

**Integration of RHYMIS and HMIS  
Frequently Asked Questions**

**System Transition**

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**Q: Does HMIS replace RHYMIS?**

A: Homeless Management Information Systems, or HMIS has been expanded to include all runaway and homeless youth measures. Beginning in FY2015, all Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees are required to use HMIS, operated by their local U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-funded Continuum of Care, or CoC, for all data reporting to the Family & Youth Services Bureau. (In order to make this expansion clear for the purpose of this document, FYSB refers to the system as RHY-HMIS.) Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees will create an export data file through RHY-HMIS and submit their data to FYSB twice a year. All RHY grantees are expected to be using RHY-HMIS by April 15, 2015.

**Q: When are Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees expected to begin using RHY-HMIS to collect RHYMIS data?**

A: Grantees are expected to begin entering client-level data into RHY-HMIS by April 15, 2015. Grantees by now should have been engaging their Continuum of Care to ensure they have access to and training for the HMIS designated by their CoC. All RHYMIS records that were open as of October 1, 2014, or later, will need to be entered into RHY-HMIS by July 31, 2015.

**Q: My CoC has indicated the HMIS software is not set up to collect data for RHY programs yet. What should I do?**

A: Your local RHY-HMIS should already be set up for runaway and homeless youth providers to enter client-level data. If the HMIS Lead Agency or CoC contact is unable to accommodate you, please contact [RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov) with details, and we will help you find a solution.

**Q: Can I continue to use the RHYMIS desktop system?**

A: All grantees must use RHY-HMIS by April 15, 2015. Some grantees have opted to continue to use the RHYMIS desktop system, but because technical support for RHYMIS ended October 31, 2014, there is no assistance available if you encounter issues accessing your data. We recommend grantees keep paper records until you can begin entering data into RHY-HMIS.

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**Q: Should I upgrade my RHYMIS desktop system to continue to collect data?**

A: There is no need to upgrade the RHYMIS system on your desktop. We advise you not to use RHYMIS because there is no technical support available.

**Q: Who will I call for technical assistance for RHY-HMIS questions?**

A: If you need assistance with HMIS software (e.g., password reset, fields on a form, report generation, setting up a new project in HMIS) you should contact your local CoC's help desk.

Questions about runaway and homeless youth data and national transfer issues will be handled by a FYSB funded contractor that will also be working in partnership with the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center to provide training materials and webinars to help grantees better understand the runaway and homeless youth data elements and collection and reporting requirements. You will continue to contact your program officer for questions that pertain to your grant and general program operations, until further notice. Until the contractor is secured, you can send RHY-HMIS transition questions to [RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov).

HUD-related HMIS and CoC questions (other than software questions) can be sent to HUD's [Ask-A-Question portal](#).

**Continuums of Care (CoC)**

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**Q: How do I find out which CoC I am assigned to?**

A: You should have received your CoC assignment in the guidance letter from FYSB Associate Commissioner William H. Bentley in October 2014. If you did not receive the letter or need to confirm your assignment, please send an email with your request to [RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov).

**Q: The CoC assignment I received in my letter doesn't match the CoC I currently work with. Can I continue to work with the CoC with which I already have a relationship?**

A: If the CoC assigned to you in your letter differs from the CoC with which you have already established a working relationship, you may seek approval from FYSB to revise your assignment by emailing [RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov). We will make decisions about revisions on a case-by-case basis, depending on the location of the organization and jurisdiction of the CoC in question.

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In general, we encourage grantees to join the CoC in which the majority of their Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grant activities take place.

**Q: My organization receives multiple grants for programs operating in multiple counties. Will each program need to work with a separate CoC?**

A: We encourage grantee organizations operating multiple grants over multiple counties to join the CoC that corresponds to the location of each program. By joining each CoC, you can maximize coordination with other local service providers and ensure housing availability and service volumes are accurately reflected for each area you serve.

Organizations that have one grant that operates across multiple CoCs and would like to report through a single CoC may seek FYSB's approval by emailing [RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov).

**Q: Can a CoC work with our runaway and homeless youth program even if it has not designated youth services as a priority in its community?**

A: Yes. HUD requires each CoC to develop an inclusive planning process that involves all providers serving homeless clients in their community. HUD is letting CoCs know that including runaway and homeless youth organizations and projects in the CoC and in HMIS is critical to local efforts to end youth homelessness.

