS is to provide regular training, refresher courses, and cheat sheets for collection and data entry. Additionally, consistency in intake forms, how well forms match data entry methods, wording of questions, etc. are all excellent practices for achieving the best possible accuracy of data.

Component 4: Monitoring

SSVF programs will need to implement monitoring practices to ensure that subgrantees are complying with the CoCs HMIS data quality plan. Documenting the expectations for monitoring activities of the HMIS data and the methods that data quality is monitored will help prevent invalid data. A statement on the expectation of the SSVF grantee in their grant agreements that the providers meet the benchmarks in the data quality plan will eliminate confusion.

Component 5: Incentives and Enforcement

Incentives and enforcement policies reinforce the importance of good data quality. The local CoC will likely have established incentives and enforcement measures for complying with the data quality plan. The VA expects its grantees to adhere to or exceed the local Data Quality

Standard to ensure quality data for its own programs, provide quality data for community planning, and to ensure that VA participation does not negatively impact CoC funding processes.

The purpose of monitoring is to ensure that the CoCs data quality benchmarks are met to the greatest extent possible and that data quality issues are quickly identified and resolved. The local HMIS and CoC will have a monitoring process in place. The following is a sample of a monitoring process that VA providers may be required to follow:

- Access to the Data Quality Plan: The data quality plan will be posted to the CoCs public Web site.
- Access to Data Quality Reports: By the 15th of each month, the HMIS Lead Agency will make available data quality reports for the purposes of facilitating compliance review by participating agencies and the CoC Data Committee.
- Data Correction: Participating agencies will have 10 days to correct data. By the 30th of each month, the HMIS Lead Agency will make available revised data quality reports for posting to the CoCs public Web site.
- Monthly Review: The CoC Data Committee will review participating agency data quality reports for compliance with the data quality benchmarks. The Committee will work with participating agencies to identify training needs to improve data quality.
- Public Review: On the last day of each month, the HMIS Lead Agency will post agency aggregate data quality reports to the CoCs public Web site.
- CoC Review: The CoC Data Committee will provide a brief update on progress related to the data quality benchmarks at the monthly CoC meeting.
- Review Results: Agencies that meet the data quality benchmarks are periodically recognized by the CoC Data Committee. For agencies that fail to meet the data quality benchmarks, the CoC may ask the agency to submit a written plan that details how they will take corrective action. The plan is then submitted to and monitored by the CoCs Data Quality Subcommittee. Should the problem persist, the Data Quality Subcommittee may make a recommendation to suspend the agency's ability to enter data into the HMIS, and will contact any appropriate state and federal funders.

SSVF Data Quality Policy and Thresholds

The purpose of the SSVF Data Quality Policy is to ensure collection of comprehensive and accurate data from beneficiaries of the VA's SSVF program.

It is the policy of the VA to require that all SSVF grantees collect and manage beneficiary data in HMIS and maintain a level of data completeness and quality that successfully meets a tiered system defined as follows:

Tier 1: Data must be **100%** accurate and complete. Missing data, "Don't Know", and "Refused" responses are not allowable.

Tier 2: Data must be **90%** accurate and complete. Missing data, "Don't Know", and "Refused" responses do not count toward the 90% threshold goal.

Tier 3: Data are important but will not be monitored for completeness or accuracy.

SSVF Data Quality Thresholds

SSVF Data Field	Repository upload will be rejected for…	Tier
First name	Any missing values	1
Last name	Any missing values	1
Social Security number	Any missing values	1
SSN data quality	Any missing/ don't know / refused responses*	1
Date of birth	Any missing values	1
Date of birth quality	Any missing / don't know / refused responses	1
Veteran status	Any missing / don't know / refused responses for adults	1
*Personal identification number**	Any missing values	1
*Household identification number***	Any missing values	1
Program entry date	Any missing values	1
Program exit date	Any program exit date that is earlier than the program entry date	1
Race	>=10% missing / don't know / refused responses	2
Ethnicity	>=10% missing / don't know / refused responses	2
Gender	>=10% missing / don't know / refused responses	2
Disabling condition	>=10% missing / don't know / refused responses	2
Residence prior to program entry	>=10% missing / don't know / refused responses for adults	2
Length of stay in previous place	>=10% missing / don't~ know / refused responses	2

