VA DATA GUIDE - FY2015

Data Collection and Reporting Guidance for SSVF Grantees

PREPARED FOR

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VA Programs & HMIS Participation

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). U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to HMIS participation by VA-funded homeless assistance providers[1] to support community-based service planning and coordination for Veterans and others who are homeless and at risk of homelessness

In June of 2010, 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, and is consistent with strategic plans developed by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

As a result of this federal coordination, VA-funded Grant and Per Diem (GPD) providers, Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Contract Emergency Residential Services providers, and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) providers have been directed by VA to participate in HMIS implementations operated by each CoC in which they provide services. Although VA employees are not permitted to enter client data into HMIS, HUD-VASH participation may be possible where the local Public Housing Authority can enter data or has an agreement with a sub-recipient to do so; VA strongly encourages such arrangements.

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

- Local CoC and HMIS staff should coordinate with local VA officials and VA-funded providers to initiate HMIS participation for community-based service providers who are not yet participating in HMIS.
- VA-funded projects participating in HMIS are subject to the requirements of the 2014 HMIS Data Standards and 2004 HMIS Technical Notice , which define HMIS data collection and privacy, security, data quality, and software requirements. Documentation is available on the HUD Exchange website (https://www.hudexchange.info/hmis/hmis-data-and-technical-standards/).
- VA-funded projects participating in HMIS are subject to HMIS policies and procedures established by the CoC(s) in which they operate, but they are also subject to VA requirements. For SSVF grantees, VA requirements include the export of client-level data from HMIS for upload to VA's HMIS Repository. It may be necessary to amend HMIS policies and procedures in the event that they would prevent SSVF grantees from complying with this requirement.
- VA will provide HMIS training to VA-funded projects required to participate in HMIS; topics will include a general HMIS overview, HMIS participation requirements, a review of the 2014 HMIS Data Standards as they apply to VA-funded projects, and forthcoming HMIS Technical Standards

[1] The only exception is for grantees who are victim services providers as defined by the Violence Against Women Act.

(to be released by HUD), which will include minimum standards for HMIS governance, privacy, security, software, and data quality.

- There are costs associated with HMIS licenses, training, technical support, data storage, system maintenance, and HMIS administration. Given the requirement that SSVF grantees export and upload client-level data to the Repository at least monthly, and that grantees operating in multiple CoCs may also provide exported data to other HMIS implementations, HUD expects HMIS project staff and CoC leadership to assess the costs associated with including VA-funded providers in HMIS, to document the allocation of those costs, and to assess any participation fees in an equitable and transparent manner.
- VA staff and other federal partners will work together to provide additional training materials and technical assistance (TA) support as VA expands HMIS participation requirements.

This manual is comprehensive with respect to SSVF; information and project setup guidance for HMIS administrators about other VA programs participating in HMIS is available in the VA Programs HMIS Manual on the HUD Exchange website (https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4450/va-programs-hmis-manual/).

Data Guide Introduction and Overview

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 or at risk of homelessness.

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

HMIS Participation Planning. This section includes a general overview of SSVF HMIS participation requirements and guidance for grantees in decision-making about how to fulfill them.

HMIS Project Descriptor Data Elements for SSVF. This section provides guidance to HMIS administrators and HMIS vendors on how to complete the Project Descriptor Data Elements in HMIS to properly set up an SSVF grant for data collection in HMIS.

SSVF HMIS Data Collection. This section includes information on specific data elements that must be collected, when they must be collected, and for whom they must be collected, along with SSVF-specific information. It also includes sections on data quality and completeness requirements, SSVF data security policies, and HMIS privacy and security requirements.

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

Data Quality Management. 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.

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

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.

Other Training Materials

In addition to the Data Guide, there are five 30 minute trainings available on VA's SSVF University site at http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/index.asp?page=/program_requirements/hmis_and_data.

SSVF Data Collection & Reporting 101

The target audience for this training includes new grantees, new staff, or anyone who needs a review of the basics of SSVF data collection and reporting. Topics include an introduction to HMIS, roles and

responsibilities, HMIS set-up, data collection requirements, reporting requirements, and tools and resources for grantees.

Reporting Data through VA's Repository

The target audience for this training is 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.

HMIS: Beyond Data Collection

The target audience for this training is all grantees. Topics include privacy and security requirements, VA HMIS participation, CoC coordination, and using data for program improvement.

SSVF for HMIS Administrators and Vendors

This training is more technical than the others and is aimed primarily at HMIS administrators and software solution providers

Topics include project setup in HMIS, data collection, export requirements, upload validation processes, and a brief overview of how uploaded data are reported.

Developing a Comprehensive Data Quality Plan

The target audience for this training is all grantees, particularly individuals who are responsible for planning and oversight. Topics include the importance of data quality and how to achieve and maintain it.

HMIS Participation Planning

Overview

VA's original intent was that SSVF grantees would enter data into the HMIS operated by each CoC in which they were providing direct services. Many SSVF grantees provide services in more than multiple CoCs, however, and the logistics and expense of implementing this proved to be impractical.

HUD, HHS, and the VA jointly released revised HMIS Data Standards in May 2014. Revisions include the ability to associate a single HMIS project with multiple CoCs and a requirement to identify the CoC in which the head of household is located at project entry. This associates data with a particular CoC and facilitates data exchange between HMIS implementations.

As a result, participation by SSVF grantees in the HMIS implementations of each CoC in which they provide direct services is still required, but grantees have the option to enter data directly into each HMIS or to enter data into a single HMIS and participate in others by providing an export of client-level data. When SSVF grantees participate by providing exported data, they are subject to the HMIS policies and procedures of both the HMIS implementation in which they enter/export data and those of the HMIS implementation(s) to which they are providing exported data.

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. 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.
- SSVF grantees operating in multiple CoCs must participate in the HMIS implementation of each CoC in which they operate. This requirement may be satisfied either by direct data entry into each HMIS or by entering data into a single HMIS and providing exports of client-level data to each HMIS. HMIS participation arrangements are subject to approval by grantees' Regional Coordinators and the National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans.
- 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.
- Every project in an HMIS must be associated with one or more CoCs (data element 2.3 Continuum of Care Code). SSVF projects operating in multiple CoCs must be associated with each CoC for which they will be entering client-level data into the HMIS.
- For each SSVF enrollment, HMIS users must identify the CoC (data element 3.17 Client Location) where the head of household (eligible veteran) is located at the time of project entry.

SSVF grantees should contact the HMIS Lead for each CoC in which they are operating to discuss HMIS participation. There are many factors to consider in establishing an HMIS participation plan; some of these factors are outlined below.

Considerations in HMIS Planning

Other Grantees Operating in the Same CoC

HMIS can be invaluable in reducing duplication of services in CoCs where there are multiple SSVF grantees. 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 projects 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. A grantee operating in six CoCs but with 90% of participants concentrated in a single CoC 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 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, consider entering all of your data into a single HMIS.

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. If either the host CoC HMIS or recipient CoC HMIS lacks the export or import functionality (encouraged but not yet required for HMIS implementations), then using a single CoC's HMIS may not be a viable option. Any decision to use only one CoC's HMIS must be made after determining the data exchange work flow and schedule that assures the HMIS participation requirements of the recipient CoC are met so as not to disrupt their ability to produce system level reports.

Questions to Consider

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 projects participating in this CoC's HMIS?
- Are there other SSVF grantees operating in the CoC?

- If other SSVF projects operate in the same CoC, is the HMIS open or does it support data-sharing agreements between projects?
- 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 CoC's designated software?
- Does the CoC's HMIS software 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 projects required, what is the annual cost of participation by direct data entry in this CoC's HMIS?
- What kind of user training and support is provided to HMIS users? Are they included with the participation fee or are there additional costs?
- Can the HMIS export HMIS data in the HMIS CSV 4.0 format? (This is the only format that the Repository will be able to accept, at least initially.) Can it export HMIS data in the HMIS XML 4.0 format (which may be helpful in data exchange with other HMIS implementations)?
- Does the HMIS accept imports of HMIS data from other HMIS implementations?
- Can it accept HMIS CSV 4.0 data? HMIS XML 4.0 data?
- 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?

