



## 3.1 Overview of Homelessness Data Sources

If homeless data is new to you, consider as a first step, contacting the person who is responsible for data collection in your community. This may be your local Continuum of Care Collaborative Applicant and/or local HMIS Lead Organization. You may also want to consult your ConPlan for data on the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program and on other vulnerable populations.

For a quick overview of the commonly used sources of data on homelessness, see below. [Homeless Management Information Systems \(HMIS\)](#) are the most robust source, described in the table and in detail, but useful data can also be found in the [Point in Time \(PIT\) Count](#), [Homeless Inventory Count \(HIC\)](#), and in the [Annual Homeless Assessment Report \(AHAR\)](#). All of these data sources are available on the HUD Exchange.

Overview of Key Data Sources on Homelessness			
	PIT & HIC	AHAR	HMIS
<b>Overview</b>	<p>HUD requires the Point-in-Time (PIT) count be conducted in all communities receiving CoC funds once every two years. Many communities choose to conduct this count of homeless individuals and families living in places not meant for human habitation (on the street, in emergency shelter, or transitional housing) every year. Each count is planned, coordinated, and carried out locally; to meet HUD requirements, it must be performed within the required timeframe, frequently the last week of January.</p> <p>The Housing Inventory Count (HIC) is an inventory of beds or units within a community that are dedicated to serving homeless individuals and families. To be included on the HIC, a bed/unit must only be available to those experiencing homelessness.</p>	<p>The Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) is a HUD report to the U.S. Congress that provides a nationwide estimate of families and individual experiencing homelessness, including information about the demographic characteristics of homeless persons, service use patterns, and the capacity to house homeless persons. The report is based primarily on Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) data about persons who experience homelessness during a 12-month period.</p> <p>The AHAR is an aggregate of all the individuals and families that have accessed HUD funded homeless services. Identified data (name, social security, etc.) are not reported. Every participating community can compare the local AHAR report to the national AHAR or peer communities to gauge their effectiveness.</p>	<p>CoCs use HMIS to collect standard data at the local level. The data can be used to produce an unduplicated count of homeless persons and understand patterns of service use locally.</p> <p>HMIS is the general name for the type of software that HUD requires each community use, but each community chooses its own specific software. HUD, HHS, and the VA all collaborate to establish a standard set of data elements, to allow for comprehensive analysis of homelessness across a community and the country.</p> <p>HMIS is used locally to collect eligibility, case management, and other data to assist service providers, policy makers, and project participants to end homelessness in their community.</p>
<b>Scope</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes individuals and families living on the street.</li> <li>Robust surveys include those who have not accessed services, providing a more comprehensive understanding of homelessness in the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes sheltered and unsheltered persons</li> <li>Includes all homeless families and individuals that have accessed HUD funded services within the reporting year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gathered daily</li> <li>Covers sheltered and unsheltered persons</li> <li>Covers housing inventory and utilization</li> </ul>



Overview of Key Data Sources on Homelessness			
	PIT & HIC	AHAR	HMIS
<b>Data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Client Demographic</li> <li>Housing/Project Inventory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Client Demographic</li> <li>Housing Inventory &amp; Utilization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Client Demographic</li> <li>Client Detailed Information</li> <li>Service and Referral</li> <li>Housing Inventory &amp; Utilization</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<p>The data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is limited to one day/night</li> <li>cannot be used to identify unique client/de-duplicate</li> <li>requires analysis that can delay publication by months or a full year</li> <li>counts are substantially impacted by weather or other factors on the night(s) selected</li> <li>PIT collection methodologies vary nationally based on community resources</li> </ul>	<p>The data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>covers one year (though AHAR reports can be accessed to analyze across years)</li> <li>is from HMIS</li> <li>excludes domestic violence providers</li> <li>high data quality requirements may prevent full participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HMIS data quality varies by community</li> <li>Each community selects the software product that meets their community's needs in addition to HUD's requirements</li> <li>HMIS data excludes information collected by domestic violence providers</li> </ul>

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (HMIS)

**Universal Data Elements (UDE).** UDE's are mandatory for all projects participating in HMIS. Regardless of funding source, each project must collect the data to use the HMIS. Projects created in response to a disaster may have additional flexibility on initial use based on life/safety limitation. An example of a disaster data element set is available at <http://www.clientdatastandard.org>. UDE changes over time and includes such items as name, date of birth, race, disabling condition, client location and other data that help direct resources to the right place and person. To see the comprehensive list of data elements, see the [HMIS Data Manual](#).

**Program Specific Data Elements.** HMIS captures descriptive data on homeless families and individuals served known as Program Specific Data Elements (PSDE). This information can be very helpful in identifying the subpopulation and financial stability of the homeless population. Documentation of disabilities may help disaster responders to target resources effectively. The PSDEs include but are not limited to:

- Income and Sources
- Non-Cash Benefits
- Health Insurance
- Physical Disability
- Developmental Disability
- Chronic Health Condition
- HIV/AIDS
- Mental Health Problem
- Substance Abuse
- Domestic Violence