SSVF Data Field	Repository upload will be rejected for…	Tier
	for adults	
Housing status (at entry)	>=10% missing / don't know / refused responses	2
Housing status (at exit)	>=10% missing / don't know / refused responses for records with a Program Exit Dates	2
Destination	>=10% missing / don't know / refused responses for records with a Program Exit Date	2
Income received from any source in past 30 days (at entry)	Any missing / don't know / refused responses for adults >=10% missing data	1
Income received from any source in past 30 days (at exit)	Any missing / don't know / refused responses for adults with a Program Exit Date >=10% missing data	1
Total monthly income	Non-numeric data in field	3
Non-cash benefit received from any source in past 30 days (at entry)	>=10% missing data / don't know / refused	2
Non-cash benefit received from any source in past 30 days (at exit)	>=10% missing data / don't know / refused	2
ZIP code of last permanent address	Non-numeric data in field	3
ZIP code type		3
Financial Assistance Provided		3
Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services Provided		3

*These identification numbers are assigned automatically by the HMIS application and may not be under the control of the grantee.

G. HMIS Privacy & Security Requirements

SSVF Grantees are required to maintain confidentiality of records kept on participants. In addition, HUD has established standards for the privacy and security of personal information collected in an HMIS. The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Data and Technical Standards Final Notice, published in the Federal Register on July 30, 2004 (the standard) provides baseline standards and guidance for privacy and security. While the HMIS Data Standards have been revised, the Technical Standards portion of the standard governing privacy and security remains in effect.

These standards seek to protect the confidentiality of personal information while allowing for reasonable, responsible, and limited uses and disclosures of data. The standards are based on principles of fair information practices and were developed after careful review of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

The privacy standards apply to all agencies, projects and individuals that record, use or process protected personal information for an HMIS. This includes employees, volunteers, affiliates, contractors and associates, regardless of funding source.

Baseline or minimum standards require that Continuum of Care (CoC), HMIS, service providers and individual end users:

- Must comply with other federal, state, and local confidentiality law
- Must comply with limits to data collection (relevant, appropriate, lawful, specified in privacy notice)
- Must have written privacy policy, which must be posted it on your web site
- Must post sign at intake or comparable location with general reasons for collection and reference to privacy policy
- May infer consent for uses in the posted sign and written privacy policy

The CoC may also establish additional privacy protections though the privacy policy. Once approved by the CoC, these additional protections require compliance at the same level as HUD's baseline standards.

The standard also establishes a common set of baseline security requirements for all HMIS implementations. While the HMIS staff manages most security requirements, the grantee and individual end users are critical in maintaining a secure HMIS environment by:

- Safeguarding passwords
- Maintaining local virus protection and firewalls
- Limiting physical access to systems with access to HMIS data
- Securing paper or other hard copy containing personal protected information generated for or by the HMIS, such as client intake forms, signed consent forms or reports

The CoC may adopt additional security protections that must be followed by all HMIS users.

Agencies must require each member of its staff (including employees, volunteers, affiliates, contractors and associates) to sign (annually or otherwise) a confidentiality agreement that acknowledges receipt of a copy of the privacy notice and that pledges to comply to comply with the privacy notice.

Local HMIS privacy and security requirements are a combination of HUD HMIS baseline requirements, additional protections established by the CoC in the privacy notice, and state and local privacy laws. Appropriate privacy and security training should be obtained from HMIS staff prior to accessing the HMIS.

2004 HMIS Data and Technical Standards are available at:

https://www.onecpd.info/resources/documents/2004HUDDataandTechnicalStandards.pdf

H. Continuum of Care Integration & Planning

Continuum of Care (CoC) Overview

A ‘‘Continuum of Care’’ is a geographically based group of representatives that carries out the planning responsibilities of the Continuum of Care program, as established under 24 CFR part 578. These representatives come from organizations that provide services to the homeless, or represent the interests of the homeless or formerly homeless. These organizations can include, but are not limited to nonprofit homeless providers , victim service providers , faith-based organizations, governments, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, organizations that serve homeless and formerly homeless veterans, and homeless and formerly homeless persons.

A Continuum of Care then designates certain ‘‘applicants’’ as the entities responsible for carrying out the projects that the Continuum has identified through its planning responsibilities.

Coordinated Assessment

HUD has established a requirement that all CoCs implement a coordinated assessment approach, a common process for documenting a person’s crisis response needs for housing assistance and then accessing homeless assistance services including prevention, diversion, emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, supportive services and even permanent supportive housing. The interim regulations for the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program and the CoC Program contain clear requirements for CoCs to work in consultation with ESG recipients to establish and operate “either a centralized or coordinated assessment system” within their mutual geographic areas. SSVF grantees and all VA homeless assistance service will need to be coordinated with the CoCs coordinated assessment approach.

