

NC HMIS Transition FAQ

Participation in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), a shared database that homeless service providers use to enter client data, is required by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other federal partners for programs serving homeless people. HUD and other local and state agencies use information from HMIS databases across the country to understand more about the extent and nature of homelessness and to plan for homeless services.

In North Carolina, all 12 Continuums of Care (CoCs) have elected to participate in a statewide HMIS database. The governance of the database is provided by the CHIN Governance Committee. Each CoC has representation on this committee. In February 2014, the Governance Committee issued an [RFP](#) requesting proposals for an administrator for the database. After careful consideration, the Governance Committee recommended that CoCs select the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (MCAH) to be our administrator. MCAH is recognized nationally for their expertise in administering HMIS services. We are currently in the process of transitioning the HMIS database to MCAH's administration.

This FAQ document answers questions about the HMIS transition that is currently underway. This document was created by the Governance Committee and was last updated on January 26, 2015. The Governance Committee will update questions and answers as appropriate in coming weeks. Updates will be posted at <http://www.ncceh.org/hmis/transition>

1. What is happening with HMIS in North Carolina?

HMIS in North Carolina is changing administrative agencies. The NC Housing Coalition has led North Carolina's statewide HMIS project for ten years, since CHIN began in 2004. Starting in 2015, the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (MCAH) will take over as the administrative lead agency. We will continue to have a statewide HMIS system serving the entire state.

2. What is the timeline for HMIS transition?

The transition is in progress now. MCAH will have complete administrative authority by May 1, 2015. When the transition is complete, North Carolina's HMIS will be rebranded from CHIN to NC HMIS.

3. Who is MCAH?

The Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (MCAH) is a nonprofit membership organization that administers a statewide HMIS system in Michigan. MCAH has been recognized as one of the country's leading HMIS administrators, and their staff provides national technical assistance for HUD on HMIS implementation and administration.

4. What changes can we expect?

MCAH's model for HMIS is decentralized, putting more usability and responsibility at the agency and CoC level. NC HMIS will not have the centralized team that CHIN has employed. MCAH will provide core staff; however, many responsibilities will be shared with local system administrators and agency administrators.

All end users will be re-trained on privacy and other topics. MCAH also expects to create workflows for different program types to guide how users will enter data into the system. These workflows will standardize how users enter data. For example, all Rapid Rehousing programs will use a workflow to enter and exit clients in the same manner.

NC HMIS will also have more data experts in the field. Each CoC will have a system administrator who will be responsible for end users within their area. Each agency will also have agency administrators who will be able to do more with data locally. Overall, the goal for NC HMIS is to put control of data out into the community - more users, more reports, and more functionality.

5. What is a Local System Administrator?

Under NC HMIS, most of the support functions are done by local system administrators (LSAs). LSAs are not MCAH staff, but are people chosen by your CoC who will support your end users and your CoC. They will receive specialized training and support to ensure that they can help end users, agency staff, and CoC staff to enter data with the highest data quality and to pull reports from the system that are meaningful and accurate. Each CoC is independently deciding where these staff will be housed.

6. What is an Agency Administrator?

An agency administrator (AA) is the person who will lead the HMIS implementation within their organization and will support the ongoing operation of the database by agency end-users. The AA will serve as the first point of contact for agency end-users who have basic questions or issues related to the system and/or reporting. AAs will be able to reset user passwords and maintain provider pages, run agency-level reports, and serve as the liaison between end users and the system administrator. All agencies will be asked to identify an Agency Administrator. Training and support for AAs is expected to begin in late February.

7. Who would be a good Agency Administrator?

An effective agency administrator does not need advanced IT skills – rather, this person needs a working knowledge of computers. Agencies will do well to choose the person in their agency with the most familiarity with HMIS, not necessarily the person who is most senior in the organization. AAs must have a firm understanding of how the agency works, the grants and funding sources the agency receives, and how the agency handles client information. AAs will receive specialized training.

8. How much will NC HMIS cost?

Overall costs are likely to be the same or similar to the costs under CHIN, but how these costs are distributed will be different. Each CoC in North Carolina is responsible for paying for HMIS and each has a different way of doing so. Contact your CoC's Governance Committee representative with further questions about costs ([GC CoC lead contacts](#)).

9. Will NC HMIS be easier to use?

The NC HMIS system will look and feel similar to CHIN. We will continue to use the same software (ServicePoint). It is anticipated that some changes will be made to your data entry workflows to make them easier, more efficient, and standardized by program type. The end result will be that reports will be easier to run and more accurate.

10. How will I receive training in NC HMIS?

Every end user in North Carolina will be re-trained. If you have a CHIN license, you will receive new training in the coming months. MCAH will use online training and training refreshers in addition to regularly scheduled meetings with end users, agency administrators, and local system administrators to build capacity for entering and using data.

11. What if my agency has a new staff member who needs to be trained before May 1?

It is possible to get a new end user license now. CHIN is no longer holding in-person training, but has online training available. New users and their supervisors should be aware that they will need to be retrained for NC HMIS in the coming months.

12. What has changed about Social Security Numbers in CHIN?

Social Security numbers (SSNs) are no longer visible in CHIN after initial entry. If you need to change a SSN, this will need to be done at the system administrator level. Contact your CoC's Governance Committee representative for more information if needed ([GC CoC lead contacts](#)).

13. Where can I get more information?

Contact your Governance Committee representative for more information about local data, staff structure, and costs ([GC CoC lead contacts](#)). Contact CHIN Governance Chair Andrea Kurtz for more information on overall aspects of the HMIS transition (andrea.kurtz@uwforsyth.org).

Updated information will be posted to www.ncceh.org/hmis/transition