HMIS Project Descriptor Data Elements for SSVF

This section provides guidance to HMIS administrators and HMIS vendors on how to complete the Project Descriptor Data Elements in HMIS to set up an SSVF grantee.

2.1 Organization Identifiers

The Organization ID is generated by the HMIS application; the Organization Name should be name of the grantee. In the event that the organization has other projects 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 and recognizable to CoC and HMIS administration staff.

2.2 Project Identifiers

The Project ID is generated by the HMIS software; the project name identifies the specific SSVF project. There are no specific VA requirements for SSVF project names, but in general, names should make it as simple as possible for users to distinguish between the various HMIS projects created to represent a single SSVF grant, e.g., Community Homeless SSVF RRH or Community Homeless SSVF Prevention.

2.3 Continuum of Care Code

Each CoC is associated with a geographic area and has a code assigned by HUD. Each project in HMIS may be associated with multiple CoCs. SSVF grantees are funded to operate in specific CoCs. Grantees operating in multiple CoCs should be associated with all of the CoC codes in which the project provides services and for which they will be entering client-level data into the HMIS.

2.4 Project Type

For each SSVF grant, there must be at least two separate projects; one with a Project Type of 'Homelessness Prevention' and one with a Project Type of 'PH – Rapid Re-Housing.'

A separate project with a project type of 'Other'[2] project may be used to track individuals with whom grantees are engaged in outreach.

2.6 Federal Partner Funding Sources

'VA: Supportive Services for Veteran Families' should be selected for all SSVF projects.

The Grant Identifier field should include the SSVF grant number, along with the corresponding Grant Start Date and Grant End Date.

Although the data standards require that it must be possible to associate a single project with multiple grants, multiple SSVF grant identifiers should only be associated with a single project when a grant is renewed. Organizations with more than one SSVF grant at the same time must have separate projects set up for each grant.

2.7 Bed and Unit Inventory Information

This data element should be completed for the SSVF RRH project in HMIS consistent with the policies of the HMIS implementation. This information is not used by VA and need not be included in SSVF exports.

[2] The 'Street Outreach' project type should not be used for this purpose.

2.8 Site Information - Optional

This data element should be completed consistent with the policies of the HMIS implementation. This information is not used by VA and need not be included in SSVF exports.

2.9 Target Population - Optional

This data element should be completed consistent with the policies of the HMIS implementation. This information is not used by VA and need not be included in SSVF exports.

SSVF HMIS Data Collection

HMIS Data Elements

The data elements listed below are defined in the May 2014 HMIS Data Standards and must be collected by SSVF grantees.

#	Data Elements	Subjects	When collected
3.1	Name	All clients	Record creation
3.2	Social Security Number	All clients	Record creation
3.3	Date of Birth	All clients	Record creation
3.4	Race	All clients	Record creation
3.5	Ethnicity	All clients	Record creation
3.6	Gender	All clients	Record creation
3.7	Veteran Status	Adults	Record creation
3.8	Disabling Condition	Adults	Project entry
3.9	Residence Prior to Project Entry	HoH and adults	Project entry
3.10	Project Entry Date	All clients	Project entry
3.11	Project Exit Date	All clients	Project exit
3.12	Destination	HoH and adults	Project exit
3.13	Personal ID	All clients	(generated by HMIS)
3.14	Household ID	All clients	(generated by HMIS)
3.15	Relationship to Head of Household	All clients	Project entry
3.16	Client Location	HoH	Project entry
3.17	Length of Time on Street, in an Emergency Shelter, or Safe Haven	HoH and adults	Project entry
4.2	Income and Sources	HoH and adults	Project entry and exit
4.3	Non-Cash Benefits	HoH and adults	Project entry and exit
4.4	Health Insurance	All clients	Project entry and exit
4.14 D	Services Provided	Clients who receive services	When services are provided
4.15 B	Financial Assistance Provided	Clients who receive financial assistance	When financial assistance is provided
4.17	Residential Move-In Date	RRH clients	Project entry; edit if status changes
4.41	Veteran's Information	Veterans (Veteran Status = Yes)	Record creation or first SSVF project entry
4.42	Percent of AMI	HoH	Project entry
4.43	Last Permanent Address	HoH and adults	Project entry

Assistance Type

For each SSVF grant, there must be one project set up in HMIS with a project type of Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) and another with a project type of Homelessness Prevention (HP).

Participants should be entered into HMIS under either the RRH or HP project based on the housing status of the head of household.

If the head of household is homeless, enter the household into the RRH project. Briefly, this includes:

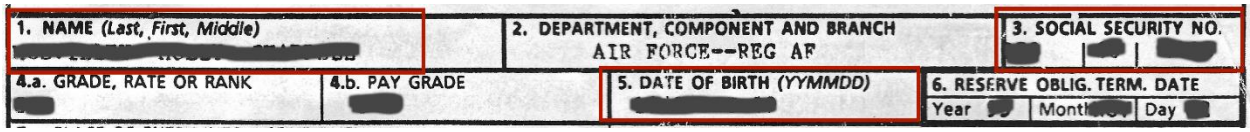
- Individuals and families living in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., a vehicle, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground).
- Individuals and families being provided with a temporary residence by a public or private organization (e.g., emergency shelter, Safe Haven, or a hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter vouchers).
- Individuals exiting an institution after a stay of 90 days or less who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.
- Individuals and families leaving their primary nighttime residence because they are fleeing domestic violence, have no other residence, and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.
- Individuals leaving their primary nighttime residence because they are fleeing domestic violence, who have no other residence, and do not have resources or a support network in place to acquire permanent housing.

Other participants (i.e., those who are not homeless but are eligible for SSVF) should be entered into the Prevention project.

3.1 Name

Providing identifying information is an SSVF eligibility requirement and is not optional. At a minimum, every client, including household members, must have a first name and a last name entered in HMIS. Use full legal names instead of nicknames or shortened versions. Entry of middle names and suffixes is strongly encouraged.

For Veterans, names should be entered in HMIS as they appear on the DD214 unless the Veteran has had a legal name change since his/her discharge. The DD214 is also a reliable source of information about Social Security number and Date of Birth.



The only acceptable response to Name Data Quality is *Full name reported*. (As long as the first name and last name are complete and correct, *Full name reported* is an appropriate response – it is desirable but not necessary that the middle name is included.)

If there is already a record in HMIS for the participant and any part of the name is incorrect, correct it. Although the HMIS Data Standards specify that name is only collected when a client record is created, it is the responsibility of every project that serves that person to ensure that information is complete and correct.

3.2 Social Security Number

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 the complete SSN into HMIS. A Veteran who declines to provide an SSN is not eligible for SSVF.

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 by selecting 'Client refused' in the SSN Data Quality field. Regardless of the reason, partial, missing, or invalid SSNs will always have a negative impact on data quality.

If there is already a record in HMIS for the client and the SSN is incorrect or incomplete, correct it.

3.3 Date of Birth

Again, providing identifying information is an SSVF eligibility requirement and is not optional. Every client, including non-Veteran household members, must have a date of birth in HMIS. Note that for Date of Birth Type, *Client doesn't know* and *Client refused* are not valid responses for SSVF participants.

If there is already a record in HMIS for the client and the date of birth is incorrect or incomplete, correct it.

3.4 Race

Select as many races as apply. If the participant does not identify with any of the five races listed, select *Client doesn't know* or *Client refused* as appropriate.

If there is already a record in HMIS for the client and race information is incorrect or incomplete, correct it.

3.5 Ethnicity

If there is already a record in HMIS for the client and Ethnicity is incorrect, correct it.

3.6 Gender

If there is already a record in HMIS for the client and Gender is incorrect, correct it. *Client doesn't know* and *Client refused* are not valid responses for SSVF participants.

3.7 Veteran Status

In HMIS, Veteran Status should be 'Yes' for anyone who has ever been on active duty in the armed forces of the United States, regardless of discharge status or length of service.

- For members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, active duty begins when a military member reports to a duty station after completion of training.
- For members of the Reserves and National Guard, active duty is any time spent activated or deployed, either in the United States or abroad.