The definition included in the CoC program interim rule is relatively broad, allowing for flexibility in choosing a model that works best for an individual community based on geography, population, level of need, and other local factors. Taking such factors into account, the resulting system of assessment should address the following elements.

Access – Homeless and at-risk households should be able to easily reach the assessment locations. CoCs might explore the possibility of offering after-hours access and other considerations to potential consumers, including special-need populations such as domestic violence survivors.

Assessment – Assessment of consumer needs for services and housing should be performed in a uniform and consistent manner. The use of a common assessment tool and standards for referral and service connections can increase consistency, fairness, and positive outcomes.

Data – Communities should have a consistent process for gathering data and sharing information across programs, with appropriate protections in place for sensitive information.

Referral – Well-defined and documented standards for referrals are needed to assure that consumers are connected with appropriate resources according to their need, eligibility, and preference.

Intake – When assessments result in intake into a particular system, consumers‟ entry into a housing or service program should be coordinated as much as possible, to assure that consumers are not required to answer questions and engage in processes that were already completed at the assessment point.

More in-depth information on coordinated assessment elements, models and requirements can be found at:
http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/coordinated-assessment-toolkit

Homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) Count

HUD requires that CoCs conduct an annual count of homeless persons who are sheltered in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens on a single night. CoCs also must conduct a count of unsheltered homeless persons every other year (odd numbered years). In 2013 and 2015, CoCs will be required to conduct both a sheltered and unsheltered count during the last ten days of January. CoCs that wish to perform their required PIT count on a date outside of the last ten days of January 2013 must request a PIT waiver from HUD. (CoCs do not need HUD permission or a waiver to conduct supplemental PIT counts.)

The PIT count should be completed using unduplicated counts or statistically reliable estimates of homeless persons in sheltered and unsheltered locations on a single night. CoCs will submit their PIT data through the HUD Homelessness Data Exchange (HDX) Web site. HUD requires that PIT counts be conducted in compliance with HUD counting standards, as documented in HUD's *A Guide to Counting Sheltered Homeless People* and *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People* available on the HUD Homelessness Resource Exchange (HRE). If you are uncertain about whether your community's standards meet HUD's requirements as outlined in these guides please submit a question to the HUD Virtual Help Desk requesting clarification of your counting methodologies.

The most recently published PIT data collection requirements include changes to better understand the characteristics of persons experiencing homelessness, and measuring progress in ending homelessness among families, children, and youth, as outlined in Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.

Housing Inventory Chart

The Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) is a point-in-time inventory of provider programs within your Continuum of Care that provide beds and units dedicated to serve persons who are homeless. It should reflect the number of beds and units available on the night designated for the count that are dedicated to serve persons who are homeless, per the HUD homeless definition.

HUD has provided specific guidance on reporting Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program Rapid Re-housing Inventory (HIC and PIT Data Collection Guidance, pg. 10).

Households are not reported as "served" unless a service record has been entered in HMIS. Therefore, CoCs must take additional steps to identify and count SSVF rapid re-housing inventory. CoCs should only count SSVF rapid re-housing beds/units that meet all of the following criteria:

- SSVF participant is actively enrolled in the provider program on the night of the inventory count;
- SSVF participant housing status at program entry is "literally homeless;"
- SSVF participant is no longer literally homeless and is in permanent housing on the night of the inventory count; and SSVF participant is receiving financial assistance and/or housing relocation and stabilization services on the night of the inventory count.

I. Toolkit Materials

Checklist & Discussion Guide for New Grantees

This comprehensive checklist includes a list of all tasks involved in setting up a new SSVF program with HMIS. The checklist is divided into four major steps, with several tasks and questions to address within each step. The form can be used as a discussion guide to initiate conversation with an HMIS Administrator to ensure a comprehensive approach is taken to implement HMIS successfully.

