TIPS AND TRICKS FOR USING THE HRE VIRTUAL HELP DESKS

The following is a collection of tips and tricks for using the HUD HRE Virtual Help Desks. Using these suggestions will facilitate the Help Desk staff’s ability to triage your questions to the appropriate personnel, track, and respond to your questions. Remember, the specificity of the information you provide as well as whether you categorize your questions correctly directly influences how quickly we can provide you with an answer.

HUD developed the Virtual Help Desks to provide a venue for applicants and grantees to ask and obtain answers to program related questions. The Virtual Help Desks benefit grantees by:

- Enabling them to obtain an answer much more quickly than submitting the question directly to HUD;
- Providing a vehicle to formally submit questions;
- Allowing them to track their questions and follow up with the Help Desk;
- Delegating questions to appropriate subject matter experts to expedite responses;
- Providing them with consistent answers to program related questions in writing;
- Enabling the asking of follow-on questions related to initial questions without opening a new Help Desk record; and
- Serving as a basis for program related FAQs.

All are encouraged to submit technical and policy related questions to the Virtual Help Desks. HUD will do its best to ensure that answers are provided to grantees as soon as they are available. Common questions regarding e-snaps lock-outs and password re-sets are generally answered within several hours of receipt by the Help Desk. Technical questions regarding e-snaps functionality are generally answered within three (3) to five (5) business days of receipt. Questions of a more complicated nature may take up to two weeks to answer. Please note that certain policy related questions that are not explicitly addressed in regulations or other program guidance take much longer to answer, as HUD may need to consult legal counsel.

Grantees should still submit certain types of questions directly to their Field Offices. The types of questions that should be directed to Field Offices are those related to the following:
• Questions related to the Continuum of Care regulatory programs – Supportive Housing Program (SHP), Shelter Plus Care (S+C), and Section 8/Single Room Occupancy (SRO) – prior to the publishing of the applicable NOFA

• Switching projects from one applicant to another

• Specific CoC projects that have been approved for funding

• Contractual documents signed by HUD

The remainder of this document includes discussion on:

• How to access the Help Desk

• Tips on using the Help Desk form correctly

• Selecting the correct Program/System type

• Selecting the correct Topic and Sub-Topic
Accessing the Help Desk

To access any of the HRE Virtual Help Desks, go to the Homelessness Resource Exchange at www.hudhre.info.

Click on “Virtual Help Desk” located in the center column on the Home page, under “Ask a Question”.

This link will take you directly to the HUD HRE Virtual Help Desk screen, where you may submit a new question or re-open an existing question.

You can also link directly to the HUD HRE Virtual Help Desk by clicking “Ask a Question” in the banner at the top of the page.
Tips on Using the Help Desk Form

Some important facts to keep in mind when completing your Virtual Help Desk form are as follows:

- It is important to select the correct Program/System. This is discussed in great detail in the next section of this document. *

- Complete all asterisked fields correctly.*

- Do not ask multiple questions in one form. If you do this, Help Desk staff has been instructed to close your record and ask you to submit your questions individually.

- When you select “Submit” or “Submit and Ask Another Question,” you will see a pop-up acknowledgment on your screen showing that the question was submitted and providing you with a Confirmation Key. An email will automatically be sent to the email address provided on your Virtual Help Desk form that also contains this Confirmation Key. PLEASE RETAIN THIS CONFIRMATION KEY.

- If you want to check on the status of a question submitted, have additional information to clarify the question, or want to add an attachment, DO NOT SUBMIT A NEW QUESTION. Use your Confirmation Key to open your existing question to check on its status or to add information/attachments. Opening multiple records containing the same question will delay Help Desk’s staff members’ ability to send a timely response to your initial question.

*Please see page 5 for screen shot
HUD HRE Virtual Help Desk

Welcome to the HUD HRE Virtual Help Desk. Review the Help Desk form for the list of HUD programs and topics the Help Desk is currently accepting questions on.

If you have a technical or functional question pertaining to IDIS or HOPWA, please submit the question on OneCPD Ask A Question.

Tips:
- On the form below you must select the “Program / System” option first before entering information in the remainder of the form. If you select the “Program / System” option after entering text, the form will reset and you may lose what you entered.