Veteran Status should be 'No' for anyone who has not been on active duty, including:

- Individuals who attended basic training, officer training school, and/or technical training but were discharged before reporting to a duty station;
- Members of the Reserves or National Guard who were never activated or deployed.

For SSVF projects, every adult must have a Veteran Status of either *Yes* or *No*. Neither *Client doesn't know* nor *Client refused* are permissible responses.

If there is already a record in HMIS for the client and Veteran Status is incorrect, correct it.

3.8 Disabling Condition

Collect at project entry for all adults. Disabling Condition should be *Yes* for any adult with:

- A physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or brain injury that:
  (1) Is expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration;

  (2) Substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently; and

  (3) Could be improved by the provision of more suitable housing conditions.

- A developmental disability, as defined in section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15002); or

- The disease of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) or any condition arising from the etiologic agency for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV).

Individuals receiving SSDI or VA disability compensation (either service-connected or non-service-connected) should be noted as a **potential** *Yes* for Disabling Condition.

3.9 Residence Prior to Program Entry

For all adults, identify the residence type and how long the client has been there at the time of project entry. 'Other' should only be selected in the event that a client's living situation on the night before project entry was so unusual that it is not possible to select one of the other options. If 'Other' is selected, an explanation must be provided; if the explanation indicates a living situation that falls under one of the other options, grantees will be required to correct this.

For Homelessness Prevention, this should reflect where the client is living *at the time of project entry*.

For Rapid Re-Housing, this should reflect where the client stayed *on the night before project entry*.

3.10 Project Entry Date

Every client must have a Project Entry Date. There are no exceptions and the Repository will reject any upload that has missing information for this field.

For both SSVF project types (Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing), the Project Entry Date is the first date on which the grantee begins providing services funded by the SSVF grant to any member of a Veteran household eligible for SSVF assistance. The term 'services' is not limited to financial assistance. There should be at least one record of a service (see data elements 4.14 D and 4.15 B) for the head of household on the Project Entry Date

All household members who are staying with the head of household at the time of project entry should have the same Project Entry Date. Children born during enrollment and individuals who join the household during enrollment may have a later Project Entry Date.

3.11 Project Exit Date

For SSVF, the Project Exit Date is the last date on which the grantee provides services to the household. This may be the last day of any month for which rental assistance is provided, even if no other services were provided on that date.

All household members who are staying with the head of household at the time of project exit should have the same Project Exit Date. Household members who die or are otherwise leave the household during enrollment may have an earlier Project Exit Date.

3.12 Destination

For all adults, select the residence type that best corresponds to the client's living situation at the time of project exit.

For Prevention clients who maintained their housing, this will be the same as the Residence Prior to Project Entry.

It is critical to follow up with clients who may stop showing up after receiving services. Without information about clients' living situation at exit, VA has no way to tell whether or not the intervention was successful. For this reason, any response that does not provide information about the client's living situation will show up on data quality reports.

If a client cannot be contacted after receiving services and it is not possible to identify a living situation for the client at the time of exit, 'No exit interview completed' should be selected. This will happen; data quality for this field is not evaluated against perfection but against national averages and other grantees dealing with the same circumstances and client population.

The selection of 'Other' for the Destination field generally reflects poor data quality. 'Other' should only be selected in the event that the client's living situation at the time of project exit is so unusual that it is not possible to select one of the other options. If 'Other' is selected, an explanation must be provided; if the explanation indicates a living situation that falls under one of the other options, grantees will be required to correct this.

3.13 Personal ID

This is generated by the HMIS application.

3.14 Household ID

This is generated by the HMIS application.

3.15 Relationship to Head of Household

Every client must have a Relationship to Head of Household entered at project entry. There are no exceptions and the Repository will reject any upload that has missing information for this field.

For each enrollment, a household must have one and only one head of household (Relationship to Head of Household = 'Self'). For SSVF, the head of household should be the eligible Veteran. In households with two or more eligible Veterans, it does not matter which Veteran is identified as the head of household.

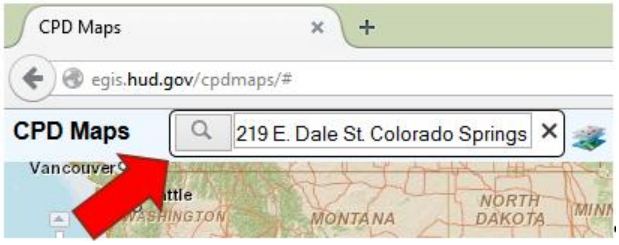
3.16 Client Location

Identify the CoC in which the head of household is located at the time of project entry. The CoC Code should correspond to one of the CoCs in which the SSVF grantee is funded to provide services. CoC

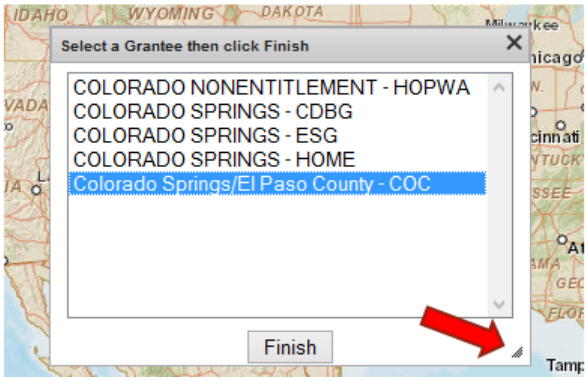
codes identify a geographic area and consist of a two-letter state abbreviation, a dash, and a 3-digit number assigned by HUD. For example, the CoC code for the Colorado Springs / El Paso County Continuum of Care is CO-504.

This is mandatory for every project entry; there are no exceptions. If you do not know the CoC code, HUD has an online mapping tool that you can use to find it. To do this:

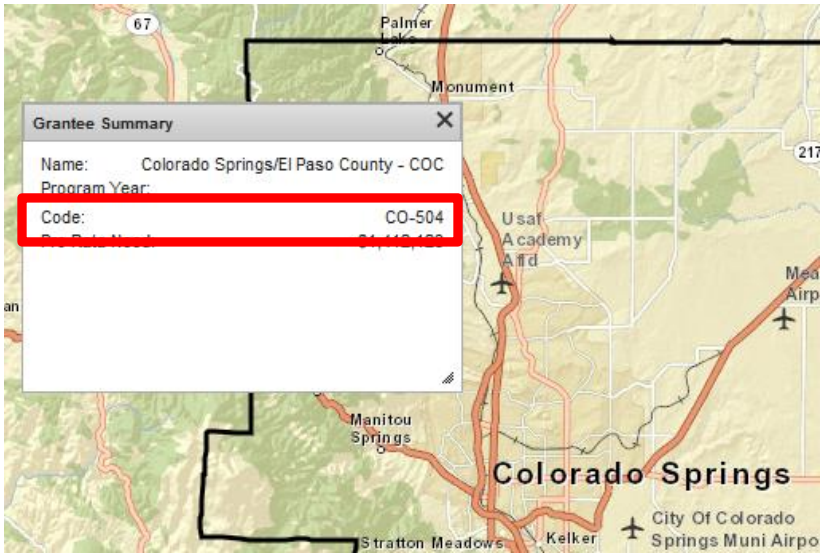
1. Go to http://egis.hud.gov/cpdmaps/#.
2. Enter the client's address (or an address close to where the client is located) in the box on the upper left and click the magnifying glass to search.



3. In the popup box, select the grantee that ends with 'COC' and click 'Finish.' If the popup box is too small to read full names, you can click on the lower right corner and drag to make it bigger.



4. The mapping tool will display the geographic boundaries of the CoC that covers the address you entered and another popup box that includes the CoC Code.



If the head of household moves to a different CoC during enrollment, create a new record with the CoC Code for the client's current location. The Information Date associated with the new record should be the date that the client changed location. If the exact date is not known, an approximate date is fine.

3.17 Length of Time on Street, in an Emergency Shelter, or Safe Haven

Record responses for all adults at project entry. This information is used, in conjunction with other data (Disabling Condition, etc.) to identify chronically homeless participants.

