

Local System Admin Overview

The following document has been developed by the HMIS Data Structure and Sharing (DSS) workgroup to provide Continuum of Care (CoC) regions with information about impending changes to HMIS data structure; and options each CoC must consider to determine how they will fill and utilize the new “local system admin” level in the HMIS data structure.

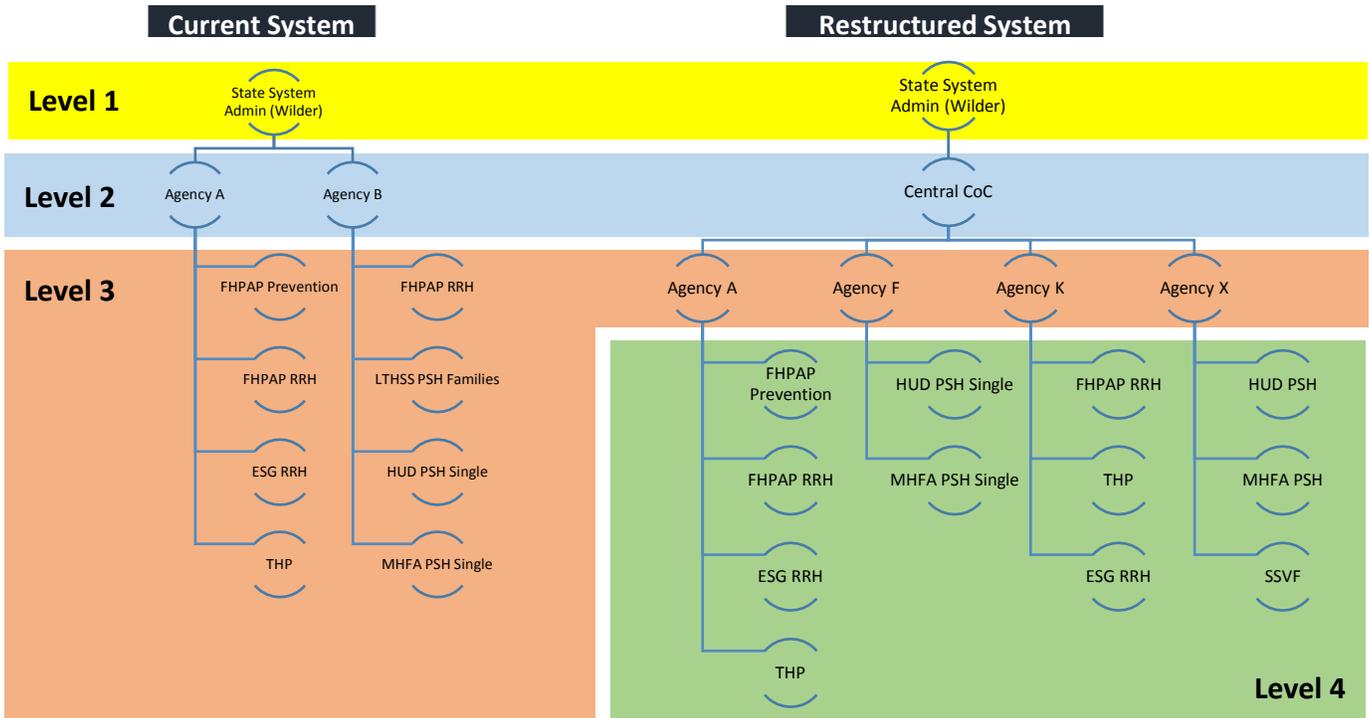
The HMIS 2.0 Interim Planning Team (IPT) has set a target deadline of October 1st, 2014 for when all data structure changes will be in place. In order to meet this deadline, it is imperative that all CoC regions have reviewed this document and made formal decisions regarding the role and function of their local system admin no later than September 1st, 2014. **The DDS Workgroup requests that each CoC will report decisions to Mike Manhard (mike@mesh-mn.org) no later than Noon 9/2/14.** Thank you for your attention to this request and for your continued partnership in working together to transform Minnesota’s Homeless Management Information System.

Sincerely,
The HMIS DSS Workgroup

What is changing

HMIS 2.0 is pursuing a new data structure in which agencies and their corresponding “data trees” will be moved under CoC jurisdiction provider pages – located at a new “Level 2” – to support hands-on management and shared responsibilities by local CoCs or other geographic jurisdictions. The new structure will allow CoCs/Regions to designate a local person(s) to directly manage their local implementation and to run required CoC reports. The new structure is inherently collaborative and anticipates a shared operation where local CoCs have additional benefits and responsibilities.

Currently, and historically, MN HMIS is structured for supporting statewide implementation and agency-specific implementation. Wilder is assigned to “Level 1,” agencies are assigned to “Level 2,” and programs are assigned to “Level 3.” This somewhat flattened structure reflects a general organizing principle focusing on the relationship between the participating agencies and Wilder.



