Report to Congress:

Progress on HUD's Strategy for Improving Homeless Data Collection, Reporting and Analysis

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HUD's Progress in Homeless Data Collection, Reporting and Analysis

I.   Introduction

This is a progress report on <u>HUD's Strategy for Homeless Data Collection, Reporting and Analysis</u> submitted to Congress in August 2001. HUD's Strategy can be found at: <u>http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/index.cfm</u>. HUD identified four major activities to address Congressional direction on the need for better data at the local and national levels on homelessness: (1) flexibly implementing the new Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) eligible activity under the Supportive Housing Program in the 2001 McKinney-Vento competition; (2) initiating a comprehensive technical assistance program to help local jurisdictions collect unduplicated client-level data by 2004; (3) developing an approach to obtain meaningful data for an Annual Homeless Assessment Report from a nationally representative sample of jurisdictions, and (4) analyzing the most viable approaches to obtain homeless client-level reporting in the Annual Progress Report (APR) submitted by HUD's Continuum of Care grantees.

II.   Implementing the New Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Eligible Activity and Initiative

The Status of HMIS Implementation in Continuum of Care Communities

The Congressional direction on an improved local and national homeless data collection was brought to the attention of most of the nation's Continuum of Care (CoC) planning bodies, state and local governments, homeless service providers and advocates when the 2001 homeless assistance Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) and application materials were announced on February 23, 2001. Most CoCs had less than three months to assess the HMIS concept and their communities' interest in implementing a system and submit proposed projects for funding. Nonetheless, the response to the initiative was greater than expected. The number of communities in the middle to late stages of the HMIS planning process was greater than expected, as was the number of dedicated HMIS project applications submitted in the 2001 competition.

1. Status of HMIS Implementation in 437 CoCs

All CoCs were asked to voluntarily complete a new, non-scored section of the comprehensive homeless plan assessing their status in implementing an HMIS. There were 437 CoCs that reported on the status of their HMIS implementation in Exhibit 1 of the 2001 CoC application.

- 72 CoCs (16 percent) indicated having implemented an HMIS or were updating or expanding an existing HMIS. Of this number, 20 were upgrading their systems and 32 were seeking to expand the coverage of their systems.

- 101 CoCs (23 percent) indicated that they had decided to implement an HMIS and were selecting a software and hardware.

- 152 CoCs (35 percent) indicated that they had been meeting and considering implementing an HMIS.

- 112 CoCs (26 percent) indicated they had not yet considered implementing an HMIS.

Status of HMIS Implementation

	Number	Percent
The CoC has not yet considered implementing an HMIS	112	26
The CoC has been meeting and is considering implementing an HMIS	152	35
The CoC has decided to implement an HMIS and is selecting needed software and hardware	101	23
The CoC has implemented a continuum-wide HMIS	20	4.5
The CoC is seeking to update or change its current HMIS	20	4.5
The CoC is seeking to expand the coverage of the current system	32	7
Total	437	100

Note: The data presented in this section does not include "Solo" Project Applications/CoCs.

2. **Applications for HMIS Funding**

There were two approaches suggested for using Supportive Housing Programs (SHP) for funding an HMIS: 1) a single **dedicated HMIS project;** or 2) a **cost-sharing or levy approach** across some or all new or renewal projects applying in the 2001 competition.

a. **Dedicated HMIS Project**

One method to fund an HMIS was for the CoC to submit a Supportive Services Only (SSO) project for the sole purpose of funding the implementation and operating costs of a new system or the upgrading or

expansion of an existing system. HUD's estimate that approximately 30 dedicated HMIS projects would be submitted was nearly tripled. In addition, nearly every CoC placing a proposed HMIS project in its priority list above the pro rata need line (so that it got 40 need points) was funded. Only one HMIS dedicated project that got 40 need points was not funded because it was bumped in favor of lower-rated permanent housing project to meet the 30 percent permanent housing set aside.

- 84 HMIS dedicated projects totaling $24 million were submitted**.**

- 51 HMIS dedicated projects were funded totaling $13.3 million: 49 were new and 2 were renewal projects.