4.2 Income and Sources

Record responses for all adults at project entry and at project exit. Note that 'Client doesn't know' and 'Client refused' are not valid responses for SSVF participants. Eligibility for SSVF is based on income; participants must provide income information and grantees must enter it into HMIS.

Information about income may be recorded in HMIS consistent with the SSVF Income Eligibility Calculation worksheet. For example, the worksheet specifically excludes income earned by minors from household income calculations; accordingly, income earned by minors may be excluded from HMIS.

If Income from any Source is 'Yes,' there should be an amount greater than zero in the Total Monthly Income field and at least one income source should also be 'Yes.' For any source that is 'Yes', there must be an amount greater than zero recorded for the source. The total of all source amounts must equal Total Monthly Income.

The HMIS Data Standards and VA require that a new record of Income and Sources must be created at the time of project exit. The questions must be asked and the responses must be recorded in HMIS. It is not acceptable to assume that nothing has changed since project entry.

4.3 Non-Cash Benefits

Record responses for all adults at project entry and at project exit.

The HMIS Data Standards and VA require that a new record of Non-Cash Benefits must be created at the time of project exit. The questions must be asked and the responses must be recorded in HMIS. It is not acceptable to assume that nothing has changed since project entry.

4.4 Health Insurance

Record responses for all participants (including minors) at project entry and at project exit.

The HMIS Data Standards and VA require that a new record of Non-Cash Benefits must be created at the time of project exit. The questions must be asked and the responses must be recorded in HMIS. It is not acceptable to assume that nothing has changed since project entry.

4.14D Services Provided

Record each service on the date it is provided. If you meet with a participant 5 times during the course of enrollment to provide case management, there should be a record for each date.

Services should be attached to the head of household's record. Do not create duplicate records of a single service for each household member.

4.15B Financial Assistance Provided

Record each instance of financial assistance. There should be a separate record of financial assistance for each check that is cut; the date of financial assistance should be the date that the check is cut. If a check is returned or not cashed, delete the record in HMIS.

Enter financial assistance under the head of household's record. Do not create duplicate records of a single instance of financial assistance for each household member; after a household is discharged, it should be possible to determine, based on HMIS data, how much financial assistance the household received.

4.17 Residential Move-In Date

This is collected for Rapid Re-Housing participants only. This information makes it possible to determine which RRH participants have moved into permanent housing, which is important for the HIC and Point-In-Time Counts. It will also provide information about how long it typically takes from the time of project entry to get participants into housing.

There should be one and only one record for this data element for any one enrollment.

In Permanent Housing

This is initially collected at project entry; the response at that time will typically be *No* unless your project is able to move participants into permanent housing on their very first day in the program. When a participant does move into permanent housing, go back to the original *No* response and change it to *Yes*.

Date of Move-In

When In Permanent Housing is *Yes*, you will be asked to enter the Date of Move-In. As the name of the field implies, this should be the date (during enrollment) that the participant moved into permanent housing.

If an RRH participant moves into permanent housing during an enrollment but leaves before discharge, you must change In Permanent Housing back to *No*.

4.41 Veteran's Information

Year Entered Military Service and **Year Separated from Military Service**

Record the Year Entered and Year Separated for the Veteran's longest continuous period of service. These can be found in Block 12 of the DD214.

12. RECORD OF SERVICE	Year(s)	Month(s)	Day(s)
a. Date Entered AD This Period	1987	NOV	03
b. Separation Date This Period	1993	NOV	02
c. Net Active Service This Period	06	00	00
d. Total Prior Active Service	00	00	00

If two continuous periods of service are identical in length and one was during a combat era and the other was not, record the Year Entered and Year Separated for the combat era period of service.

If two continuous periods of service are identical in length and neither or both were during a combat era, record the Year Entered and Year Separated for the most recent period of service.

Theaters of Operations

Identify whether or not the Veteran served in the theatre of operations for any of the listed military conflicts. Only physical presence within the geographic area during the conflict is required for a *Yes* response – this is not a question of whether or not the Veteran was in combat or ever came under fire.

Branch of the Military

Record the branch of the military in which the Veteran served for the longest period of time. If periods of service are identical in length, see the instructions related to Year Entered and Year Separated above.

This can be found in Block 2 of the DD214.

CAUTION: NOT TO BE USED FOR IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES — THIS IS AN IMPORTANT RECORD. SAFEGUARD IT. — ANY ALTERATIONS IN SHADED AREAS RENDER FORM VOID

CERTIFICATE OF RELEASE OR DISCHARGE FROM ACTIVE DUTY

1. NAME (Last, First, Middle)	2. DEPARTMENT, COMPONENT AND BRANCH	3. SOCIAL SECURITY NO.
[redacted]	AIR FORCE--REG AF	[redacted]

4.a. GRADE, RATE OR RANK	4.b. PAY GRADE	5. DATE OF BIRTH (YYMMDD)	6. RESERVE OBLIG. TERM. DATE
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	Year [redacted] Month [redacted] Day [redacted]

Discharge Status

Record the Veteran's discharge status. For Veterans with multiple discharges under different conditions, record the best discharge status.

A veteran's discharge status can be found in block 24 of the DD214.

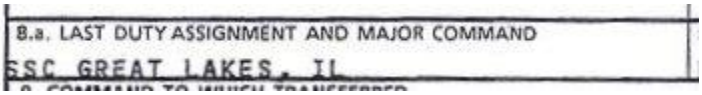
23. TYPE OF SEPARATION	24. CHARACTER OF SERVICE (Include upgrades)
RELEASE FROM ACTIVE DUTY	HONORABLE

There is only one character of service / discharge status that may appear on a DD214 but has no corresponding value on the HMIS list – this is 'Entry Level Separation.'

In order to be considered a Veteran, an individual must have completed training and reported to a duty station. Entry level separations, which only occur during the first 180 days a person is in the military, often happen prior to completion of training.

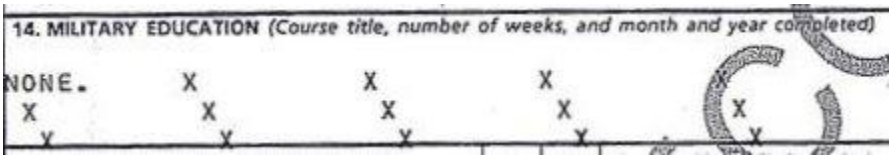
In order to establish Veteran status – and SSVF eligibility – additional information may be needed. Asking the applicant whether or not s/he reported to a duty station after training is a good start.

The last duty assignment is listed on the DD214 in Block 8a. Information about these locations is typically available via a quick internet search. If the last duty assignment was a training location, the applicant may be less likely to be a Veteran.


8.a. LAST DUTY ASSIGNMENT AND MAJOR COMMAND

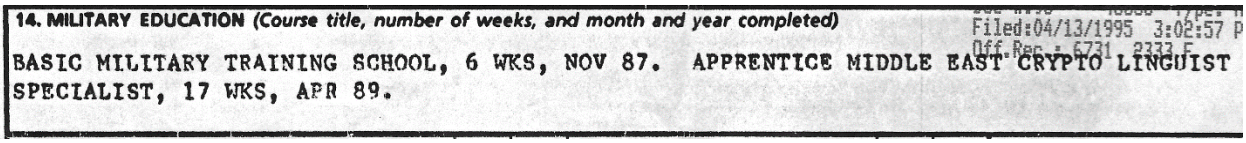
SSC GREAT LAKES, IL

Another source of information is Block 14 of the DD214, which lists military education. If Block 14 shows no completed training, the applicant may be less likely to be a Veteran.


14. MILITARY EDUCATION (Course title, number of weeks, and month and year completed)

NONE.

If completed training is listed, the applicant is more likely to be a veteran.


14. MILITARY EDUCATION (Course title, number of weeks, and month and year completed)

BASIC MILITARY TRAINING SCHOOL, 6 WKS, NOV 87. APPRENTICE MIDDLE EAST CRYPTO LINGUIST SPECIALIST, 17 WKS, APR 89.

4.42 Household Income as a Percentage of AMI

Select a category based on the SSVF Income Eligibility Calculation. Please note that although 'Greater than 50%' is a response category defined in the HMIS Data Standards, households with income greater than 50% of the Area Median Income are ineligible for SSVF. Responses of 'Greater than 50%' will negatively impact data quality.