**Q: Who do we talk to about entering our data? The CoC won't return our calls.**

A: Establishing these relationships can take time. If after three attempts you cannot get in contact with your CoC, please email FYSB at [RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov). We will work with our HUD colleagues to resolve the situation.

**Q: Our local CoC is currently unfunded. How should I proceed?**

A: If your CoC is currently unfunded, contact FYSB immediately at [RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov).

We will work with HUD to achieve a workable solution on a case by case basis. Possible solutions may include having your program join a nearby CoC or one responsible for covering the balance of your state, if one is in place.

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**Funding**

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**Q: Is there a limit to the amount of Runaway and Homeless Youth Program funds that I can allocate to RHYMIS/HMIS integration expenses?**

A: RHY-HMIS integration costs are allowable expenses and can be covered under your Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grant. Reasonable costs may include, but are not limited to, computers, Internet access, HMIS licensing fees, and CoC membership fees. If your expenses greatly exceed the types of reasonable costs listed here, or if you have a question about a specific expense, please email FYSB at [RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov) and we will let you know if the expense is allowable.

**Q: I have multiple programs. Do I need to purchase licenses for each program and for each person entering runaway and homeless youth data into RHY-HMIS?**

A: There is not one national answer to this question. Each CoC funds its HMIS differently. Some purchase licenses for each user. Some purchase licenses for each program. Some simply pay for support. You will need to check with your local CoC to see what your costs are.

Please be mindful that regardless of the number of licenses purchased, users must NOT share log in information or passwords.

**Data Entry and Reporting**

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**Q: Do we now have to use HUD's definition of homelessness?**

A: No. Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees will continue to use the definitions in the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974), as last amended by the Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008 (P.L.110-378).

**Q: Can I import my RHYMIS records into HMIS?**

A: RHYMIS and HMIS are not compatible. HMIS will not accept a record transfer of any information stored in RHYMIS. All RHYMIS records open on or after October 1, 2014, will need to be transferred by hand, to the RHY-HMIS run by your local CoC. Historical records closed before October 1, 2014, will not be imported into the new system.

A crosswalk guide will be provided to assist grantees who collected data using the old RHYMIS fields to map their responses to the new RHY-HMIS fields.

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**Q: How much data do we have to go back and enter?**

A: All youth records open on or after October 1, 2014, and all records opened prior to that date but were still open on October 1, 2014, will need to be transferred to the new RHY-HMIS that is run by your local CoC. These records will need to have the correct dates to reflect the original date of service. Historical records closed before October 1, 2014, do not need to be entered into the new system.

**Q: When will we be told what data we have to collect?**

A: Most elements in RHY-HMIS will remain the same as they were in RHYMIS. A few have been modified and some new ones have been added. A complete list of data elements, to include those for the runaway and homeless youth programs, is available in the [HMIS 2014 Data Standards Manual](#), which is published on the HUD Exchange. The federal Office of Management and Budget approved the runaway and homeless youth data standards in February 2015. Grantees may now begin to collect and enter those data into RHY-HMIS. Soon, additional training and support materials will be provided to continue to facilitate the integration efforts. .

**Q: Why haven't they given us more time to do this? The timeframe seems very soon.**

A: We understand that a system change like this is challenging for many grantees under the best of circumstances, but we do think that it is achievable within the existing timeframe. Grantees that have not yet joined their CoCs should do so immediately to receive training on RHY-HMIS as soon as possible.

**Q: When will we get training on how to do this?**

A: Your CoC will provide training on using the local RHY-HMIS. Additional information on [CoCs and HMIS](#) can be found at the HUD Exchange.

To more broadly support Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees during data system integration, FYSB and HUD are preparing webinars and written guidance on RHY-HMIS data elements, functioning within a CoC, confidentiality within RHY-HMIS, and other topics. This training and guidance will be made available in the coming months.

## Integration of RHYMIS and HMIS Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: If we are entering youth records that were open as of October 1, 2014, will we be able to enter the original date of entry or service delivery for the youth?**

A: Yes. When manually transferring an open youth record into RHY-HMIS, you should back-date the file to reflect the original date of entry or service provision.

**Q: When will the first reports be due from RHY-HMIS?**

A: Grantees are expected to make their first national data transfer from RHY-HMIS in October 2015. After October 2015, grantees will resume submitting data every 6 months. Instructions on reporting will be provided at a later date.