Your Details:

(* required)

- Please review the HRE Virtual Help Desk Tips document to determine which Program/System to select.
- Program / System: *

(*) Required
- Last Name: *
- First Name: *
- Name of Organization:
- E-mail Address: *
- Confirm E-mail: *
- Phone: *
- State: *

Question Details:

- Topic: *
- Sub-Topic: *

Question (please be as specific as possible): *

Use this optional feature to upload a document to support or clarify your question.

Upload Document: Browse...

Once you submit your question, you will receive a message which will include a Confirmation Key. The system will also automatically generate an email to you with the same information. Please retain this email for your records and keep your Confirmation Key accessible! It will enable you to re-open your question to and ask a follow-up question, add additional details, and track the subsequent response.

Submit	Submit and Ask Another Question	Reset
Selecting the Correct Program/System Category for Your Question

The first step you must take when opening a Help Desk request is to select a program from the Program/System dropdown menu. It is important to select the appropriate program portal, in order to facilitate our ability to get a correct response. Your choices and what they cover are as follows:

**APR:** Now that CoCs will be submitting their Annual Performance Reports (APR) through e-snaps, HUD has established a new APR Help Desk portal on the HRE. All questions that are related to the APR, both technical and policy related, should be submitted through this program. This portal will not answer HPRP APR questions.

**CoC Program:** This Help desk program/system is for questions about implementing the CoC Program, including eligible program activities, eligible participants, reporting requirements, etc.

In 2012, the CoC Program Interim Rule was published. This new rule established the basis for implementing the new CoC Program, including the Continuum of Care planning process. The legacy homeless assistance programs that comprised the Continuum of Care Program prior to the publication of the CoC Program Interim Rule are the following: the Supportive Housing program (SHP), the Shelter Plus Care program (S+C), and the Moderate Rehabilitation/Single Room Occupancy (SRO) program. Currently, questions regarding both new CoC Program questions and legacy (SHP), (S+C), and (SRO) Program questions, should be directed to the CoC Program help desk program/system. Also, in 2012, a new “Homeless Definition” topic and subtopic were added to this help desk to address questions about the December 2011 publication of the Homeless Definition Final Rule.

**CoC Structure:** This program is for questions regarding CoC planning, updating contact information for CoC and completing the CoC Check-up.

**e-snaps CoC Competition:** This program is for anything having to do with the mechanics of submitting your application for homeless assistance funding to HUD during the annual CoC grant competition. Through this Help Desk portal, Collaborative Applicant staff and individual project applicants can ask questions regarding problems with completing specific forms related to CoC Applicant Profile, CoC Registration, Grant Inventory Worksheet, CoC Consolidated Application (formerly known as Exhibit 1), Project Priority Listing, Project Applicant Profile, Project Application (formerly known as Exhibit 2) in e-snaps, how to attach documents in the system, submitting your Project Application to the CoC, etc. Also, please do not submit CoC Program questions through the e-snaps help desk portal.

**Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program:** This help desk portal is for technical and policy questions regarding the implementation of the ESG program.
**HDX:** This program is where you may ask questions about the Homelessness Data Exchange (HDX), the Housing inventory Count (HIC), Point-in-Time (PIT) count, the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) and Pulse, including updating contacts for HMIS.

**HMIS:** A Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is the information system designated by the Continuum of Care (CoC) to comply with HUD’s data collection, management, and reporting standards and used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. HMIS users and administrators can submit questions to this Help Desk portal using the general HMIS topics. HMIS vendors may submit questions concerning specifications, data standards and Excel reporting tools to this portal as well.

**HPRP:** This program ended on September 30, 2012. As of January 1, 2013, the HPRP portal is closed for questions/comments.

**HRE Calendar:** This program allows users to submit details for HUD and non-HUD events they would like to see posted on the Homelessness Resource Exchange website.

**HRE Website Questions/Feedback:** This program is for users who would like to submit questions or feedback regarding website functionality, report website technical difficulties, or submit resources to upload on the Homelessness Resource Exchange.

