



Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Please note that this FAQ is for HMIS users in Rhode Island. If your agency is located in Rhode Island and you have more questions, please reach out to us at 401.721.4685 or info@rihomeless.org.

1. What is the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)?

- a. HMIS is a database used to collect information in order to track and report on the scope of homelessness prevention/assistance and human service needs across the Rhode Island Continuum of Care (CoC) as well as individually at each organization. The system is organized to collect client-level data to inform service delivery needs across the state. Data from HMIS is reported to the Rhode Island Office of Housing and Community Development (HUD) in order to track (over time) where improvements may be needed, to identify system successes as well as the overall need of the individuals and families served throughout Rhode Island.

2. Who should use HMIS?

- a. HMIS should be used by any human service organization that assists clients at risk of becoming homelessness as well as clients experiencing homelessness. Human service organizations that serve low-income clients whom are not homeless or at-risk may also use HMIS. It is important for as many agencies in Rhode Island to use the system as possible to better inform our data collection and reporting which will better impact the community overall. Depending on the funding received from HUD, some agencies may be required to use HMIS for reporting.

3. Who is the HMIS lead in Rhode Island?

- a. The Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless (RICH) has been designated by the Rhode Island CoC as the HMIS Lead agency. This means that RICH is responsible for implementing HMIS by providing individual trainings for users or system administrators, group trainings and certificate installation/technical support. RICH is also the liaison between the different user agencies, HUD and the HMIS software vendor.

4. Are there benefits in using HMIS?

- a. Absolutely! Any organization using HMIS in Rhode Island is better informing overall service delivery. By using HMIS, an organization (at any given point or time) is able to: improve the state's coordination and supportive services, assists our clients by avoiding multiple intake and assessments, prevents 'double dipping' of services between organizations, improves the tracking client outcomes, identifies possible system failures, allows a more accurate 'unduplicated' client served count, educates your community with solid data and allows organizations and RICH to inform our funders and donors by creating tailored reports per what is needed.



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5. Are there any risks in using HMIS?

- a. The main risk associated with using HMIS revolves around protecting client confidentiality. Any client seeking services at their time of need and consents our collection of their personal information should feel their dignity and data is protected. For this reason, there are many built-in security precautions on HMIS including the following:
 - i. HMIS software has a built-in multi-level “permission” structure governed by individual user names and passwords which only allows the user to see the data relevant to them. User names are NOT shared.
 - ii. HMIS uses a 128-bit encryption technology in order to render the database unreadable to anyone who attempts an unauthorized use of the system.
 - iii. RICH requires each user and system administrator to sign a user-agreement adhering to the privacy and confidentiality of all clients served.
 - iv. The Rhode Island CoC has implemented the requirement of a client consent form (or, Release of Information) in order to inform clients of their rights when collecting data for HMIS.
 - v. The Rhode Island CoC has implemented the requirement of Agency Partner Agreements between any agency using HMIS and the HMIS Lead, RICH.
 - vi. There are data collection statements and fact sheets required to be posted at each work station where clients are interviewed or data is collected. Clients should be given copies when asked.
 - vii. The government does not see any client-level data.

6. How much does it cost to use HMIS?

- a. Each user that uses HMIS needs an HMIS End-User License assigned to them from RICH on the HMIS database. License structure is billed for the period of June 1 to May 31 each year. Beginning June 1, 2019 the costs of an HMIS license have changed (and are subject to change in the future with notice). A new license costs \$660.00 and a renewal license (a license purchased in the previous billing period) is \$405.00.

7. How many user licenses do I need?

- a. To ensure security, privacy and confidentiality, each HMIS user must have their own license. The sharing of HMIS licenses/log-ins is strictly prohibited as it compromises security of the HMIS and could be in violation of federal privacy laws, subject to a substantial fine. Depending on how many people responsible for collecting client data at your organization will assist you in determining how many licenses you will need. RICH is happy to help your organization determine your needs.

8. How do I request an initial user training and what is the training process?

- a. A user training should be requested through our Online survey request: <http://sgiz.mobi/s3/HMIS-New-User-License-Request-Form> . Once completed, a user will be set up on our TalentLMS to complete the training process prior to using the live site.



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9. What are the System Requirements for HMIS?

- a. Intel-compatible 2GHz+ processor, minimum 40 GB Hard Drive, Minimum 2GB RAM, network card, LAN or always-on High Speed Internet Connection, recent internet version (preferably Firefox or Chrome) with browser settings for use with SSL based websites.
- b. **Device:**
 - i. PC (Bowman is not presently supporting MAC)
 - ii. SOME Mobile Devices and Tablets (ServicePoint5 is not yet meant for tablet/mobile functionality)
- c. **Operating System:**
 - i. XP, 32-bit and 64-bit, up to Service Pack 3
 - ii. Vista, 32-bit and 64-bit, up to Service Pack 1.
 - iii. Windows 7, 8, or Windows 10; all both 32 and 64 bit. Windows 7 compatible up to Service Pack 1.
 - iv. Apple Operating Systems
- d. **Memory:**
 - i. If XP, 1 GB Minimum, but 2 GB Recommended
 - ii. If Vista, 2 GB Minimum but 4GB Recommended
 - iii. If Windows 7 or Windows 10, 2 GB Minimum, 3 GB Recommended
- e. **Monitor:**
 - i. Screen Display: 1024 x 768 (XGA)
- f. **Processor:**
 - i. HMIS may not function at an acceptable performance level without a recommended Dual-Core processor.

If you are a present HMIS user, please do not hesitate to send an email to our HMIS team with any questions or concerns. We can be reached at **hmis@rihomeless.org** or through phone at 401-721-5685 ext. 25 26 or 27.