**Guidance for Completing Homeless Veterans Assessment**

**Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care**

Homeless Veterans Reporting Guidance – Updated 6.10.20

**Overview**  
As part of our work to end Veteran homelessness, the Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoSCoC), utilizes an Active List to identify literally homeless Veterans, as well as a regular reporting and tracking process. Generally, this process involves reviewing the updated Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Veterans Report and Active List and reporting on housing plan status, offers of permanent housing, and housing placements for all Veterans.  
  
The purpose of this process is to ensure that all homeless Veterans are immediately identified, assisted to develop a housing plan that reflects their needs and goals, and then permanently housed as quickly as possible.

In March of 2018, the Ohio BoSCoC transitioned from managing an Active List that was housed in Google Sheets to managing all aspects of the Active List within the CoC’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The following sections detail the protocol for providing all necessary updates on Vets’ housing plans and progress within HMIS.

**Definitions**

* Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
  + A locally administered, electronic data collection system that stores longitudinal person-level information about the individuals who access homeless and other human services in a community. Each Continuum of Care receiving federal homeless assistance funding is required to implement an HMIS to capture standardized data about all persons accessing the homeless and at-risk of homelessness assistance system.
* Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Veterans Report and Active List
  + This HMIS-generated report identifies all homeless Vets in Ohio BoSCoC HMIS-participating shelters, outreach, transitional housing (TH) projects, and in unsheltered locations, and provides information about housing plans and housing offers that have been documented in HMIS
  + Ohio BoSCoC HMIS is the data source for this report
  + The data in this report is used to track the CoC’s progress on achieving the federal benchmarks for ending Veteran homelessness.
* Homeless Veterans Assessment
  + The assessment within each homeless Veteran client-record in HMIS that is used to report on housing offers, plans, and progress
* Responsible Provider
  + The provider responsible for working with a homeless Veteran to assist them to move into Permanent Housing (PH). Responsible Providers are also charged with ensuring the Homeless Veterans Assessment in HMIS is updated regularly, per the guidance below.
  + Typically, the local SSVF provider is the Responsible Provider because the Veteran has accepted the offer of RRH assistance and will be assisted to move into PH with SSVF-RRH assistance. However, if a Vet has declined the SSVF offer and is remaining in ES or TH (including GPD), then the ES or TH provider is identified as the Responsible Provider.
    - The Responsible Provider can change from an ES/TH provider to a PH provider once the Veteran has accepted the PH offer, including accepting a referral to SSVF.
    - The Homeless Veterans Report and Active List is organized around the assumption that SSVF providers are typically the Responsible Provider, thus Veterans in the report are sorted in some worksheets based on SSVF provider service areas

For additional definitions and background information, visit the Ohio BoSCoC program page about work to end Veteran homelessness here: <https://cohhio.org/boscoc/special-initiatives/#gsc.tab=0>

**Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Veterans Assessment: Reporting Process**  
The following section describes the process for Ohio BoSCoC providers to complete/update the Homeless Veterans Assessment in HMIS, including updating housing plans and offers.

As outlined in the *Ohio BoSCoC Coordinated Entry System Plan for Homeless Veterans*, providers immediately offer permanent housing to all homeless Veterans. If a Veteran declines a PH offer, providers continue to make PH offers at least every two weeks. Housing offers and housing plans are documented by the Responsible Provider in HMIS.

***Homeless Veterans Assessment Data Elements and Reporting Requirements***  
Following are the data elements in the Homeless Veterans Assessment and their definitions:

* Date Veteran Identified
* The date the Veteran was identified by the Ohio BoSCoC homeless system
* In most cases, this date will align with their most recent ES, TH, or RRH program entry date.
* If the Veteran has prior entries into the homeless system, the Date Identified field should be updated with the date of the most recent entry if there were at least 90 days between the current entry and the most recent prior exit to permanent housing.
* HOMES ID
* The unique client ID for a Veteran also entered into the VA’s HOMES system
  + If not known or if there is not one, leave blank until it can be entered/provided later, if applicable.
* List Status
* Veterans who are unsheltered will be reported as Active-Unsheltered.
* Veterans residing in ES/TH, will be reported as Active-ES/TH.
* Veterans who have disappeared will be reported as Inactive-Unknown/missing.
* Veterans who have been permanently housed will be reported as Inactive-Permanently Housed.
* Veterans who have been temporarily housed or in some other situation not reflected above will be reported as Inactive-Non-Perm Housing.
* Permanent Housing Track
* The type of permanent housing the Veteran is actively working towards obtaining. The actual housing unit does not need to be identified, but the type of housing assistance must be generally available to the Veteran.
  + For example, if the Veteran is offered and accepts an offer to SSVF-RRH, that can be recorded as the PH Track because SSVF providers are generally able to assist every Veteran who is eligible who wants it. In contrast, if your local VASH program has no vouchers available currently, it would not be appropriate to offer that type of housing and document VASH as the PH Track, because that resource is not actually available.
* Response options include the following:
* None
* HUD – VASH
* Permanent Housing (PH)
  + Includes any type of permanent housing option not dedicated to persons experiencing homelessness, such as Housing Choice Voucher programs, other types of subsidized housing, etc.
* Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)
  + Includes CoC Program-funded PSH or state funded PSH dedicated to homeless persons with disabilities
* Rapid Re-Housing
  + Includes HCRP-RRH and CoC Program-funded RRH projects
* SSVF – RRH
* Self-Resolve
  + - Providers select this Permanent Housing Track when the Veteran has indicated that they will identify and move into permanent housing on their own without accessing a housing assistance project, or in cases where the Veteran is not income eligible for PH assistance projects.
* Expected PH Date
* The date the Veteran and Responsible Provider have identified as the goal permanent housing date
  + The Ohio BoSCoC Provider Responsible should report the expected PH date as soon as it is identified. This date may be changed over time, as needed.
* Once this date passes, or if this data is left blank, the Veterans Active List considers the Veteran as having no PH Track.
* VA Eligibility
* The Veteran’s eligibility for VA homeless services
* SSVF Ineligible
* As applicable, SSVF providers update the data element if they have confirmed Veteran is ineligible for SSVF.
* Most Recent Offer Status
* Responsible Providers document whether the Veteran has accepted or declined the most recent PH offer, or if no PH offer has been made
  + This is updated with each new housing offer
  + If a Veteran has declined a housing offer, Responsible Providers must continue to offer PH assistance at least every two weeks. Each offer must be documented in HMIS.
* Most Recent Offer Date
* The date the most recent housing offer was made
  + This is updated with each new housing offer.
* Offers of Permanent Housing
* Enter the date of the PH offer, the type of PH offered, acceptance/decline of the offer, and date of acceptance/decline
  + The most recent Offer of Permanent Housing information should match what is reported for the Most Recent Offer Status and Most Recent Offer Date data elements.
  + The Offers of Permanent Housing section of the Homeless Veterans Assessment allows providers and CoC staff to see the history of PH offers and status of acceptance/decline.
* Current Living Situation
* The current location in which the Veteran is residing and the date they began residing in that location
  + This is updated with each change in living situation.
  + For Veterans residing in Unsheltered locations, providers can provide details about the unsheltered location (e.g., under Main St. bridge in Newark, Ohio)
* *Outreach – Retired*
  + *Reporting will continue to show old entries and those from the Current Living Situation.*

***Completing the Homeless Veterans Assessment***

When a Veteran is identified to the homeless system, either a first identification or a return to the system after a previous exit, the provider assisting the Veteran should complete as much of the Homeless Veterans Assessment in HMIS as possible, by taking the following steps:

* Log into HMIS
* Search for the client for which you need to complete or update the Homeless Veterans Assessment
* Create an interim for the Vet’s current program stay by clicking on the Entry/Exit Tab, then click on the Interim button
  + Click Add Interim Review, select Interview Review Type ‘Update’, set the Review Date to the date of the update, then click Save & Continue.
* Click on the Homeless Veterans Assessment
  + Enter data for the following data elements:
    - HOMES ID, if known
    - Date Veteran Identified
      * If the Veteran had previous entries into the homeless system that were more than 90 days prior, enter the Date Veteran Identified for the current homeless episode
        + Usually the date identified aligns with the date the Veteran entered an ES or TH project or, if unsheltered, was enrolled in street outreach or SSVF
  + List Status
  + Permanent Housing Track, if known
    - This is not usually known immediately
  + Expected Permanent Housing Date, if known
  + Housing Offer
    - if one has been made and accepted or declined, document as outlined in the next section
  + Current Living Situation

***Documenting Housing Offers***

When it is time to provide updates on housing plans for currently homeless Veterans, the Responsible Provider should take the following steps:

* Log into HMIS
* Search for the client for which you need to provide an update
  + The Vet may be a current client of the Responsible Provider and enrolled in their project, or may be residing in another project. Either way, the Responsible Provider can provide updates on housing plan progress for the Vet via the Homeless Veterans Assessment
* Create an interim for the Vet’s current program stay by clicking on the Entry/Exit Tab, then click on the Interim button
  + Click Add Interim Review, select Interview Review Type ‘Update’, set the Review Date to the date of the update, then click Save & Continue
* Click on the Homeless Veterans Assessment
* Provide updates as needed
  + If documenting an offer of permanent housing, do so via the Offers of Permanent Housing section.
  + Any other information about progress on the housing plan should be reported by adding a note in the Current Living Situation section and adding a note/comment as appropriate
    - Adding a note in the Current Living Situation section can be particularly helpful if the Veteran has been declining PH offers and the Responsible Provider wants to indicate why (working on clinical goals, for example).
* All updates in HMIS should be made within **5 days** of when the change/update was reported to staff, and in accordance with the CoC’s Data Quality Standards, which can be found [here.](http://hmis.cohhio.org/index.php?pg=kb.page&id=39)

If you discover that the Homeless Veterans Assessment is not available for clients of a particular project, let CoC or HMIS staff know. The HMIS team will add the Homeless Veterans Assessment to the provider as needed.

***Additional HMIS Data Entry Guidance***

*Determining When Exits to Family/Friends are Permanent*

In cases where a Vet’s exit from a provider was to a temporary location, it may be appropriate to update the exit destination at a later date to reflect movement into a permanent housing destination. Please consider the following when determining how to characterize a client’s exit and/or if the client exit destination should be updated after the date of the program exit.

* Exit to family or friends
  + If a Vet exits a homeless program to live with family or friends, record that exit destination as permanent if any of the following apply:
    - Vet is moving into stable housing with family/friends and has permission and intent to stay indefinitely
    - Vet intends to stay with family/friends for a short-term, but this temporary stay will lead to an exit destination that is already secured
      * For example, Vet has VASH voucher in hand and has identified a rental unit, just cannot move into the unit quite yet
      * For example, Vet is an RRH client and has identified a rental unit, just cannot move into the unit quite yet

More detailed guidance about how to determine when an exit destination to family/friends may need to be reported in HMIS as permanent or temporary can be found here: <http://hmis.cohhio.org/index.php?pg=file&from=2&id=306>

*Fixing and Incorrect Exit Destination/Reviewing Correct Responses*

In some cases, providers may find they need to correct a client’s exit destination in HMIS. This may have resulted from either a simple mistaken click, or a misunderstanding about exactly which destination answer to use.

If a provider discovers that the wrong destination answer was reported for a client compared to what was reported on the intake/exit forms, the provider should correct the exit destination.

* For example, while reviewing data quality you discover your HMIS data shows a lower number of clients exited to RRH than what your program actually did. In this case, you should review the exit destinations to ensure the correct exit destination responses have been picked. It is not uncommon to see records for a shelter client who was assisted with Rapid Rehousing and housed, but the destination at exit from the shelter was reported as “Rental by client, with other ongoing subsidy” and in the Notes it says “client went through Rapid rehousing”.
  + In this case, “Rental by client, with other ongoing subsidy” is an incorrect destination, and though it will give the shelter credit for exiting clients to permanent housing, neither project nor system-level data reflects the coordination and provision of Rapid Rehousing assistance. The correct exit destination response in this situation would be “Rental by client, with ongoing RRH or equivalent subsidy” and the record should be corrected.
* Anytime you have concerns that HMIS reports or program outcomes are not reflecting what you expect to see in terms of exit destinations, take a look at the Destinations in the CoC-APR (Q23c) and see if the selected responses seem accurate.  If they aren’t, double-check the client files and update HMIS accordingly.

**Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Veterans Report and Active List: Running and Using the Report**

Ohio BoSCoC SSVF providers, at minimum, should run the Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Veterans Report and Active List in HMIS on a weekly basis. This report will show newly homeless Veterans that SSVF providers may need to outreach to.

Detailed guidance about how to run the report and use the report can be found [here](https://cohhio.org/member-services-2/boscoc/veteran-homelessness/).

For additional information about responsibilities of providers to outreach to homeless Veterans, or to determine which provider is responsible for reporting on housing offers and plans, visit the Ohio BoSCoC program page about work to end Veteran homelessness here: <https://cohhio.org/member-services-2/boscoc/veteran-homelessness/>