	Requested Funds		Awarded Funds	
	Projects	**Amount $**	**Projects**	**Amount $**
New	82	$23,810,899	49	$12,830,735
Renewal	2	$475,904	2	$475,904
Total	84	$24,286,803	51	$13,306,639

b. Shared HMIS Funding

CoCs were also permitted to spread the cost of a community-wide HMIS across multiple SHP projects. In this approach, all or some of the new and renewal SHP projects that a community would be including on its priority list would add to each individual project's request as its share of the community-wide HMIS cost. If the project was a SHP renewal, it could only request the supportive services funding for HMIS activities if its current grant already included supportive services in its budget. Finally, an SHP renewal's total project request, including its share of the cost of the HMIS, was limited, as are all SHP renewals, to the final year amount of its existing grant plus a reasonable increase of up to 5 percent.

- Relatively few CoCs appear to have used the shared approach to funding a HMIS.

- Approximately 50 projects (3 new and 47 renewal), totaling over $900,000 provided for shared HMIS funding in their SHP projects.

III. Implementing a Comprehensive Technical Assistance (TA) Program to Assist Communities

HUD signed a two-year, $4.1 million TA contract with Aspen Systems, Inc. in September 2001. The Center for Social Policy at the John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Massachusetts-Boston (UMASS) is the principal resource for developing a variety of TA products, trainings and technical assistance. In addition to the UMASS experts, we have engaged 15 subcontractors and consultants who have experience with the implementation of a HMIS.

TA Reports and Analysis

The following is a description and schedule for new or updated HMIS guidance being prepared by UMASS under the Aspen contract.

Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS): Cost Framework and Submission Guidance This is a set of guidelines to assist applicants develop and HUD staff review conditionally awarded grants for implementing an HMIS through the Supportive Housing Program. This work directly complements the new 2001 Technical Submission guidance for HMIS dedicated projects.

Homeless Management Information Systems: An In-Depth Look The 2001 edition of this report is currently available on the HUD website. The updated version of a consumers' guide to HMIS software will be available in Fall 2002.

HMIS Planning Implementation Guide The current edition is on the website. The updated planning and implementation guide subject matter will be vastly expanded, with new sections on lessons learned and best practices added. It should be available by June 2002.

HMIS TA

There are three broad types of TA assistance:

- **Targeted Education (Training)** – This is a one-day "basic" training course that provides an overview of HMIS, HUD's requirements, the planning process for implementing a HMIS, technical and systems design considerations, and an overview of operational issues. In the future, HUD will provide additional "advanced" training on other modules (currently under

development). *The primary target audiences for training are Continuum of Care grantees that currently <u>do not</u> have knowledge of HMISs, or are in the early stages of planning a system.* Priority will be given to training sessions that involve a large number of CoCs.

There are 64 training events each year for two years.

- **Targeted Implementation Help (Technical Assistance)** – This is "advanced" technical assistance targeted beyond basic training to help a CoC move to HMIS implementation. This assistance is appropriate for communities facing logjams in decision-making or implementation, or that present significant opportunities for multi-jurisdiction collaborations. First priority will go to statewide HMIS implementations, balance of state or multi-CoC collaborative efforts, large city or county CoCs, or places seen as vital to the construction of a nationally representative sample of jurisdictions for the annual homeless assessment report.

  There are 26-targeted technical assistance sessions planned each year for two years. Technical assistance could include up to two days on-site time, and phone and other (off-site) support to the community.

  General Information Sharing (Conferences and Satellite Broadcasts) – This involves information presentations in 16 national, regional and state conferences (sponsored by other organizations) each year for two years. We will also explore the use of satellite broadcasts and teleconferencing as means of informing communities of new technical assistance products and sharing expertise on HMIS implementation.

  Finally, as a result of feedback from our early training sessions, we are exploring the creation of a HMIS listserv and help desk to assist communities in their HMIS implementation efforts and to facilitate communication among jurisdictions.

TA Accomplishments as of February 2002

One–day "pilot" training sessions on HMIS basics were held in six locations: Seattle (10/22), Portland (10/23), Atlanta (10/30), Corpus Christi (11/6),

Phoenix (11/15) and San Francisco (11/16) in the Fall 2001. These sites were selected because they involved forums for statewide or large regional training sessions. The following is a table indicating the progress, as of February 2, 2002, in providing HMIS TA across the country.