Step 1: Learn about HMIS

- ☐ Review federal HMIS participation requirements:

- Review the HMIS Data Standards to understand the HMIS requirements for data collection. (**https://www.onecpd.info/resource/1220/final-hmis-data-standards/)** (The 2013 Data Standards are currently being promulgated and will not go into effect until 2014.)
- Review the 2004 HMIS Data and Technical Standards to understand the security and privacy standards for HMIS (**https://www.onecpd.info/resource/1318/2004-hmis-data-and-technical-standards-final-notice/)**
- Check the OneCPD Resource Exchange page for updates on HMIS. Here grantees can subscribe to receive HUD's e-mail updates on HMIS. (**https://www.onecpd.info/mailinglist/**)

Step 2: Learn about your CoCs HMIS Implementation

A list of local CoC HMIS points of contact can be found on the OneCPD Web site (https://www.onecpd.info/grantees/). Discuss the following questions:

- ☐ Contact the CoC Chairperson and HMIS Administrator. (See Section 1: HMIS Basics Fact Sheet for more information on these contacts.)

  Gather the following information:

  - What are the HMIS participation requirements? Ask for a copy.
  - What is the name of the software solutions provider?
  - What are the participation costs?
  - HMIS project staff and CoC leadership must assess what the costs will be for adding VA-funded homeless assistance programs.
  - What participation agreements are required? .

- What are the local data collection, privacy, security, and data quality requirements beyond any federal baseline standards?
  - Are software and/or reporting licenses required? If so, is there a limit on the number of licenses per project?
  - What training or technical support is available? Who will be your contact person?
  - Who would be your contact person for resolving technical questions?

- ☐ Communicate your SSVF Reporting Needs to HMIS lead agency, including monthly HMIS export, SSVF specific data elements (optional to collect through HMIS) and troubleshooting. Invite your Administrator to SSVF Administrator & Software Solutions Provider Webinar training.

- ☐ Negotiate and execute agreements.

- ☐ Administrator provides HMIS trainings including data collection, privacy and security, and reporting training. Set training timeline with Administrator.

Step 3: Implementing HMIS within your SSVF program.

- ☐ Request individual login and passwords for all Repository users, including back-up staff. Section 3: Data Reporting Toolkit- Repository User Notes.
- ☐ If your SSVF program covers multiple CoC jurisdictions, how will this data be reportable by CoC?
- ☐ If your SSVF program has subgrantees, determine whether the prime grantee or subgrantee or both will be entering data directly into HMIS. If subgrantees will upload separately, they will need to request separate Repository logins.
- ☐ Establish data collection and HMIS policies and procedures.
- ☐ Establish data collection workflow, the process by which data are collected from clients, managed by HMIS staff and entered into HMIS. Test workflow before implementation begins.
  - Who will enter data?
  - Who will upload data monthly to the Repository?
  - Who will monitor data quality regularly?
  - Who will correct data quality errors?
- ☐ Develop data collection forms that capture required data elements at program entry, exit and at update from all program participants. See Section 2: Data Collection Toolkit, Data Collection templates.
- ☐ Train SSVF staff to consistently collect and record all required information per policies and procedures and workflow.

- ☐ Test data entry using HMIS training database.
- ☐ Confirm that HMIS can produce all information needed for monthly and quarterly VA reporting.

Step 4: Creating and Monitoring Data Quality Standards

- ☐ Develop data quality plan. See Section 4: Data Quality Management Standards
- ☐ Establish management and end user accountability for data accuracy, timeliness and completeness.
- ☐ Include regular monitoring as part of data collection and entry process to assure information is timely, complete and accurate. Provide feedback to staff, as necessary.

Step 5: Upload Your Data to the Repository

- ☐ Before uploading to the Repository:
  - Confirm that all information for the calendar month has been entered into HMIS.
  - Use any available data quality tools to check for missing or erroneous data prior to the end of each month and update records in HMIS.
- ☐ Upload to the Repository:
  - Ensure data is uploaded to the Repository BEFORE the last day of the upload cycle (the fifth business day of each month).
  - If data is rejected, correct errors and resubmit data to Repository.

Data Collection Templates

The program entry and program exit templates on the following pages may be used to aid in data collection.

- **Entry Template** – this information should be collected at program entry for all clients
- **Income and Sources Template** – this information should be collected at program entry and program exit for all clients
- **Non-Cash Benefits Template** – this this information should be collected at program entry and program exit for all clients
- **Exit Template** – this information should be collected at program exit for all clients

Your HMIS Administrator, software solutions provider or fellow SSVF grantees may have sample forms available for use as well.

Entry Template

Identifying Information

Note: Providing identifying information is an eligibility requirement and is not optional. You must collect and enter into HMIS, at a minimum, a first name, a last name, and a date of birth for all clients, including household members. Complete Social Security numbers are mandatory for all Veterans and must be entered into HMIS.

