**Guidance for Completing Homeless Veterans Data Elements**

**Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care**

Homeless Veterans Reporting Guidance – Updated April 2022

**Overview**
As part of our work to end Veteran homelessness, the Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoSCoC), utilizes a Veterans Active List to identify literally homeless Veterans and tracking progress on housing plans. The Active List is housed in the Ohio BoSCoC’s custom reporting platform, R minor elevated (Rme), and the CoC’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) serves as the data source.

The Veterans Active List is intended to help providers and VAs to better coordinate services and 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.

The following sections detail the protocol for completing the Veteran-specific data elements in HMIS, including providing all necessary updates on Veteran housing plans and progress on those plans.

**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 Veteran Data Elements
	+ Those HMIS data elements in HMIS that apply only to Veterans, including those elements used to report on housing plans, offers of permanent housing, etc.
* 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 Data Elements: Reporting Process**
The following section describes the process for Ohio BoSCoC providers to complete/update the Homeless Veterans data elements 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 Data Elements and Reporting Requirements***
Following are the Homeless Veteran data elements and their definitions:

* Veteran Information
	+ These should be reviewed and reported by VA funded providers, such as SSVF and GPD, upon program enrollment. These are HUD VA required data elements
		- Military year of Entry and Separation
		- Theaters of Operation
		- Branch of Military
		- Discharge Status
* 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
* 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.
* List Status
* Veterans who are unsheltered and enrolled in an Outreach project or in a Coordinated Entry Access Point (CE AP) project 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.
* 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.
* County in which Veteran is being served
* 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.
* Current Living Situation
* The current location in which the Veteran is residing, the date they began residing in that location and the provider verifying the client’s 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)
* Offers of Permanent Housing
* Responsible Providers document the date of the PH offer, the type of PH offered, acceptance/decline of the offer, and date of acceptance/decline
	+ 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.
	+ 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.
		- These are pulled into Homeless Vets Assessment

***Completing the Homeless Veterans Data Elements***

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 many of the Homeless Veterans data elements in HMIS as possible, by taking the following steps:

* Log into HMIS
* Switch your agency to Coordinated Entry - BoSCoC
* Search for the client for which you need to complete or update the Homeless Veterans data elements
* Navigate to the client’s profile
	+ Review and update the following elements, if needed.
		- Veteran Information
			* Military year of Entry and Separation
			* Theaters of Operation
			* Branch of Military
			* Discharge Status
		- 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
		- VA Eligibility
		- SSVF Eligibility
		- County in which Veteran is being served
		- Permanent Housing Track
			* This is not usually known immediately
		- Expected Permanent Housing Date, if known
		- *Save Changes*
* Navigate to the client’s AP program enrollment, by clicking ‘Programs’ and the edit box next to the current CE AP enrollment
	+ Click Assessments and start a new Current Living Situation assessment
		- Update the following elements as needed.
			* Date of Contact
			* Current Living Situation
			* Living Situation Verified
			* Location Details
			* *Save & Close*
* Switch to the Responsible Provider’s Agency
* Navigate to the client’s program enrollment with the Responsible Provider (typically RRH or GPD). Currently you cannot document PH offers if client is only enrolled in CE AP.
	+ Click Assessments and start an Offers of Permanent Housing assessment
		- Update the following elements as needed.
			* Assessment date
				+ This is the date of the PH offer
			* Type of PH Intervention
			* Offer Accepted?
			* Date of Accept or Decline
			* *Save*

Any other information about progress on the housing plan can be reported by adding a note to the client’s HMIS account. Adding a note 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). Notes are optional. Notes are viewable only to users of the Agency they are entered under. Entering housing plan notes under the Coordinated Entry agency will allow the notes to be accessible to all users with access to the AP project.

* Switch to the Agency the notes will be entered under
* Navigate to client’s profile
	+ Select Notes at the top of the screen
	+ Select Add note
		- Complete the following areas
			* Title
			* Category
				+ Select “No Category”
			* Date
			* Note
			* *Click Add Record to save*

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 data elements are not available for clients of a particular project, let HMIS staff know. The HMIS team will add the Homeless Veterans data elements 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 Active List: Running and Using the Report**

Ohio BoSCoC SSVF providers, at minimum, should review 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. The report updates daily and can be found in Rme here - <https://ohiobalanceofstatecoc.shinyapps.io/Rminor_elevated/>

Additionally, Veteran serving providers and VAMC staff should use this report in their regularly occurring case conferencing meetings.

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/boscoc/special-initiatives/>