**Q: Can I enter information about homeless services provided to youth who aren't eligible for Runaway and Homeless Youth Program services?**

A: The HMIS data standards contain an element ("4.22 BCP-RHY status") that enables Basic Center projects to collect data on youth who are not eligible for RHY Basic Center Program services but who are being served in the Basic Center project or facility. You may elect to use RHY-HMIS to capture data on these youth and indicate in 4.22 they are youth not served by FYSB's RHY funding and why they are not eligible for Runaway and Homeless Youth Program-funded services (e.g., out of age range, immediate reunification, or other).

**Q: Are grantees expected to enter data only for youth receiving residential services?**

A: There are certain circumstances under which youth who are not receiving residential services can be entered into RHY-HMIS. For example:

- Youth who are eligible for basic center services and receiving BCP Preventive Services (they may be logged as a non-shelter entry).
- Street outreach contacts for youth who have not accepted shelter.

When entering or updating records for youth who *are* entering into residential shelter, please be sure to include *Basic Support Services* as a part of the youth's service record. This response option is located in "4.14B RHY Services Provided" and will offer an additional distinction between non-sheltered and sheltered youth.

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**Q: Are we expected to capture all data measures for each youth contact in our street outreach program?**

A: Street Outreach Program grantees are expected to capture whatever data they can for all youth served who they believe are homeless. Given the nature of street outreach, we understand much of the information can only be gathered slowly, over multiple interactions or contacts. We ask that grantees enter what data they can as they become aware of it. Initial entries may, for example, be little more than “youth in Raiders cap.” However, over time, you may be able to fully engage the youth to create a full youth record.

**Q: Our local jurisdiction allows us to serve youth up to age 19 in our basic center. Can we enter these youth into RHY-HMIS as well?**

A: The intent of FYSB’s Basic Center Program is to serve youth who are under the age of 18. Although we recognize that some local jurisdictions permit providers to serve older youth, those youth are not eligible for Runaway and Homeless Youth Program funding. You may enter such youth into RHY-HMIS as non-FYSB-funded youth for your agency’s internal purposes. Those records will not be included in the FYSB national data transfer report.

**Q: Many times we do not receive the youth’s Social Security number. Either parents refuse to provide it, they don’t know it, they cannot locate it, or the youth has been abandoned by the parents. Are we required to provide Social Security numbers? If so, what do we do in these cases?**

A: Social Security numbers are critical to HMIS for maintaining unduplicated client records. However, if the youth’s Social Security number is unknown, follow the instructions provided by the local RHY-HMIS for data entry in the Social Security number field. Mark the data element as “client doesn’t know” or “client refused,” whichever is the most appropriate.

**Q: Do I need to enter data for each youth record on a daily basis or every time a service connection is made? That may be very labor intensive.**

A: Having high quality data is extremely important for RHY-HMIS. We believe that entering and updating youth records as close to the service date as possible improves accuracy. It is important to have up-to-date shelter entry and exit data which give administrators “real-time” information on shelter utilization and availability. However, grantees can determine the frequency for updating records that aligns with reporting requirements and best suits their agency.

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Also, as members of CoCs, Runaway and Homeless Youth Program grantees are responsible for meeting certain data quality standards. Grantees should work with their CoCs to review the standards and determine if they are sufficient for runaway and homeless youth projects.

**Q: Are we entering the information into RHY-HMIS for runaway and homeless youth who are being admitted into the shelter program due to RHY issues or is this only for crisis calls?**

A: As in the past, RHY data are collected on youth for whom you have provided direct services with FYSB's Runaway and Homeless Youth Program funding. If you provide homelessness prevention services via a crisis call, enter the youth's information into the "BCP – Prevention" project in RHY-HMIS. If the youth is admitted directly to the shelter, enter the information in the "BCP – Emergency Shelter" project in RHY-HMIS.

If the youth calling for assistance is ineligible for Runaway and Homeless Youth Program services or has needs that fall outside your agency's service area and require a referral, then that call would not be entered into RHY-HMIS. Instead, information about the call and any subsequent referrals may be captured in aggregate as a brief contact.

Grantees are strongly encouraged to begin to include aggregate-level information about their brief contacts, turnaways, and street outreach material dissemination in their semi-annual performance progress reports to FYSB.