

# HMIS END USER BEST PRACTICES CHEAT SHEET

## HELPFUL TIPS AND REMINDERS

### GENERAL BEST PRACTICES

#### Staff and Organization Buy-in

- Understanding the importance of HMIS and how communities, providers, and individuals are connected through HMIS is essential to operating a well-organized and meaningful database.
- With increased buy-in, HMIS end users will feel supported in their work. This may include allowing designated time or adjusting schedules to enter HMIS data, collaborative brainstorming if data do not reflect program experiences, using HMIS data to make programmatic decisions, sharing HMIS data with program staff, etc.

#### Training

- In order to have a meaningful database, it is essential the system is being used correctly and data entered are accurate.
- Regardless of how long someone has been an HMIS end user, on-going training is recommended. Below are training ideas to sharpen your HMIS skillset:
  - After initial on-boarding, shadow other HMIS end users at your organization.
  - After 6 months of using HMIS, go back through the on-boarding training materials. You'll be amazed at how much you've learned and will likely pick-up a few tricks you may not have noticed the first time.
  - Don't forget about resources available 24/7 on [www.hmismn.org](http://www.hmismn.org) for quick refreshers and to verify processes.

#### Ask Questions

- *When in doubt, ask!* Taking the time to ensure your questions are answered before entering data into HMIS or making changes to HMIS data will increase your HMIS knowledge and prevent the possibility of additional HMIS data cleaning if data are entered incorrectly.
- Resources for Asking Questions:
  - Other HMIS end users at your organization
  - Other HMIS end users at organizations similar to yours
  - Local HMIS end user groups
  - *Knowledge Base* - Collection of FAQs with answers provided by ICA, available at [www.hmismn.org](http://www.hmismn.org) under the Training & Support tab.
  - ICA Helpdesk - ICA staff are happy to assist with any questions you may have, so don't hesitate to reach out! The ICA Helpdesk can be reached by email at [MNHMIS@icalliances.org](mailto:MNHMIS@icalliances.org).

#### Read Newsletters

- Newsletters are a great way to stay up-to-date on any system changes, helpful reminders, and upcoming activities that impact HMIS end users.
- Click “For More Information” or other links provided in each topic for additional information – you may be surprised at how much you learn!
- Archived Newsletters are available at [www.hmismn.org](http://www.hmismn.org) under the News tab.

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### TIMELY DATA ENTRY

#### Build HMIS into Your Schedule

- Block time off on your calendar specifically for HMIS data entry.
- Include extra 15 minutes at the end of client meetings to enter HMIS data.
- Complete all HMIS data entry by the end of the work week.
- Conduct monthly data checks so you know you're up to date on data entry.
- Communicate timeline expectations and flow of information if multiple staff are involved in the data entry process (i.e. different person enters data into HMIS than person collecting HMIS data.)



### DATA ERRORS AND CORRECTIONS

#### Check Data Frequently

- Run monthly or quarterly data checking reports to ensure data are complete and accurate. Waiting until funders request reports to clean data can be time consuming and lead to missing data points due to clients already exiting a program.



#### Understand the Importance of Data

- Data entry into HMIS is more than meeting compliance requirements. Knowing how to identify data errors and steps necessary to correct data errors are essential to meeting high data quality standards. With accurate data entry, you can use HMIS data for programming and funding decisions, which have an impact on individuals experiencing homelessness and the community.

### REPORTS

#### Become Familiar with Available Report Tools on [www.hmismn.org](http://www.hmismn.org)

- Information about specific reports are available in **User Guides** provided under the "Training Support" tab "Forms & Instructions"
- Search the **ReportCollections** tool under the "Reports" tab.