4.43 Last Permanent Address

Record the participant's last permanent address. For Prevention clients, this will be their current address. For Rapid Re-Housing participants, this is not the location where the participant is currently staying, but the address of the last place they were permanently housed.

This should never be the address of a shelter or a reference to a location like the streets or a park – it should be the address where the client was last in housing that might be categorized as permanent, such as:

- An apartment or house rented by the client, with or without a subsidy;
- A home owned or rented by someone else (e.g., the client's parents, a friend, etc.) where the client lived.

SSVF Data Quality and Completeness Policy

SSVF grantees must attempt to collect every applicable 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 'Client doesn't know' and 'Client refused.' In some cases, these responses are unacceptable for SSVF clients.

Mandatory Data Collection

All of the data elements listed in the SSVF HMIS Data Collection section are mandatory; all grantees are required to collect them, SSVF participants are required to provide responses, and the data 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 the complete SSN into HMIS. A Veteran who declines to provide an SSN is not eligible for SSVF.

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 by selecting 'Client refused' in the SSN Data Quality field. Regardless of the reason, partial, missing, or invalid SSNs will always have a negative impact on data quality.

If there is already a record in HMIS for the client and the SSN is incorrect or incomplete, correct it.

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[3] 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.

Of the data elements defined by the HMIS Data Standards, 4.43 Last Permanent Address may be particularly sensitive for Prevention participants given that it includes a current street address. Grantees should enter the city, state, and ZIP code, but may omit the street address in instances where there is reason for concern about an abuser's access to HMIS data.

[3] The Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005 prohibits victim services providers from entering any personal identifying information about any victim into the Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). Victim service providers are nonprofit, non-governmental organizations whose primary mission is to provide services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

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 operate.

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 in whole or in part until after the participant has been discharged.

In addition to data elements required by VA, some HMIS applications include data collection that may provide information about a participant's location, employers, etc. 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 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 website
- 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

SSVF Reporting

Monthly Repository Uploads

Grantees are required to enter data on all participants into the HMIS project associated with the CoC geography where the head of household is physically located at the time of entry. The only exception to this is for grantees who are victim service providers as defined by the Violence Against Women Act. Client data from separate HMIS projects will be aggregated within the Repository to create a consolidated accounting of SSVF Activity.

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 data are managed to a secure SSVF HMIS 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.

Data exported from HMIS systems should be packaged in a ZIP file prior to upload to the Repository. For detailed specifications, please see the VA Repository Data Upload Criteria section of this document.

Quarterly Reports

In addition to use of HMIS, grantees are also expected to complete quarterly reports. There are two components to quarterly reporting: a narrative report and a financial report.

The narrative report includes 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.

The financial report includes a detailed comparison of budgeted and actual expenditures in major categories, including TFA; grantees are asked to explain variances. It also includes information about quarterly spending by subcontractor, and draw downs. Copies of the Excel report template and companion guide for completing these reports can be found on the SSVF University Website, (http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvfuniversity.asp?page=/program_requirements/hmis_and_data).

Please note, however, that only the Excel workbooks with completed grantee data and budget information provided by VA should be submitted, and that you should never make changes to the formulas or worksheets. An automated process aggregates the data from all 300+ financial reports into a single national report, and changes can make processing impossible.

VA Repository Data Upload Criteria

Each upload of SSVF data to the Repository must contain a complete data set for the current grant year up to the date that the data set is exported from the HMIS. This document identifies criteria that an uploaded data set must meet in order to be accepted by the Repository.

Data Upload Format

Beginning in November 2014, the Repository will accept data in the HMIS CSV 4.0 format. CSV files must be packaged in a ZIP file and uploaded to the Repository by the fifth business day of each month.

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 HMIS CSV specifications and with the data quality requirements established by VA for SSVF grantees.

General

- Each of the required CSV files must be included in the upload and file names must be consistent with the HMIS CSV specifications. Uploads missing any required file will be rejected.
- Each file must contain a header row with field names for all fields defined for the file in the HMIS CSV specifications, regardless of whether or not the Repository requires data for the field. Uploads with missing fields, incorrect field names, or additional fields in required files will be rejected.
- The Repository will disregard fields that are greyed out in the tables below. Any data in those fields will not be validated, nor will it be written to the Repository database.
- Fields that are not greyed out in the tables below must be exported in a manner consistent with the HMIS CSV 4.0 specifications (where data are present) or the upload will be rejected. Data types must be correct, fields with defined pick lists must include only valid values, and fields not specifically identified in the CSV specifications as nullable must have values.
- All data associated with any enrollment active in the current grant year must be included in every upload. This includes all enrollment data for participants who entered the project in the previous grant year and were still enrolled on October 1. All service and financial assistance records associated with those enrollments must be exported, including those dated prior to the export start date.
- No data marked as deleted in the exporting application may be included in an SSVF export for upload to the Repository. Uploads with non-null values in any DateDeleted field will be rejected.
- When an upload is rejected, the Repository will provide a specific reason (or reasons) for the rejection.

Data Quality

The Repository will evaluate the uploaded files for data quality.

When records are missing data in critical fields, an error message will be displayed identifying the file name, the field name, and the PersonalID associated with the record.

When the percentage of field values with missing/NULL, Client doesn't know (8), Client refused (9), or Data not collected (99), 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.

Required HMIS CSV 4.0 Files

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

- Export.csv
- Project.csv
- ProjectCoC.csv
- Client.csv
- Enrollment.csv
- EnrollmentCoC.csv
- Exit.csv
- IncomeBenefits.csv
- Services.csv

The Repository will ignore any files other than those that are required. It will also ignore data in fields that are not required.

Files and their associated fields is listed below, along with Notify and Reject thresholds and notes specific to Repository uploads.

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 (ExportID) 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.

There may be one and only one record in Export.csv.

Field Name	Notes
ExportID	Unique identifier for the exported data set, repeated in all files.
SourceID	
SourceName	
SourceContactFirst	
SourceContactLast	
SourceContactPhone	
SourceContactExtension	
SourceContactEmail	
ExportDate	The date that the export was generated.

Field Name	Notes
ExportStartDate	The start date of the SSVF grant (or earlier) should be used for the Export Start Date. If the date in this field is later than the Repository's recorded start date for the program, the uploaded dataset will be rejected.
ExportEndDate	The date that the export was generated must be used for the Export End Date. If the date in this field does not match the ExportDate, the upload will be rejected.
SoftwareName	The name of the HMIS application that produced the export.
SoftwareVersion	(optional)
ExportPeriodType	Must be 3
ExportDirective	Must be 2

Project.csv

Project.csv must include records for all projects selected by the user for inclusion in the export, regardless of whether or not there is enrollment data.

Name	Notes
ProjectID	Unique identifier; up to 32 characters.
OrganizationID	
ProjectName	Up to 128 characters.
ProjectCommonName	
ContinuumProject	
ProjectType	Valid values are 6, 12, and 13. These correspond to services only, prevention, and RRH, respectively.
ResidentialAffiliation	
TrackingMethod	
TargetPopulation	
PITCount	
DateCreated	
DateUpdated	
UserID	
DateDeleted	
ExportID	Must match record in Export.csv

ProjectCoC.csv

There must be at least one record in ProjectCoC.csv for each record in Project.csv where the *ProjectType* is either 13 (Prevention) or 13 (RRH).