- 9 events (combination of training, TA, and conferences) have been completed. From the 9 events, 88 CoCs have received assistance and 388 people have been helped.

- An additional 9 events were scheduled for completion during the months of February and March. Basic training on HMIS implementation is expected to be available for every CoC by July 2002.

HMIS TA Assistance

Training			
Location	**Date**	**Number of Continuum of Cares (CoCs) Served**	**Number of People Assisted**
Seattle, WA	**October 22, 2001**	**9**	**30**
Portland, OR	**October 23, 2001**	**10**	**45**
Corpus Christi, TX	**November 6, 2001**	**10**	**35**
Phoenix, AZ	**November 15, 2001**	**3**	**30**
Oakland, CA	**November 16, 2001**	**21**	**89**
Birmingham, AL	**January 29, 2001**	**6**	**49**
Pasadena, CA	February 11, 2002	Scheduled for completion	--
Meridan, CT	February 26, 2002	Scheduled for completion	--
Greensboro, NC	March 12, 2002	Scheduled for completion	--
Indianapolis, IN	March 21, 2002	Scheduled for completion	--
Lansing, Michigan	March 21, 2002	Scheduled for completion	--
Minnesota (city TBD)	March (date TBD)	Scheduled for completion	--
Technical Assistance Deliveries			
Location	**Date**	**Number of Continuum of Cares (CoCs)**	**Number of People Reached**
Seattle, WA	**January 29-30, 2002**	**1**	**15**
State of Michigan	**February 5, 2002**	**20**	**45**
Cincinnati, OH	February 11, 2002	Scheduled for completion	--
Los Angeles, CA	February 12, 2002	Scheduled for completion	--
San Francisco, CA	February 13, 2002	Scheduled for completion	--
Conferences			
Location	**Date**	**Number of Continuum of Cares (CoCs)**	**Number of People Reached**
Atlanta, GA	**October 30-31, 2001**	**8**	**50**

IV. The National Homeless Assessment Report

HUD is in the process of selecting a contractor to undertake a number of tasks (e.g., data and reporting standards) essential to communities' collecting homeless data for local and national reporting purposes and for HUD to report reliable information to Congress on homelessness. The major tasks are:

- **Convene Expert Focus Groups to Discuss Major Homeless Data/HMIS Issues**

- **Prepare National Definitions and Standards Report**

- **Report on a Proposed Method for Choosing a National Homeless Data Sample**

- **Develop a Final Sample Selection Report and Provide Ongoing Outreach to Those Selected**

- **Prepare Technical Assistance Guide on Local Uses of HMIS Data**

- **Convene a National Meeting of National Homeless Data Sample Participants**

- **Produce a Report Setting Forth the Proposed Format and Content for the Annual Homeless Assessment Report**

- **Produce an Annual Homeless Assessment Report Using HMIS Sample Data**

We expect the contract to be finalized in April and the development of national data standards is a key early priority of this contract.

V. Implementing a Homeless Client-Level HUD McKinney-Vento Program Reporting System

HUD will assess the technical feasibility of receiving client-level reporting on client characteristics and outcomes through the Annual Progress Report for each of its thousands of operating projects. HUD will assess the technical issues and program implications of client-level reporting from its grantees, including but not limited to, the following: proposed alternatives, their costs for HUD and grantees, implementation advantages and disadvantages, issues of confidentiality, and the

use of HMISs to provide client-level APR reporting. HUD will consider approaches that minimize duplicate reporting and reporting burdens, and address the need for national standards given different data systems used across the country. HUD will develop a short-term and long-term strategy for implementing and operating the client-level reporting system.

The Aspen contract contains a task calling for a thorough review of the current APR reporting system. The contract will assess the methods and desirability of client-level reporting of APR data. The analysis of a client-level report is being conducted by The Center for Social Policy of the John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Massachusetts-Boston. A report addressing options and recommendations for client-level reporting of APR data will be available in late 2002.