**Other Homeless Programs:** If you are homeless and looking for assistance or if you are inquiring about the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG), HUD VASH, or any other HUD homeless program not listed above, you may submit a question to the “Other Homeless Programs” portal.

**Request for Conference Speaker:** If you would like to request to have HUD staff or one of their national TA providers speak/present at a national, state, regional or local conference, you may submit your request through the “Request for Conference Speaker” portal.

**NOTE:** If you have questions related to HMIS, other than the information requested in the e-snaps application about HMIS participation, please submit these to [HMIS Help Desk](#).

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**Selecting the Correct Topics and Subtopics for Your Question**

After selecting the correct program type for your question, you **must** select a topic and a subtopic. **Please note that subtopics are completely dependent upon topics.** If you cannot find the subtopic you are looking for under a particular topic, you probably chose the incorrect topic.

The applicable topics for each program/system are listed in the remaining pages of this document.
Annual Performance Report (APR)

Questions related to the APR filed in e-snaps under the Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance programs should be submitted to this help desk under the following topic and subtopics.

Table 1: APR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics and Subtopics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using e-snaps</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Editing APRs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Locked out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Re-set password</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other technical problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CoC Projects</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CoC APR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• HMIS dedicated projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transition Reporting Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Report Design and Vendor Information</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• APR Aggregation Tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• APR Generation Tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Programming Specifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CoC APR Test Kit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CoC Program

Policy questions about implementing the Continuum of Care Program are to be directed to the following topics and subtopics.

Table 2: CoC Program

Topics and Subtopics

- Homeless Definition
- Definitions
- CoC Planning and Responsibilities
- Unified Funding Agency
- Eligible applicants
- Application Process and Awards
- Consolidated Plan
- Subsidy Layering
- Renewals
Program Components and Eligible Costs

- Program Components
- Uses of Assistance
- CoC Planning Activities
- Unified Funding Agency Costs
- Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and New Construction
- Leasing
- Rental Assistance
- Operating Costs
- Supportive Services
- HMIS
- Project Administrative Costs
- Indirect Costs

High Performing Communities

- Becoming an HPC
- HPC Eligible Activities
- HPC Eligible Participants
Program Requirements

- Matching
- Housing Standards
- Accessing and Tracking Supportive Services
- Participation of Homeless Services
- Occupancy Charges and Rent
- Term of Commitment, Repayment of Grants, and Prevention of Undue Benefits
- Timeliness Standards
- Limitation on Use of Funds
- Termination of Assistance to Program Participants
- Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity
- Conflicts of Interest
- Program Income
- Applicability of Other Federal Requirements

Grant Administration

- Recordkeeping Requirements
- Grant and Project Changes
- Sanctions and Remedial Actions
- Close-out
CoC Structure

Questions related to Continuum of Care planning, updating contact information or completing the CoC Check-up are directed to the following topics and subtopics.

Table 3: CoC Structure

**Topics and Subtopics**

- **CoC Contact Updates**
  - Update CoC Contact
  - Update Homeless Contact

- **CoC Check-up**
  - General Technical
  - Lock Out
  - Update CoC Contact
  - Accessing the Self-Assessment
  - Submitting the Self-Assessment
  - CoC Governance and Structure
  - CoC Plan and Planning Process
  - CoC Infrastructure and Administrative Capacity
  - Housing and Services
  - Reports
  - Final CoC Self-Rating
  - CoC Action Plan
  - Other
**e-snaps CoC Competition**

Select this program is for anything having to do with the mechanics of submitting your application for homeless assistance funding to HUD during the annual CoC grant competition. Through this Help Desk portal, Collaborative Applicant staff and individual project applicants can ask questions regarding problems with completing specific forms related to CoC Applicant Profile, CoC Registration, Grant Inventory Worksheet, CoC Consolidated Application (formerly known as Exhibit 1), Project Priority Listing, Project Applicant Profile, Project Application (formerly known as Exhibit 2) in *e-snaps*, how to attach documents in *the system*, submitting your Project Application to the CoC, etc.