A consequence of relying on this data structure is that only the state-wide administrator (Wilder) can currently perform CoC- and state-level reporting. This creates “bottleneck” issues which reduce the usability and functionality required and/or desired by many HMIS stakeholders.

In the proposed restructuring of HMIS management and governance, our statewide system administrator’s (Wilder’s) role will be redefined as a technical project manager with responsibility that will include: enhancing the HMIS end-user experience, supporting high quality report generation, generating state-wide reports, and nurturing the local CoCs’ role in system analysis and planning (among other tasks). As a natural consequence of this transition, enforcing HMIS compliance and increasing ownership of responsibility for data quality would then be a role shifted to local CoCs.

Benefits we are seeking with data structure changes

The following describe some of the benefits we are seeking with data structure and local system admin changes:

- **Provide CoCs with access to their region’s data.** The Current Minnesota HMIS data structure/organization does not provide the CoC with direct access to its own local/regional data. This inhibits our ability to effectively use data to evaluate our regional approaches to end homelessness (i.e. which models are effective, who is served best, what population is being underserved). The proposed restructuring will allow each CoC to have immediate access to and ability to interact with their local data as fully and as completely as the CoC can manage.
 - Note: while the structure change will allow localities to more fully engage with their own local data, it will not allow other regions/CoCs to see data outside their CoC.
- **Improve the quality of reports.** The new structure allows local admin responsibilities which should enhance the monitoring and trainings for local data quality (a designated local administrator will know more about local programs than a state-wide administrator).
- **Increase efficiency.** Adding a local system admin role will reduce delays and may reduce costs that regions have incurred when trying to access data through one, state-wide system administrator. Regions will no longer need to “get in line” to access reports, nor will they have to pay to run unscheduled or custom reports. Another area of efficiency will be found in increased overall system capacity by adding local system admin in regions across the state. This will be another layer of expertise to assist client, end user needs.
 - Note: under proposed restructure, the State HMIS staff can still support a CoC to whatever degree that the CoC may need or desire.
- **Benefit to agencies.** Data structure changes and local system admin will help to provide more direct access to system help (another resource in addition to Wilder). For example, this local system admin may help agencies to improve their data quality or develop new agency reports. In addition, by enhancing the CoC’s ability to run local, detailed reports will likely prove helpful for all agencies in helping programs and the entire region to secure more funding (better data = increased ability to tell your story).
- **Benefit to CoCs.** The proposed restructure will greatly increase autonomy of local CoCs, to the degree that each desires and has capacity. There will be an ability for regions to establish their own “custom made” elements in the system. The local system admin role will also create the ability for CoCs to respond to local system/tech issue on more timely matter (especially if not a state-wide priority).
- **Improve our ability to end homelessness.** Over the past few years, it has become increasingly clear that we must utilize data effectively in order to advance our efforts to end homelessness. We need to know where the needs are. We need to know which models are working. The structure changes will greatly improve regional access to data; which, in turn, increases our ability to target our efforts to end homelessness more effectively.

Addressing potential concerns

Below are some of the potential concerns we anticipate stakeholders may have with structure/admin changes. For each concern, we have tried to describe how we think these issues will be accommodated:

- **Who will have access to my data?** Establishing the local system administrator role is entirely about systems administration (administrative uses of data), and thus is NOT about data-sharing for purposed of care coordination. Each agency in HMIS is already allowing administrative access to their agency’s data through their agency agreement with Wilder Research. There is little different here as each CoC will designate a trusted, local

HMIS admin who will simply be assuming another level of administrative support. In essence, it is similar to Wilder hiring a new staff for their admin functions (another person who has access to data, but only for the same purposes as our current HMIS). Each CoC will be creating new agency agreements/MOUs for each agency to sign with the identified local HMIS admin. This MOU will provide legal clarity and outline use of data—same as Wilder.