Name	Notes
ProjectCoCID	Unique identifier; up to 32 characters
ProjectID	Must match a record in Project.csv
CoCCode	Two letters, a dash, and 3 numbers `^[a-zA-Z]{2}-[0-9]{3}$`
DateCreated	
DateUpdated	

Name	Notes
UserID	
DateDeleted	
ExportID	Must match record in Export.csv

Client.csv

Name	Reject	Notes
PersonalID	>0	
FirstName	>5	
MiddleName		
LastName	>5	
NameSuffix		
NameDataQuality	>5	Check for: 2, 8, 9, 99, NULL
SSN		
SSNDataQuality	>10	Check for: 2, 8, 9, 99, NULL
DOB		
DOBDataQuality	>5	Check for: 2, 8, 9, 99, NULL
AmIndAKNative		
Asian		
BlackAfAmerican		
NativeHIOtherPacific		
White		Check for: 8, 9, 99
RaceNone	>10	
Ethnicity		
Gender	>5	Check for: 8, 9, 99, NULL
OtherGender		
VeteranStatus	>0	Check for: NULL
YearEnteredService		
YearSeparated		
WorldWarII		
KoreanWar		
VietnamWar		
DesertStorm		
AfghanistanOEF		
IraqOIF		
IraqOND		
OtherTheater		
MilitaryBranch		
DischargeStatus		
DateCreated		
DateUpdated		
UserID		
DateDeleted		
ExportID		Must match record in Export.csv

Enrollment.csv

Name	Reject	Notes
ProjectEntryID	>0	
PersonalID	>0	
ProjectID	>0	
EntryDate	>0	
HouseholdID	>0	
RelationshipToHoH	>0	
ResidencePrior		
OtherResidencePrior		
ResidencePriorLengthOfStay		
DisablingCondition		
ContinuouslyHomelessOneYear		
TimesHomelessPastThreeYears		
MonthsHomelessPastThreeYears		
MonthsHomelessThisTime		
StatusDocumented		
HousingStatus		
DateOfEngagement		
InPermanentHousing		
ResidentialMoveInDate		
DateOfPATHStatus		
ClientEnrolledInPATH		
ReasonNotEnrolled		
WorstHousingSituation		
PercentAMI		
LastPermanentStreet		
LastPermanentCity		
LastPermanentState		
LastPermanentZIP		
AddressDataQuality		
DateOfBCPStatus		
FYSBYouth		
ReasonNoServices		
SexualOrientation		
FormerWardChildWelfare		
ChildWelfareYears		
ChildWelfareMonths		
FormerWardJuvenileJustice		
JuvenileJusticeYears		
JuvenileJusticeMonths		
HouseholdDynamics		
SexualOrientationGenderIDYouth		
SexualOrientationGenderIDFam		
HousingIssuesYouth		
HousingIssuesFam		

Name	Reject	Notes
SchoolEducationalIssuesYouth		
SchoolEducationalIssuesFam		
UnemploymentYouth		
UnemploymentFam		
MentalHealthIssuesYouth		
MentalHealthIssuesFam		
HealthIssuesYouth		
HealthIssuesFam		
PhysicalDisabilityYouth		
PhysicalDisabilityFam		
MentalDisabilityYouth		
MentalDisabilityFam		
AbuseAndNeglectYouth		
AbuseAndNeglectFam		
AlcoholDrugAbuseYouth		
AlcoholDrugAbuseFam		
InsufficientIncome		
ActiveMilitaryParent		
IncarceratedParent		
IncarceratedParentStatus		
ReferralSource		
CountOutreachReferralApproaches		
ExchangeForSexPastThreeMonths		
CountOfExchangeForSex		
AskedOrForcedToExchangeForSex		
DateCreated	>0	
DateUpdated	>0	
UserID		
DateDeleted		
ExportID	>0	Must match record in Export.csv

EnrollmentCoC.csv

There must be one record in EnrollmentCoC.csv with a DataCollectionStage of project entry (1) for each record in Enrollment.csv where the RelationshipToHoH = 1 (i.e., the record is for the head of household.).

Name	Reject	Notes
EnrollmentCoCID	>0	
ProjectEntryID	>0	
ProjectID	>0	
PersonalID	>0	
InformationDate	>0	
CoCCode	>0	`^[A-Za-z]{2}-(0-9){3}$`
DataCollectionStage	>0	
DateCreated	>0	
DateUpdated	>0	

Name	Reject	Notes
UserID		
DateDeleted		
ExportID	>0	Must match record in Export.csv

Exit.csv

This file includes information on client exits. There may be no more than one record in Exit.csv for any ProjectEntryID.

Name	Reject	Notes
ExitID	>0	
ProjectEntryID	>0	
PersonalID	>0	
ExitDate	>0	
Destination		
OtherDestination		
AssessmentDisposition		
OtherDisposition		
HousingAssessment		
SubsidyInformation		
ConnectionWithSOAR		
WrittenAftercarePlan		
AssistanceMainstreamBenefits		
PermanentHousingPlacement		
TemporaryShelterPlacement		
ExitCounseling		
FurtherFollowUpServices		
ScheduledFollowUpContacts		
ResourcePackage		
OtherAftercarePlanOrAction		
ProjectCompletionStatus		
EarlyExitReason		•
FamilyReunificationAchieved		
DateCreated	>0	
DateUpdated	>0	
UserID		
DateDeleted		
ExportID	>0	

IncomeBenefits.csv

Name	Reject	Notes
IncomeBenefitsID		
ProjectEntryID	>0	
PersonalID	>0	
InformationDate	>0	

Name	Reject	Notes
IncomeFromAnySource	>5	Check for: 8,9,99
TotalMonthlyIncome		
Earned		
EarnedAmount		
Unemployment		
UnemploymentAmount		
SSI		
SSIAmount		
SSDI		
SSDIAmount		
VADisabilityService		
VADisabilityServiceAmount		
VADisabilityNonService		
VADisabilityNonServiceAmount		
PrivateDisability		
PrivateDisabilityAmount		
WorkersComp		
WorkersCompAmount		
TANF		
TANFAmount		
GA		
GAAmount		
SocSecRetirement		
SocSecRetirementAmount		
Pension		
PensionAmount		
ChildSupport		
ChildSupportAmount		
Alimony		
AlimonyAmount		
OtherIncomeSource		
OtherIncomeAmount		
OtherIncomeSourceIdentify		
BenefitsFromAnySource		
SNAP		
WIC		
TANFChildCare		
TANFTransportation		
OtherTANF		
RentalAssistanceOngoing		
RentalAssistanceTemp		
OtherBenefitsSource		
OtherBenefitsSourceIdentify		
InsuranceFromAnySource		
Medicaid		

Name	Reject	Notes
NoMedicaidReason		
Medicare		
NoMedicareReason		
SCHIP		
NoSCHIPReason		
VAMedicalServices		
NoVAMedReason		
EmployerProvided		
NoEmployerProvidedReason		
COBRA		
NoCOBRAReason		
PrivatePay		
NoPrivatePayReason		
StateHealthIns		
NoStateHealthInsReason		
HIVAIDSAssistance		
NoHIVAIDSAssistanceReason		
ADAP		
NoADAPReason		
DataCollectionStage	>0	
DateCreated	>0	
DateUpdated	>0	
UserID	>0	
DateDeleted		
ExportID	>0	

Services.csv

Name	Reject	Notes
ServicesID		
ProjectEntryID	>0	
PersonalID	>0	
DateProvided	>0	
RecordType		Ignore records with a RecordType other than 144 or 152
TypeProvided	>0	
OtherTypeProvided		
SubTypeProvided		
FAAmount		
ReferralOutcome		
DateCreated		
DateUpdated		
UserID		
DateDeleted		
ExportID	>0	Must match record in Export.csv

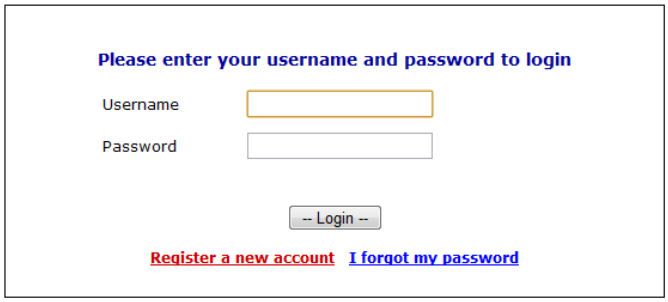
Repository User Guide

Accessing the Repository

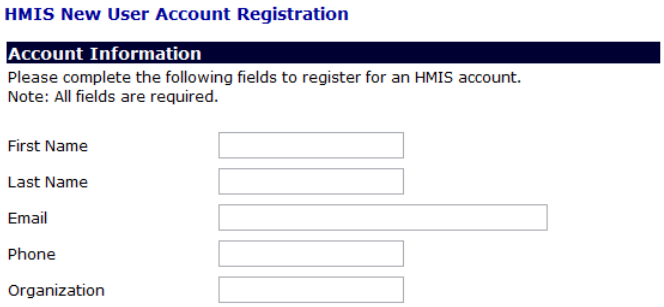
To access the Repository, go to http://www.hmisrepository.va.gov and click the 'Click here to log in' link.