**Table 6: e-snaps CoC Competition**

**Topics and Subtopics**

- **General/Technical**
  - Getting started
  - Locked out
  - Re-set password
  - Updating/creating user profile
  - Adding users/registrants
  - Attaching documents in *e-snaps*
  - Export to PDF/print
  - Transfer projects
  - Authorized representation changes
  - CoC lead agency changes
  - Other technical problems

- **CoC Applicant Profile**
  - Accessing the CoC Applicant Profile
  - Contact information
  - Attachments
  - Completing/editing the profile
CoC Registration
- Funding opportunity registration
- Accessing CoC registration
- CoC merges
- Attachments
- Submitting CoC registration
- CoC Review

Grant Inventory Worksheet
- GIW-tab 1
- Rental Assistance Worksheet-tab 2

CoC Application
- CoC Structure
- Housing Inventory Count
- HMIS Coverage, funding, and data
- Homeless population data
- CoC strategic planning objectives
- Discharge planning
- CoC planning
- Reallocation
- CoC Performance
- Submitting the project list(s)
**Tools and Tips**

**Project Priority List**
- CoC ID
- New project list
- Renewal project list
- CoC planning project list
- CoC planning project list
- Amending projects
- Submitting the projects list(s)

**Project Applicant Profile**
- Accessing the Project Applicant Profile
- Contact Information
- Attachments
- Completing/editing the profile

**Project Application**
- Accessing the Project Application
- SF-424
- Subrecipient detail
- Project Information
- Housing, services, and HMIS
- Participation and outreach
- Performance measures
- Budgets
- Leveraged Sources
- Attachments
- Amending project applicants
- Submitting the application
Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program

Use the topics and subtopics below to submit questions about implementing the new ESG program.

Table 5: ESG Topics and Subtopics

- Award and Use of Funds
  - Consolidated Plan Requirements
  - FY2011 Substantial Amendment
  - Grant Agreement
  - Match Requirements
  - Obligation, Expenditure, and Reimbursement Requirements
  - Other

- Consolidated Plan
  - CAPER
  - Certifications
  - Citizen Participation Requirement
  - Consultation Requirement
  - Definitions
  - Housing Market Analysis
  - Needs Assessments
  - Strategic Plan/Action Plan
  - Other
General Provisions
- Allocation of Funding
- Definitions

Program Components/Eligible Activities
- Administrative Activities
- Emergency Shelter
- HMIS
- Homelessness Prevention
- Indirect Costs
- Rapid Re-Housing
- Street Outreach
- Other

Program Requirements
- APR Reporting
- Assessment and Recordkeeping
- Conflicts of Interest
- Environmental Review
- Shelter and Housing Standards
- Preventing Involuntary Family Separation
- Terminating Assistance
- Systems Coordination
- Waivers
- Other Program Requirements
Homeless Data Exchange (HDX)

Questions related to the housing inventory count (HIC) and Point-in-Time (PIT) count should be categorized under one of four topics. Currently, each topic only has one subtopic with the same name.

Table 6: HDX Topics

- Accessing/Changing Primary Contact
- AHAR
- General
- HIC
- PIT
Eligible Activities and Participants
- Eligible Activities
- Eligible Program Participants
- Ineligible and Prohibited Activities
- Requirements Related to Determining Participant Eligibility

Grant Allocations, Application Process, and Eligible Grantees/Sub-grantees
- Application Content & Submission Requirements
- Eligible Grantees and Sub-grantees
- HUD Review of Application & Grant Agreement Timeline
- Initial Allocation
- Reallocation -- when you have questions about taking back funds from one sub-grantee and allocating them to another sub-grantee. Note: Since the application period for grantees and subgrantees ended in 2009, questions on this topic should be limited to reallocation.

Other Federal Requirements
- Conflicts of Interest
- Drug-Free Workplace
- Environmental Requirements
- Equal Participation of Religious Organizations
- Lead-Based Paint Requirements
- Lobbying and Disclosure Requirements
- Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Requirements
- Uniform Administrative Requirements

Post-Award Requirements
- Deadlines for Using Grant Amounts
- Documentation Requirements & Recordkeeping
- Housing Inspection Requirements
- Method of Payment
- Monitoring
- Rent Reasonableness and Rent Payments
- Reporting Requirements
- Responsibility for Grant Administration
HMIS

HMIS questions should be submitted to this help desk under the topics and subtopics listed below. HMIS users and administrators can submit questions using general HMIS topics. HMIS Vendors can submit questions using the Vendor Data Standards, Vendor Excel Reporting Tools, Vendor Questions (Other) and Vendor Specifications topics.