- What about data privacy? Since data access is admin function, not service; it does not violate any elements of client rights and confidentiality. Two forms enable this admin role (whether it be our current state-wide admin or local):
 - Agency agreements/MOUs. Noted above. This is where the agency acknowledges the admin functions.
 - Informed Consent. This is where the client acknowledges and consents to how their data will be used as collected into the system. For nearly all agencies, an amended and standardized “informed consent¹” form will sufficiently meet data privacy standards.
- What if I am a HIPAA or VAWA agency? HIPAA agencies may also require a business associate agreements with the local system admin to further accommodate their data privacy obligations. The ServicePoint system accommodates any privacy rule other than VAWA (Domestic Violence). Specifically agencies that comply with mental health and drug treatment privacy rules can operate and even share data with Informed Client Consent.
- What if I’m not funded by HUD? CoCs have the responsibility and accountability for assuring that they have a working and effective HMIS and are using HMIS on local (CoC) level. The data restructure provides each CoC with ability to have more direct access to local data—not just HUD funded programs. This is not new. Local, system-wide reports (such as the AHAR report) have been provided to CoCs by Wilder Research. The only change will be that the CoCs can now run these reports independent of Wilder. Again, the agency agreements/MOUs and informed consent meet all data privacy needs here.
- How will data be used? The agency agreement/MOU will outline how data will be used (just as the current agency agreement does with Wilder. There will be a need for both system-wide and provider level reports—as the movement across the country is increasing accountability on all levels. This being said, the fundamental rule is that no agency specific data will be released without an agreement that includes the agency—all parties will be aware. A grievance policy will be established to express concerns about local use of data.
- How will the restructure change things for how we use HMIS within our agency? There will be some changes (different steps) for end users to accommodate this different tree structure and to improve data quality at all levels – agency, CoC and State. The changes will not be substantial and training will be provided to ensure all agencies understand the new steps. Your agency’s existing agency tree structure will be maintained within the CoC for most programs.
 - What if my agency serves multiple CoCs. Separate discussions are taking place for multi-CoC agencies. Solutions will be identified for these agencies that will prioritize ease of use for CoCs, agencies, and end users. For all agencies, even those that are cross-jurisdictional, the same providers will be available for entry. Protocol will be in place to ensure that reasonable accommodation is made to meet regional/multi-CoC agency needs.
- What if our CoC doesn’t have the capacity or expertise? Adding the local HMIS admin role is an opportunity/option, not a requirement. If a CoC can’t identify a Trusted Party with capacity to serve in this role, the Statewide Systems Administrator (Wilder) can continue to provide the same direct support they currently provide. It should also be assume that there is a range of responsibility that the local HMIS admin could assume—some requiring very little expertise or capacity and others requiring high levels of expertise and capacity. To build

¹ HMIS 2.0 Data Structure & Sharing Committee must ensure that the new “informed consent” works well with a range of programs from those that collect minimal information to those that collected higher risk data such as disability/mental health information, health information, Substance Use, HIV/AIDS, Domestic Violence or complete case management notes.

capacity, it is possible that regions could share common system admin with other low capacity CoCs. Please note that this is not a one-time decision—regions can increase or decrease their admin role over time.

Designate and support the functioning of local/CoC-level HMIS system administrators

To accommodate structure changes, each local/regional CoC will need to designate a local “HMIS system administrator” to support local HMIS administration, management, training, reporting, trouble shooting, and system monitoring. While it may not be possible to mobilize funding sufficient to support paid staffing for this role in each CoC, each CoC is strongly encouraged to clearly identify and support the consistent presence and participation of someone who fulfills these responsibilities.

This local system administrator should take an active role in promoting data quality, producing local data reports, and more actively evaluating providers through implementation and monitoring of locally-defined performance measures. As production of reporting and active use of data increases, users should, themselves, take on increasing responsibility for increasing data quality and systems performance. In CoCs that are unable to identify an entity that can fill the system admin role, the CoC Coordinators can be trained and supported to run reports and take on a more active role in HMIS administration and enhancement of data quality.

The data re-structure does not obligate any CoC to utilize or perform the local system admin role. Regions will want to consider whether there is a trusted and qualified entity in their region that could perform some or all of the following tasks. Any function not identified by your CoC would continue to be performed by the state-wide HMIS entity (Wilder).

Potential responsibilities of Local HMIS Admin Entities

CoCs will want to consider which of the following responsibilities you can expect your Local HMIS Admin to assume. These activities are organized into three categories (basic, enhanced, advanced) to assist you in understanding the projected complexity for any of these functions:

<p>Basic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run reports • Publish numbers that have been locally validated and approved • Host local user meetings • Coordinate with state-wide efforts • Data quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Know programs ○ Support programs in obtaining data quality • Reach out to other non-participating homeless providers to encourage participation.
<p>Enhanced</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic set PLUS • Query the database or Modify Reports as needed or desired • Help local agencies fully utilize HMIS tools – turn modules on and off • Local Training and support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Privacy trainings ○ Intro to system ○ Agency HMIS lead orientation (how to conduct sys admin within your organization’s data) ○ Q/A response • Supporting AHAR, PIT, APR • Data quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Knowing programs ○ Support programs in obtaining data quality
<p>Advanced</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Set, Enhanced Set PLUS • Query the database to answer local questions • Working on internal workflows • Studying new system options • Back-end set ups, system administration (most of this would remain with state-wide sys admin) • Identify/conduct changes to enhance usability

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local protocols ○ New functions/trainings ● Other problem solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How to get resources (rationale) for tablets for outreach for example
--	--