NAME (First, Middle, Last name, Suffix (e.g., Jr, Sr, III)

First name	
Middle name	
Last name	
Suffix	

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER ***[All clients]***

			-			-				

DATE OF BIRTH (e.g., 10/23/1978) ***[All clients]***

		/			/				

Month Day Year

SOCIAL SECURITY TYPE ***[All clients]***

- ☐ Full SSN reported
- ☐ Partial SSN reported
- ☐ Client doesn't know/have SSN
- ☐ Client refused to provide SSN

DATE OF BIRTH TYPE ***[All clients]***

- ☐ Full date of birth reported
- ☐ Approximate or partial DOB reported
- ☐ Client doesn't know DOB
- ☐ Client refused to provide DOB

RACE Select as many as apply. ***[All clients]***

- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Native / Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Client does not know
- ☐ Client refused

ETHNICITY ***[All clients]***

- ☐ Non-Hispanic / Non-Latino
- ☐ Hispanic / Latino
- ☐ Client does not know
- ☐ Client refused

GENDER [***All clients***]

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Transgendered male to female
- ☐ Transgendered female to male
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Client does not know
- ☐ Client refused

DISABLING CONDITION ***[All clients]***

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Client does not know
- ☐ Client refused

VETERAN STATUS ***[All adults]***

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Client does not know
- ☐ Client refused

[IF 'Yes'] **DISCHARGE TYPE** **[All Veterans]**

- ☐ Honorable
- ☐ General
- ☐ Medical
- ☐ Bad conduct
- ☐ Dishonorable
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Client does not know
- ☐ Client refused

RESIDENCE PRIOR TO PROGRAM ENTRY [*All adults*]

- ☐ Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter voucher
- ☐ Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth)
- ☐ Permanent housing for formerly homeless persons (such as SHP, S+C, or SRO Mod Rehab)
- ☐ Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility
- ☐ Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center
- ☐ Hospital (non psychiatric)
- ☐ Jail, prison, or juvenile detention facility
- ☐ Staying or living in a family member's room, apartment, or house
- ☐ Staying or living in a friend's room, apartment, or house
- ☐ Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher
- ☐ Foster care home or foster care group home
- ☐ Place not meant for habitation (e.g. a vehicle, an abandoned building, bus/train/subway station/airport or anywhere outside)
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Safe Haven
- ☐ Rental by client, with VASH housing subsidy
- ☐ Rental by client, with other (non-VASH) housing subsidy
- ☐ Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy
- ☐ Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy
- ☐ Owned by client, no ongoing housing subsidy
- ☐ Client does not know
- ☐ Client refused

LENGTH OF STAY IN PREVIOUS PLACE [*All adults*]

- ☐ One week or less
- ☐ More than one week, but less than one month
- ☐ One to three months
- ☐ More than 3 months, but less than one year
- ☐ One year or longer
- ☐ Client does not know
- ☐ Client refused

ZIP CODE OF LAST PERMANENT ADDRESS [*All adults*]

Zip code | | | | | |

- ☐ Full or partial zip code reported
- ☐ Client does not know
- ☐ Client refused

HOUSING STATUS AT ENTRY *[All clients]*

Note: *Your program will not get credit for having served any client without a valid housing status at entry in HMIS data uploaded to the Repository. 'Client does not know' and 'Client refused' are not valid responses; housing status is relevant to eligibility.*

- ☐ Literally homeless
- ☐ Imminently losing their housing
- ☐ Unstably housed and at-risk of losing housing
- ☐ Stably housed

Income and Sources Template

Income and sources should be collected for all clients at program entry and program exit.

Has the client received any income from any source over the last 30 days?

☐ No ☐ Client does not know

☐ Yes ☐ Client refused

[IF YES] Complete the following:

Source of income	Receiving income from source?	Amount from source (round to nearest dollar)
Earned income (i.e., employment income)	No ☐ Yes ☐	$ .00
Unemployment Insurance	No ☐ Yes ☐	$ .00
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	No ☐ Yes ☐	$ .00
Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)	No ☐ Yes ☐	$ .00
Veteran's disability payment	No ☐ Yes ☐	$ .00
Private disability insurance	No ☐ Yes ☐	$ .00
Worker's compensation	No ☐ Yes ☐	$ .00

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	No ☐ Yes ☐	$	.00
General Assistance (GA)	No ☐ Yes ☐	$	.00
Retirement income from Social Security	No ☐ Yes ☐	$	.00
Veteran's pension	No ☐ Yes ☐	$	.00
Pension from a former job	No ☐ Yes ☐	$	.00
Child support	No ☐ Yes ☐	$	.00
Alimony or other spousal support	No ☐ Yes ☐	$	.00
Other source	No ☐ Yes ☐	$	.00
Total monthly income	Monthly income from all sources	$	.00

Non-Cash Benefits Template

Non-Cash Benefits should be collected for all clients at program entry and program exit.