Table 9: HMIS Vendors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics and Subtopics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client Confidentiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Informed Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracts and Agreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eligible Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rural Housing Service Providers Data Collection Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eligible Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mining and Recovery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Data Quality**
- Data Consistency
- Implementing a Data Quality Plan
- Troubleshooting

**Data Warehousing**
- Data Warehousing

**HMIS Administration/Project Management**
- HMIS Administration/Project Management

**HMIS Data Standards**
- Definitions and Data Standards
- Responsibilities of Contributing HMIS Organizations
- Responsibilities of Rural Housing Service Providers
- Responsibilities of Victim Service Providers

**HMIS Disaster Planning and Recovery**
- HMIS Disaster Planning and Recovery

**HMIS Vendor Support**
- HMIS Vendor Support
• SHP Funded Programs
• Non-SHP Funded Programs
• Contributing HMIS Organizations
• Domestic Violence

• Policy and Procedures

• Privacy and Security Standards/Ethics

• Balance of State Collaboration
• Multi-CoC Collaboration

• Developing a Reporting Compliance Plan
• Standard HUD Reports
• Unduplicating Client Records

• HMIS Software Compliance
• HMIS Software Selection
• Vendor Negotiations
HRE Calendar:

Requests to add HUD and non-HUD sponsored events to the calendar tool on the Homelessness Resource Exchange website should be submitted to this help desk under the following topics and subtopics.

Table 10: HRE Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics and Subtopics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Submit a HUD Event</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Name of Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Start Date/Time and End Date/Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Event Host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Event Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Contact Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Event Host URL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Submit a Non-HUD Event</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Name of Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Start Date/Time and End Date/Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Event Host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Event Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Contact Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Event Host URL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HRE Website Questions/Feedback

Questions and/or feedback regarding technical difficulties or functionality on HUDHRE.info should be submitted to this help desk in addition to requesting for uploading resources to the website using the following topics and subtopics.

Table 11: HRE Website Questions/Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics and Subtopics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking for Assistance/Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individuals Looking for Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Researchers Looking for Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• TA Providers Looking for Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Broken Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Incorrect/Outdated Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Website Feedback/Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Documents for Posting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Homeless Programs

If you are homeless and looking for assistance or if you are inquiring about the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG), HUD VASH, or any other HUD homeless program not listed above, you may submit a question using the categories shown below.

The applicable topics and sub-topics under this heading are shown in the following table.

Table 12: Other Homeless Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics and Subtopics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal Access to Housing • Equal Access to Housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ESG                  • HMIS (as it relates to ESG only)  
                         • IDIS (as it relates to ESG only)  
                         • Other |
| Other Homeless Activities  
                         • BRAC  
                         • CoC Disaster Preparedness/Recovery  
                         • HUD VASH  
                         • HUD VHPD  
                         • Title V  
                         • Other |
| Other Programs • Other Programs |
| People Seeking Housing/Assistance • People Seeking Housing Assistance  
                         • People Seeking Veterans Assistance |
Request for Conference Speaker

Requests for Conference Speakers should be submitted to this help desk under the categories listed below, under which you may specify the details of the conference/event and the type of presenter you are requesting.

### Table 13: Request for Conference Speaker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker Type and Event Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Request HUD Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request TA Provider</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• National Event  
• State Event  
• Regional Event  
• Local Event
Summary

The HRE Virtual Help Desks have been developed to help applicants and grantees to obtain answers to questions on the HUD programs that address homelessness. This document was developed to provide applicants and grantees with some tools and tips to enable them to submit their questions through the appropriate channels in order to expedite the ability of HUD staff to provide answers to these questions.

Upon reading this document, applicants and grantees should be able to:

- Understand the benefits of the HRE Virtual Help Desks
- Learn what types of questions to send to HUD Field Offices
- Access the Help Desk
- Use the Help Desk form correctly
- Select the correct Program/System type under which to submit a question
- Select the correct topic and subtopic