

Open HMIS Release of Information – Implementation Notice

Good afternoon,

The Continuum of Care (CoC) is currently working to implement our community's Coordinated Entry System (CES) in January 2018. Please refer to the attached fact sheet or contact [Stacy Rowe](#) at County Housing and Community Development for more information on the CES. This effort requires transitioning the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) from a “closed” to an “open” system in January of 2018.

Currently, only clients' identification information (i.e. name, date of birth, social security number, and military veteran status) is shared between HMIS participating providers. This is considered a “closed” system. An “open” HMIS allows for clients' HMIS identification, assessment, and service transaction information to be shared between HMIS participating providers and their HMIS end users, provided that they have signed an “open” HMIS memorandum of understanding and end user agreement, respectively; and that clients have signed an “open” HMIS Release of Information (ROI). These documents serve to confirm provider and end user compliance with HMIS [policies](#) recently approved by the CoC. Case notes, client notes and specific test results will not be shared. The “open” HMIS will allow our community to better understand its homeless population and the CES will rely on shared HMIS data to effectively connect clients with services.

This message serves to inform you that the CoC approved the aforementioned “open” HMIS ROI on December 5th, 2017. The “open” HMIS ROI has been vetted by Santa Barbara County Counsel and is available on the HMIS Portal [here](#). Please familiarize yourselves with the “open” HMIS ROI and have all new and existing clients sign the document beginning **December 14th, 2017**; the previous iteration of the ROI (designed for a “closed” HMIS) should no longer be used as of the same date. To be clear, all clients with an ROI start date of **December 14th, 2017** or later must have signed the “open” HMIS ROI. The data of clients who have signed the “open” HMIS ROI will start being shared between providers in January of 2018 as the “open” HMIS and the CES comes online. For existing clients who do not sign an “open” HMIS ROI, providers will continue to share only identification information.

Please note the following:

- I have attached a document briefly summarizing the intent of the “open” HMIS ROI, which I hope you'll find useful. Please be advised that the “open” HMIS ROI allows for a client's data that was previously entered into HMIS (under the “closed” HMIS ROI) to be shared as well. Please be sure to explain this to clients;
- Please be sure to enter a client's ROI into HMIS in accordance with the “Adding an ROI” user manual, available on the [HMIS Portal](#). Make sure you enter an ROI start date and end date. As stated in the user manual, if a client requests any restrictions on the sharing of his/her data (see [ROI](#), page five), you must [submit a support case to CTA](#) before proceeding with data entry. Once the support case has been resolved with CTA, please be advised that there is a very brief, new “Restricted ROI” section to be completed in such clients' Summary information (this is addressed in the user manual);

December 6, 2017

- A client must sign an ROI before his/her data can be entered into HMIS; and
- Please refer to the “Adding New Clients” user manual, available on the [HMIS Portal](#), for general guidance on entering client data into HMIS. If you have any HMIS technical assistance questions, please [submit a support case to CTA](#).

Thank you for your help on this very important matter! Please email me if you have any questions.

Best,

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County of Santa Barbara Coordinated Entry System

What is a Coordinated Entry System?

A Coordinated Entry System (CES):

- Is a community-wide system to standardize and expedite the process by which people experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of homelessness, access housing and homeless resources.
- Connects the community's network of homeless services and housing resources while streamlining, standardizing and coordinating the homeless intake, assessment, and referral processes.
- Will focus on the most vulnerable, who are often resistant to services, the most visible in the community, and who tend to be high users of first responder and emergency room services.
- Will reduce barriers, improve program accessibility, limit restrictive program criteria and turnaways, and focus on matching the person in need to the right resources.
- Will use multiple "entry points" throughout the County to meet homeless people where they are, including on the streets, and in shelters, hospitals, drop-in centers, jails and other locations frequented by the homeless.
- Will use a develop a communication and affirmative marketing plan, including branding and a distribution strategy in order to educate consumers, providers and the community about CES.
- Will bring a new level of coordination and efficacy to the Santa Maria/Santa Barbara Continuum of Care, eliminating silos and bringing providers from multiple disciplines into the homeless service delivery system.
- Will rely on data from the Homeless Management Information System to facilitate case conferencing and connect people experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of homelessness, with resources.
- Is a requirement of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for all housing and homeless funding. Other Federal and State programs for homeless services, including those provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs and State funding for developing permanent, supportive housing, require recipient agencies to participate in CES. Currently, in the County of Santa Barbara, as much as \$10 million dollars in Federal and State funds awarded between 2015-2018 require an operational CES.
- Must be implemented by January 23, 2018.

Santa Barbara County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

Summary of Open HMIS Release of Information

As a Santa Barbara County HMIS Partner Agency, it is important we collect and share your personal information to:

- Best connect you with the services you need;
- Better understand the needs of homeless persons;
- Improve planning to eliminate homelessness; and
- Improve services for homeless persons.

We collect information such as your name, whereabouts, services you've received, and health and income data. The only people who will be allowed to see your data are HMIS trained staff for homeless service providers who have agreed to keep your data confidential. Please note that any of your data already entered into HMIS will be shared as well. You have the right to refuse to share your data and this will not disqualify you from receiving services. However, without your data, we may be unable to tell which programs you qualify for, and so you may lose out on some opportunities to receive services.