What CoCs should look for in a local admin/lead HMIS agency

CoCs should look for the following qualities in a Local HMIS admin entity:

- **Not necessarily IT background.** In fact, according to our HMIS technical assistance team, you may not want an IT person. Most of the technical work is actually done at Bowman. Other technical support is provided by Statewide Systems Administrator.
- While not necessary, individuals with good analytic skills evidenced by good knowledge of at least one reporting tool (Excel, Access, Crystal Reports, Business Objects, SPSS, etc) can generally learn to modify reports in ART and will be an asset at the local level.
- **Familiar with local community and homeless service programs.** Local System Administrators should be knowledgeable about local service programs so that they can understand the data they are looking at and communicate effectively with local agencies. This is a critical characteristic of those that are successful at managing the System locally.
- **Other qualities/skills:**
 - Like computers & not be terrified of numbers
 - Strong communication skills
 - Quick learner
 - Organized
 - Analytical
 - Comfortable with data and understands purpose of data
 - Experience with excel
 - See Michigan job description sample at end of document
- Please note that there will be a transition/ training period for Local HMIS Admin entities.

Steps to get there

There is a two-step process that CoCs will need to complete by October 1st, 2014.

Step 1: Define the role of your Local HMIS Admin Entity.

Due date: 9/2/14

We are asking that all CoCs have reviewed this document and have determined the functions your CoC will assign to their local HMIS admin entity. You need not have identified the actual entity that will fill this role at this time, but are certainly encouraged to be conducting your search.

Step 2: Identify your Local HMIS Admin Entity and get Agency Agreements/MOUs in place with all participating agencies in your region.

Due date: 10/1/14

At this point, we will need the name/contact of your local system admin entity (HMIS Lead). CoC regions will also need agency agreements/MOUs/business associate agreements to be in place with all programs within your CoC prior to your being able to utilize the level 2 system admin role. The HMIS 2.0 Data Structure and Sharing Workgroup will organize a meeting in early September/late August with the HMIS TA team and legal representation from Local HMIS Admins to review and finalize MOUs—other stakeholders will be invited to attend, if interested. It is likely that an MOU will also be required between the Local HMIS Admin entity and Wilder.

Thank you for your attention to this document. Please contact Mike Manhard (mike@mesh-mn.org or 612-750-1474) with any questions.

SAMPLE System Administrator Job Description (from Michigan HMIS)

Reports To: MSHMIS Project Director

Salary Range: \$46,000 to \$55,000 plus benefits (36%)

Location: It is anticipated that most candidates will be housed by the local Lead HMIS Agency.

Goals: Provide local HMIS system administrator support to assigned jurisdiction(s). The position will require achieving a detailed understanding of assigned CoCs homeless services and their specific implementation of the HMIS. Staff will be required to attend local (in person or via conference call) CoC and User Meetings as well as State HMIS sponsored meetings. A core function will be to build a positive working relationship with participating providers. Remote meeting tools may be used extensively to mitigate travel.

Project – Specific Support:

1. Housing Inventory Chart and Annual PIT between January and May.
2. Annual Homelessness Assessment Report between October and January.
3. Monitoring Outcome Performance by agency and CoC - ongoing.
4. Supporting Continuous Quality Improvement processes.
5. 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness Updates
6. Annual Count and Coverage Calculation – February to March
7. CoC publications and data questions.
8. Local Compliance to Security and Privacy Data Standards - Annual.

Ongoing HMIS Support (in collaboration with MCAH Trainers and Analysts):

1. Local User Meetings and support routine Data Quality
2. Support Agencies and CoCs in using the various Reports on the System.
 - a. Demographics
 - b. Data Quality
 - c. Outcomes
 - d. Grant Reports (HPRP, SHP, ESG, ESP etc)
 - e. Other Custom Reports
3. Support local sharing decisions and related Provider Page set-up.
4. Support Provider Page Completeness.
5. Provide System's Training and problem-solve data issues.
6. Assist CoCs in HMIS data-informed decision making.
7. Coordinate with the Statewide Project.
8. Oversees HMIS-related files, records, and documents.
9. Other duties as assigned.

Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience in a social service field including agency data base administration and/or reporting to funding organizations is preferred however experience with computer support and training coupled with a proven interest in homeless services may substitute for direct social service experience .
- Experience providing training. Technical training history is preferred.
- Knowledge of and experience with relational database. Knowledge of Bowman's ServicePoint System is preferred.
- Experience in working in not-for-profit settings strongly preferred.
- Ability to translate between agency information needs and database structure and functions is required. Experience in social service agency record keeping and fund reporting is strongly preferred.
- Thorough working knowledge of Microsoft Office (Word, Excel and Access).
- Moderate knowledge of homeless services is required.
- Excellent communications skills.
- Ability to work independently and as the member of a team.