Creating an Account

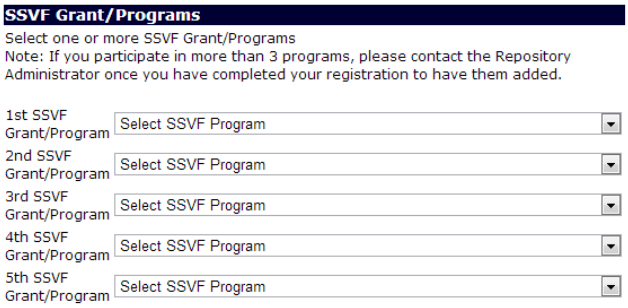
1. From the log in page, click on the 'Register a new account' link.



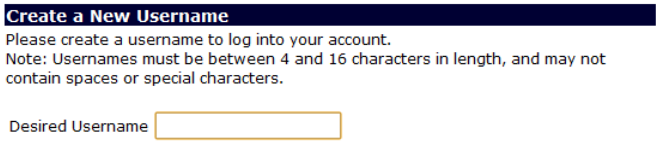
2. Enter your first name, last name, the email address the Repository should use to send your account confirmation, your work phone number, and the name of the organization that employs you. All of these fields are required. The phone number should include an area code.



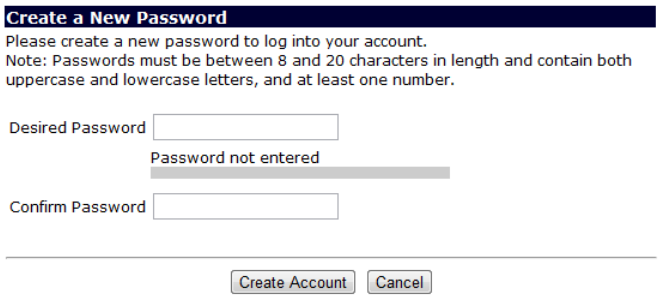
3. Select the name of the program(s) for which you will be uploading data. In order to create an account, you must select at least one program, and if you only select one program, it must be in the field labeled '1st SSVF Grant/Program.' If you will be uploading more than five data sets each month, select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



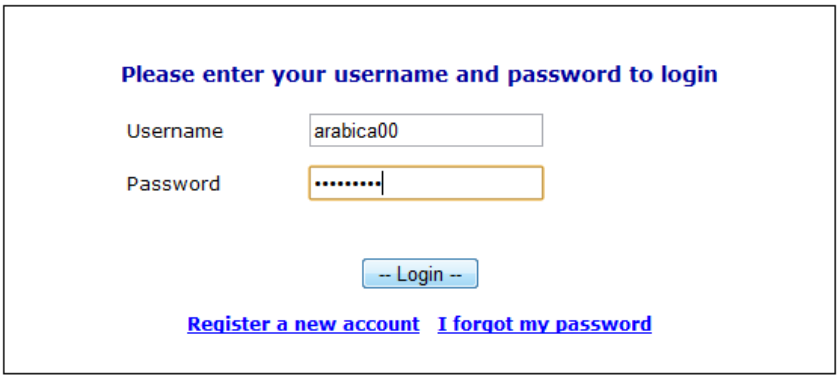
Within a few minutes, you should receive an email asking you to confirm your email address. If you do not receive an email, please contact ssvfhmis@abtassoc.com.

After you have confirmed your email address, a Repository Administrator will authorize your account to log in.

Logging in to the Repository

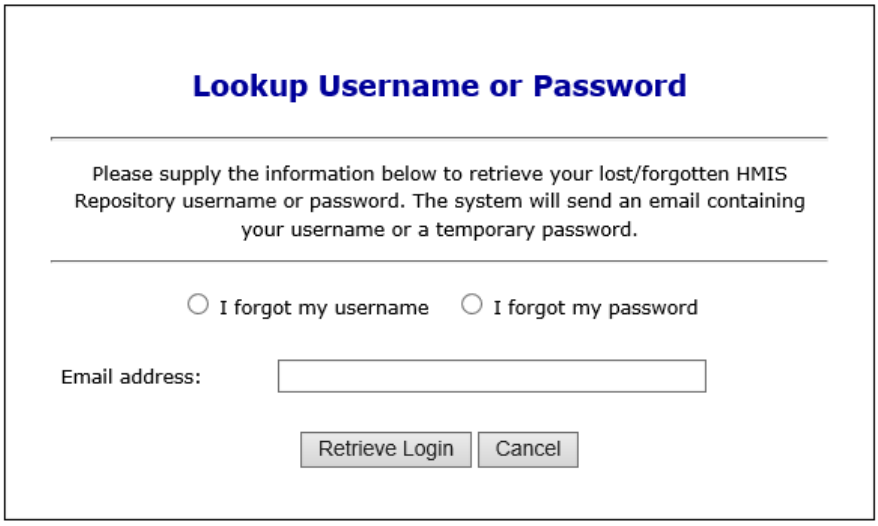
The Repository is open during the first five business days of each month, at which time you are free to log in as many times as necessary.

On the Repository login page, 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" link 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.

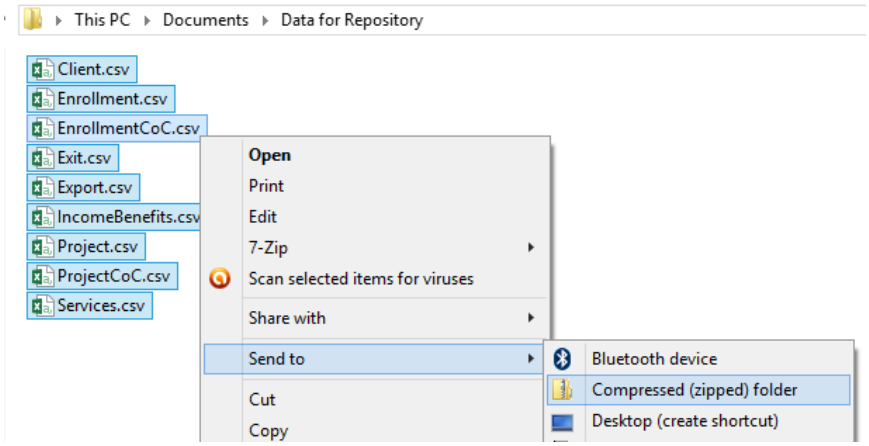
Preparing CSV Data for Upload

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

- Export.csv
- Project.csv
- ProjectCoC.csv
- Client.csv
- Enrollment.csv
- EnrollmentCoC.csv
- IncomeBenefits.csv
- Services.csv
- Exit.csv

The CSV files 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 OS have built-in functionality to create ZIP files. To use the built-in functionality, select all nine of the CSV files and right-click on them.



In Windows, click 'Send to' and then 'Compressed (zipped) folder' to create a ZIP file.

In Mac OS, click 'Compress 9 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.

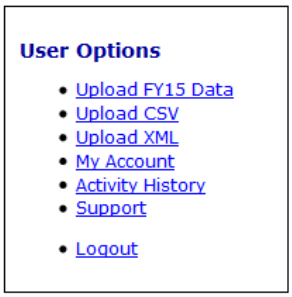
When you zip your files, make sure to zip ONLY the CSV files. Don't zip up the folder that contains the files; if they're in a folder inside the ZIP file, the Repository will not be able to find them.

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 (-), and underscores (_) are the only characters you should use in the file name.

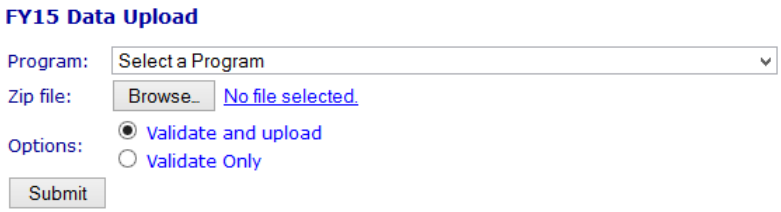
There are also several software applications that will create ZIP files, including 7-zip, WinZip, WinRAR; or MagicRAR. If you have one of these installed on your computer, you are welcome to use it to zip your files.