Did you receive any non-cash benefits over the last 30 days?

☐ No ☐ Client does not know

☐ Yes ☐ Client refused to provide

[IF YES] Specify whether or not the client has received each of the benefits listed below

No	Yes	Source of non-cash benefit
☐	☐	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (Formerly known as Food Stamps)
☐	☐	MEDICAID health insurance program
☐	☐	MEDICARE health insurance program
☐	☐	State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)
☐	☐	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
☐	☐	Veteran's Administration (VA) Medical Services
☐	☐	TANF Child Care services
☐	☐	TANF transportation services
☐	☐	Other TANF-Funded Services
☐	☐	Section 8, Public Housing, or other rental assistance
☐	☐	Other source: _____
☐	☐	Temporary rental assistance

Exit Template

Fill out separate form for each family member.

NAME (First, Middle, Last name, Suffix (e.g., Jr, Sr, III)

First name	
Middle name	
Last name	
Suffix	

PROGRAM EXIT DATE ***[All clients]***

		/			/				

Month Day Year

HOUSING STATUS AT EXIT ***[All clients]***

- ☐ Literally homeless
- ☐ Housed and at imminent risk of losing housing
- ☐ Housed and at-risk of losing housing
- ☐ Stably housed
- ☐ Client does not know
- ☐ Client refused to provide

DESTINATION [*All clients*]

- ☐ Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter voucher
- ☐ Places not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bus/train/subway station/airport or anywhere outside)
- ☐ Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher
- ☐ Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth)
- ☐ Permanent housing for formerly homeless persons (such as SHP, S+C, or SRO Mod Rehab)
- ☐ Staying or living with family, temporary tenure
- ☐ Staying or living with family, permanent tenure
- ☐ Staying or living with friend's, temporary tenure
- ☐ Staying or living with friends, permanent tenure
- ☐ Rental by client, no housing subsidy
- ☐ Rental by client, other (non-VASH) subsidy
- ☐ Rental by client, VASH subsidy
- ☐ Owned by client, no housing subsidy
- ☐ Owned by client, with housing subsidy
- ☐ Foster care home or foster care group home
- ☐ Hospital (non psychiatric)
- ☐ Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility
- ☐ Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center
- ☐ Jail, prison, or juvenile detention facility
- ☐ Safe Haven
- ☐ Deceased
- ☐ Other (Describe)

  _____

  _____
- ☐ Client does not know
- ☐ Client refused to provide

Additional Resources for Data Quality Management

Using Data to Get Measurable Results (USICH)

The Web site of the U.S. Interagency Council on the Homeless contains a list of resources to help communities improve their data quality and use data more effectively to make policy, funding, and program design decisions in this toolkit.

http://www.usich.gov/usich_resources/toolkits_for_local_action/using_data/

The Solutions Database (USICH)

The USICH Solutions Database is a searchable source of up-to-date information drawn from around the country that federal, state, and local partners can use to further their collaborative efforts to end homelessness.

http://www.usich.gov/usich_resources/solutions/

Sample Data Quality Plan

This sample of a combined Quality Assurance/Data Quality plan summarizes and combines policies provided by SSVF Grantees. Grantees should add additional detail as necessary to describe their specific efforts to assure excellent data quality. Thanks to the Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County, Inc. and Volunteers of America of Greater Sacramento and Northern Nevada, Inc. for sharing their policies.

Quality Assurance & Data Quality Policy

1. The goal of the SSVF Program is to provide services that will stabilize housing for very-low income veterans and their families through prevention assistance for those still residing in housing and for very low income homeless veterans, through assistance in movement to permanent housing.

