

**Client-Level Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Data  
APR Reporting and Uses of Data: Issues and Options  
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**Abstract**

HUD requested analytic assistance for assessing the feasibility of HUD receiving client-level data in the Annual Progress Report (APR) process. This *Issues Paper* provides guidance to prepare HUD to meet congressional expectations and to fulfill its own plan as explained in the Department's August 2001 *Report to Congress: HUD's Strategy for Homeless Data Collection, Analysis and Reporting*.

The *Issues Paper* introduces topics and raises questions for HUD to consider in making policy about the HMIS data: its potential uses, holders and users. The central question we provide guidance on is: *How will HMIS client-level<sup>1</sup> data, generated from communities across the country, be handled for national-level analytical and reporting purposes?*

Based upon the *Issues Paper* analysis, three generic options are the likeliest alternatives: (1) HUD as the holder of HMIS data; (2) a decentralized alternative in which client-level HMIS data remains within each Continuum of Care entity (CoC) or within the states; and (3) an alternative in which HUD would delegate a contracted organization other than itself to receive and manage client-level HMIS/APR data at particular times for particular purposes.

The *Issues Paper* is based on two premises about HUD and HMIS data:

- HMIS client-level data, especially the set appearing in the APR, are intended to enhance service locally and to provide the empirical basis for answering questions posed by the Congress and by HUD; and

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<sup>1</sup> The term "client-level data" encompasses data that are identified or are identifiable. In contrast, anonymous aggregate data do not contain explicit identifiers, and records are combined in sufficient numbers that the probability of identifying any particular client is very low, even through linking of databases.

- HMIS technology is meant to ease the burden of reporting (by service provider organizations to CoCs, and by CoCs to HUD) and to facilitate management of data for research.

**KEY DETERMINATIONS.** The Issues Paper analytically raises issues in the following six areas of decision making that are central to HUD's deliberations regarding how HMIS client-level data, generated from communities across the country, will be handled for national-level analytical and reporting purposes.

1. Purposes and uses of HMIS data by HUD and others
2. HMIS/APR process relying on one or multiple APR reports/formats
3. Clarifying where *client-level* data will be received, stored, and managed for each purpose
4. Evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of each option
5. HUD's responsibilities as steward
6. Involving interested parties in the formulation of policies regarding the uses and handling of HMIS data