

HUD Releases Final HMIS Standards Requiring DV Programs to Provide Client Data

In July 2003 the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development released the Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) Standards for reporting data regarding the homeless population. This early version of the standards provided an exemption for domestic violence programs.

However, in July 2004, the Final HMIS Standards that HUD released had removed this exemption. Therefore HMIS would require programs to electronically report information such as the name, address, and social security number of all individuals seeking transitional housing, emergency shelter, soup kitchens, or other support services. Despite confidentiality, safety and security concerns, HUD is also encouraging sharing HMIS information among other service providers.

The new HMIS standards, that take effect this fall, would eventually require domestic violence programs that receive HUD McKinney-Vento Funding to provide identifying data regarding their clients.

PLEASE NOTE: (the following information is taken from NNEDV's "The Domestic Violence Advocacy Guide to the Final HMIS Standards"):

- DV Programs are not required to give data until some point after October 2004. Though the final HMIS standards currently require that DV programs receiving HUD McKinney-Vento funds provide sensitive details and the locations of victims, DV programs are permitted late-stage entry into HMIS systems. DV programs do not have to participate until some point after October 2004, and have no stated entry deadline.

- Administrative Appeal/Petition for Rulemaking Filed. On 8/27/04 NNEDV filed a formal administrative appeal with the Secretary of HUD, requesting that HUD stay the implementation of the Final Standards and begin a rulemaking process to amend the final standards, reinstating the domestic violence exemption.

Local Advocacy Programs, State Domestic Violence Coalitions, & National Organizations. Local DV Advocacy programs are encouraged to use the "grace period" provided in the final standards to work with their state coalitions and national organizations to analyze possible local, state, and federal confidentiality laws that may preempt the HMIS directive. Programs that have been sharing any identifying data may want to temporarily stop giving data while issues are resolved.

Educate all survivors on their right to keep their private information out of databases. Clients using any service provider funded by HUD may be asked to share sensitive information with state or citywide databases. Clients are not required to consent to sharing personal information in HMIS in order to be provided services. The standards require that service providers talk about the potential benefits of widespread data sharing, but do not require them to inform clients about all the potential risks. This puts victims in a very dangerous situation if the abuser works in the system.

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) along with the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) and the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence have been working diligently to provide information to local programs regarding these standards. We have set up a series of national conference calls to provide information as well as posted the information on our websites. If you would like to receive additional information concerning the HMIS Standards and our response, please contact the NCADV Public Policy Office at (202) 745-1211.

TAKE ACTION

NCADV and NNEDV have sent letters to President Bush and HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson requesting that HUD reconsider the HMIS standards and return the exemption for domestic violence programs.

NCADV is encouraging all domestic violence programs to send a letter to HUD