2. The SSVF Program will provide services consistent with the application submitted to the VA, the Final Rule, the Continuum of Care Program's Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) and VA SSVF Program Guide. This includes targeting:

   - Extremely low-income veteran-headed households
   - Very low-income homeless veterans with a dependent family member
   - Chronically or formerly chronic homeless veterans and their families

3. Performance objectives will be developed to demonstrate the effectiveness of the SSVF Program goal and measured using internal tracking and HMIS reporting.

4. The agency will integrate HMIS Data Quality elements into the Quality Assurance activities.

5. The agency will evaluate the project outcomes and develop strategies for addressing those areas of deficiency.

6. Policy and procedures are developed to ensure consistency with the implementation of the SSVF Program and incorporate any interpretations or clarifications received from the VA.

General Procedures for Quality Assurance, Evaluation & Data Quality:

1. Staff providing services as part of the SSVF Program will receive training in the policy and procedures, the SSVF Program Guide and Final Rule.
   Add specific steps

2. Subcontractors will develop performance standards for each employee in the SSVF Program and evaluate performance at least annually.
   Add specific steps

3. Agency staff and subcontractors will be trained on HMIS policies, procedures and operations. All staff and contractor personal with access to the HMIS will receive training in the Continuum of Care's Privacy Policy and will sign an HMIS End User Agreement.

4. Staff and contractors will be trained on the agency's data quality elements, standards and monitoring:

- **Timeliness**
  - Standard – Intakes will be reviewed by a Screening Committee within 24 hours. Once a decision has been made by the committee, the relevant data will be entered into HMIS within 24 hours of the veteran's acceptance into SSVF.
  - Monitoring - The entry date of HMIS will be compared to the date on the SSVF intake document and is expected to be within 48 hours of the intake appointment (24 hours of approval).
- **Completeness**
  - The SSVF Program will enter data on 100% of all clients accepted into the program. Subsequently, all clients will be exited from the system within 24 hours of their exit from the program.
  - All Social Security numbers of family members are required through either a card or verification from the Social Security office.
  - Veteran Status is documented through a DD-214.
  - Birth certificates of all children are requested. If the cost to the homeless veteran family of obtaining a birth certificate is prohibitive, a hospital birth form is acceptable.
  - All HMIS questions will be asked at the intake. Don't know, refused or unknown will not be recorded in the HMIS system because of a question not being asked or recorded.
- **Monitoring**
  - An HMIS client detail report will be printed from HMIS on a monthly basis to ensure that the list of current and exited clients is accurate.
  - A Data Quality report will be run biweekly to identify any missing/refused or don't know responses. It will be run immediately prior to the monthly upload to the VA Repository.
  - The results and corrections will be reviewed by the Program Director and the Director of Quality Assurance. Should further oversight be deemed necessary the Vice President or Chief Operating Officer will review all findings.
  - All Data will reach the Data Quality and Benchmark Rates as established by SSVF. The repository notifications will be responded to as follows:
    - Notify level: if the agency receives an alert at the Notify level it will be corrected immediately.
    - Reject level: For a non-compliant data set, the staff will immediately update HMIS and repeat the Repository upload.

- **Accuracy**
  - Errors within the data reporting system can often be corrected most efficiently by comparing paper files to the HMIS records.
    As such, SSVF paper intake forms should match what is entered into HMIS. Instances where the two sources are not in agreement identify errors for our staff so that we can ensure corrections are made.
  - Standard – 100% of the data entered into HMIS will reflect what SSVF clients are reporting
  - Monitoring Plan – A data quality report will be run biweekly to identify any missing data elements or those with unknown/refused responses. The results and corrections will be reviewed by the Program Director and the Director of Quality Assurance. Should further oversight be deemed necessary the Vice President or Chief Operating Officer will review all findings.

  Monitoring – In this example monitoring is integral to each data quality element. In addition, data quality reports will be printed at a minimum of once-a- month and reviewed by senior staff. The results will be reviewed by the Program Director and the Director of Quality Assurance.

5. Program performance is evaluated monthly and more frequently if there is a high error rate in compliance to the policy and procedures, SSVF Program Guide and Final Rule. During program implementation and until performance demonstrates the ability to provide the SSVF Program services consistent with the NOFA, Final Rule and SSVF Program Guide, the agency will review the eligibility determination for each application approved for assistance and those households screened and determined ineligible.

   - This includes the submission of the eligibility determination.
     List required forms and documentation.
   - The agency will review the forms submitted and data entered into the HMIS within 2 business days of receipt of the paperwork, not including the day the paperwork is received. The review will include:
     List required forms and documentation.
   - Once staff can confirm eligibility, the case manager will be notified. Staff will complete the SSVF program entry in the HMIS.
     List any evaluations, measurement or other activities the case manager is required to complete after eligibility is confirmed.