Uploading Data

From the list of User Options on the left-hand side of the page, click 'Upload FY15 Data.'



Next, enter the following information about your upload.



- **Program** – Select the name of the specific SSVF program for which you are uploading data.
- **Zip file** – Click 'Browse' to open a dialog box where you can select the zip file from your network or hard drive.
- **Options** – There two options for the upload process:
  - **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.
  - **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, click the "Upload Data" button 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 5. Data Integration

Success! Uploaded data has been transferred to the Repository database.

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 the HMIS CSV specifications. 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.

The Repository will unzip your CSV files and evaluate them.

There are several sections in the validation report; at a minimum, you should review: the Data Summary, Data Quality Alerts, Validation Errors, and File Errors.

Data Summary

Data Summary

158 client records
- 86 adult record(s)
- 68 child record(s)
- 4 missing DOB

168 project entries
168 project exit(s)
987 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 records that are missing data in critical fields. These issues may not prevent you from uploading your data, but they should be addressed with program staff.

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 and must be corrected in HMIS. Once HMIS has been updated, data must be exported and uploaded again.

File Errors

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

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 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

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

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 will be field names and the second row will be the values for those fields.

Project.csv

This file holds data about the project(s) selected for export as defined in HMIS. There should be one record for each project selected for export, even if there's no enrollment data for a selected project. There should be one (and only one) record in Project.csv for each ProjectID in Enrollment.csv.

ProjectCoC.csv

For each project in Project.csv, this file identifies the CoC(s) in which the project provides services.

Client.csv

This file holds data about clients – name, SSN, DOB, race, gender, and ethnicity, veteran status, and, for Veterans, information about their service. and the Personal ID. The Personal ID is unique to each client in an HMIS, and it is also used in Enrollment.csv and other data files to link enrollment data to a particular individual. Household members are considered clients and they all have records.

There should only be one record for each person, regardless of how many enrollments they have

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 Enrollment.csv.

Enrollment.csv

Enrollment.csv is central to all reporting. It holds data about project entries and should have one record per person per project entry.

In addition to the entry date, it also has fields for which there is only one response per project enrollment – e.g., Relationship to Head of Household, Residence Prior to Project Entry, etc.

The Personal ID in this file links to the Personal ID 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 Enrollment.csv.

Every record in Enrollment.csv ***must have*** an Entry Date and Relationship to Head of Household.

Every household ***must have*** one (and only one) record where Relationship to Head of Household is 'Self' (1).

The count of records in Enrollment.csv is – when everything is as it should be – a duplicated count of clients, or an unduplicated count of project entries. If the number of rows in Enrollment 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 count of records in this file might be substantially different from the number you see in reports.

EnrollmentCoC.csv

At every project entry, the CoC in which the head of household is located must be identified in HMIS. For every record in Enrollment.csv where Relationship to Head of Household is 'Self' (1), there must be one record in EnrollmentCoC.csv that identifies the CoC at project entry.

If the head of household moves from one CoC to another during enrollment, there may be an additional record in EnrollmentCoC.

IncomeBenefits.csv

This file holds information about specific sources of income, benefits, and health insurance. The records are linked to Enrollment.csv using the ProjectEntryID.

Each client should have one record in IncomeBenefits at project entry and one record at project exit, so the total number of records should be equal or greater than the total number of records in Enrollment.csv PLUS the total number of records in Exit.csv. There may be additional records if any of the information is updated during enrollment.

Records for adults will include income, non-cash benefits, and health insurance. Records for children (clients who were under 18 at project entry) will include only health insurance information.

Services.csv

This file holds information about specific services, and there's a record for each instance of service. Depending on the number of services provided, the number of records may be quite high relative to other files.

How to Tell If an Upload Is Successful

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

Step 5. Data Integration

Success! Uploaded data has been transferred to the Repository database.

If you do not see that message, your data has not been uploaded to the Repository.

Repository User Account Information

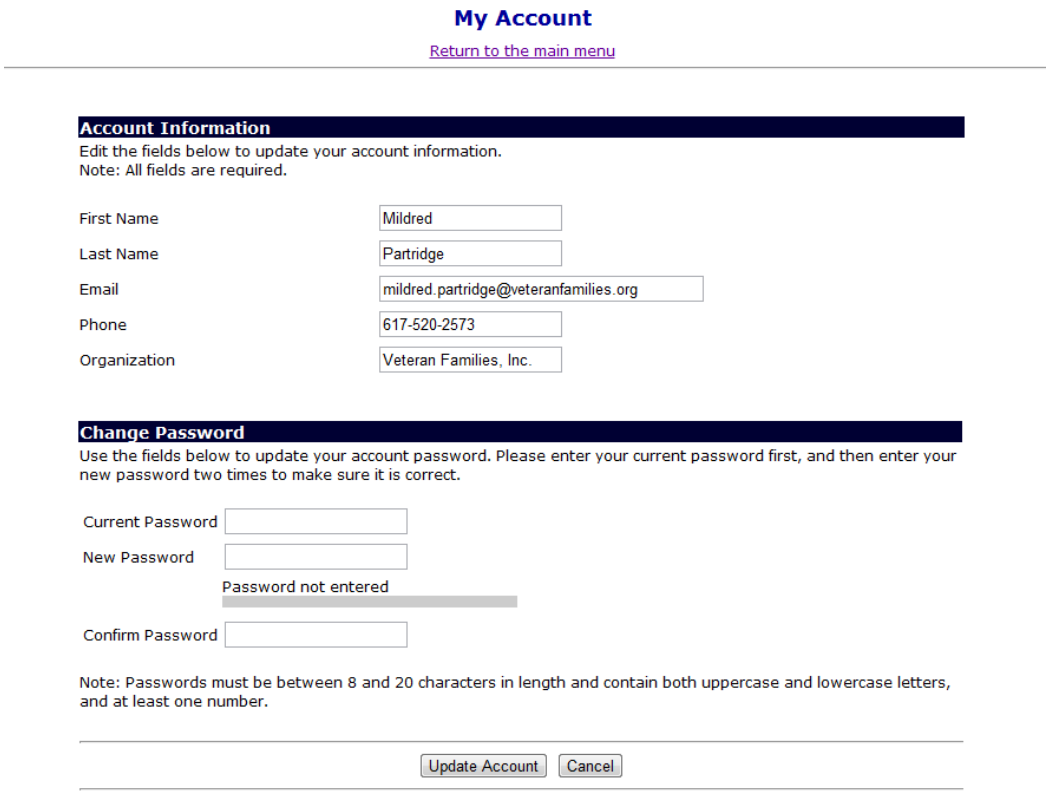
Each Repository user should have his/her own username and password. Please do not ever share your username or password with anyone. There is no charge for these accounts; your organization may have as many as you need to make sure that SSVF program data gets uploaded to the Repository on time every month.

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 important that the Repository has a current email address so that we can contact you in the event that there is an issue with your data. It also allows you to retrieve your username if you forget it, and to automatically reset your own password it you forget that.

Please note that 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 the 'Update Account' button to save it.

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.

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 projects 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 website.
- 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 Website.
- 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.

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.

SSVF Data Collection and Management 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 2014 HMIS Data Standards Manual to understand the HMIS requirements for data collection. (https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/3826/hmis-data-standards-manual/)
- Check the HUD 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 HUD Exchange Website (https://www.HUDexchange.info/grantees/).

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. Review the Repository User Guide section of this manual.

- 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 exporting data from HMIS, confirm that data entry is up-to-date. You should also use any available data quality tools to check for missing or erroneous data prior and make corrections.

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.

Additional Resources for Data Quality Management

Using Data to Get Measurable Results (USICH)

The Website 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.
2. Subcontractors will develop performance standards for each employee in the SSVF Program and evaluate performance at least annually.
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 DD214.
  - 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.

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.

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