6. At a point in time agreed to by the agency and the primary subcontractor, the agency will begin to reduce the level of review provided.
   Describe any anticipated changes in subcontractor review.

7. The agency will evaluate the effectiveness of the services being provided by examining the aggregate results of the performance. The following data elements will be reviewed at least quarterly:
   List the data elements that will be reviewed to evaluate performance.

8. Incentives and enforcement policies are an important part of the HMIS Data Quality Plan since they reinforce the importance of good data quality. HMIS data quality reports will be prepared monthly for providers based on data entered. Corrective action is required for any data quality score below 100%. Staff and subcontractors achieving a score of 100% will be recognized by the agency for their performance.

9. Program performance is reviewed by the agency CEO and Board of Directors.

10. Each request for Financial Assistance is reviewed to ensure the eligibility of the request and compliance with the limitations and restrictions for the requested assistance. The agency Financial Assistance Request Checklist will be completed and reviewed by different staff persons using the Financial Assistance Request Reviewer Checklist.

11. Policy and procedures may be revised to clarify or correct an area of deficiency and will be reviewed at least annually.

Privacy & Security- Additional Resources

- Additional in-depth security and privacy information, including slides and a recorded presentation, are available in Module 4 of HUD's HMIS 101 training:

  https://www.onecpd.info/training-events/courses/hmis-system-administrator-training-hmis-101/

- Additional resources, including sample agency participation agreements and end user confidentiality agreements, are available at:

  https://www.onecpd.info/resource-library/

- The HMIS section of HUD's OneCPD "Ask A Question" can respond to specific questions on the technical standards for privacy and security:

  https://www.onecpd.info/ask-a-question/

- Additional VA SSVF resources, including HMIS training, are available at:

  http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvfuniversity.asp?page=/home/

Sample Client Notification Forms

Sample 1

(Homeless Management Information System Name)

VA SSVF Program Client Notification Form

(SSVF Grantee Name) collects personal information directly from you for reasons that are discussed in our privacy policy. We may be required to collect some personal information by law or by organizations that provide funding to operate this program. Other personal information that we collect is important to run our programs, to improve services for homeless persons, and to better understand the needs of homeless persons. We only collect information that we consider to be appropriate.

Your privacy rights are explained in the (**Name of CoC)** privacy policy, available on request. The privacy policy also explains how your personal information is used and the steps we take to protect that information. On a monthly basis your personal identifying information and other information about services provided to you by the SSVF program will be shared with the US Department of Veteran Affairs for purposes of program administration, grant monitoring, and evaluation.

This VA SSVF program requires that you provide information to determine eligibility for SSVF benefits and to allow the VA to keep your Veteran records current and complete.

The (**CoC Name)** allows agencies to view limited information about homeless persons served in other programs. Sharing information helps us to coordinate and improve services to all our clients. [Optional: While participation in the (**HMIS Name)** is mandatory for this program, you may choose to not share your personal information with other agencies.]

Signature of Client/Parent Guardian

Date

Optional for verbal consent to share: Verbal Consent Case Manager Signature

Sample 2

(Homeless Management Information System Name)

VA SSVF Program Client Notification Form

(HMIS Name) is used by agencies working together to provide services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. HMIS is administered and maintained by (**HMIS Lead Agency Name)**. This system is required by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and gathers identifying information on persons served in various housing programs to create an unduplicated count and picture of who receives what kind of housing-related services in (**Community Name)**.

We collect and enter personal identifying information into **(HMIS Name)** for reasons that are discussed in our privacy policy. Personal identifying information includes: Name, Social Security Number, Date of Birth, and Zip Code of Last Permanent Residence. On a monthly basis your personal identifying information and other information about services provided to you by the SSVF program will be shared with the US Department of Veteran Affairs for purposes of program administration, grant monitoring, and evaluation.

Release of identifying information to (HMIS Name)

All persons applying for benefits from the VA SSVF Program are required to provide identifying information to determine program eligibility. Each month the HMIS transfers information about persons served and services provided to the VA's SSVF Data Repository.

☐ I have received a copy of and understand the **(Name of CoC)** Privacy Policy

_____	_____	_____
Client Name (please print)	Client Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Guardian Name (please print)	Guardian Signature	Date