HOMELESSNESS
Partnering Strategy

Homeless Individuals and Families Information System 4

A comprehensive platform to allow coordinated service delivery

May 2018

Summary

- Background:
    - o Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS)
    - o Homeless Individuals & Families Information System (HIFIS)
- HIFIS 4 Benefits
- HIFIS 4 Modules
    - o Supports Client Registration (intake) and Case Management
    - o Monitoring Provision and Availability of Services
    - o Facilitates Customized Reporting
    - o Customisation and Platform Administration
    - o Privacy
- Key Considerations to a Successful Implementation
- Related Information & Contacts

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Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS)

- HPS is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness by providing direct support and funding to communities across Canada.

- Since its inception, HPS encourages communities to adopt an approach to homelessness that shifts away from emergency responses by refocusing on longer-term solutions.

https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/communities/homelessness.html

Homeless Individuals & Families Information System (HIFIS)

- HIFIS is a national homelessness information system that:
  - helps service providers with their day-to-day operations and planning activities through a free platform
  - includes features to track and support the management of some Housing First activities
  - collects data on shelter use to help develop a national portrait of homelessness and community trends

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Homeless Individuals & Families Information System (HIFIS)

From a data collection tool to a full-scale web-based community platform

1999	2002	2006	2015
HIFIS 1	**HIFIS 2**	**HIFIS 3**	**HIFIS 4**
A desktop application tool to collect data for the Government of Canada	*A more advanced data collection tool with expanded functionalities*	*Community-driven design, ongoing improvements, and online training*	*Web-based, user-friendly, configurable application for improved service coordination and data management*

Homeless Individuals & Families Information System 4 (HIFIS 4)

A web-based community platform that promotes Coordinated Access amongst service providers.

- Works within a web environment
- Available for service providers across the country
- Designed to support service providers' operational activities and collect real-time anonymized information, including non-identifiable data from Violence Against Women emergency shelters
- Supports coordination among the spectrum of homelessness-related services, including intake and case management
- Captures data into reports, and speeds up the ability to make business decisions (this improves the reporting process and avoids the need to retrieve data manually)

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Supporting a Coordinated Approach

A coordinated approach enables a strong network of support for clients from the combined efforts of service providers.

Benefits for Clients:
- Personal information is not repeated to different service providers within a community
- Effectively prioritized and referred to the right services at the right time

Benefits for Service Providers and Communities:
- Able to share data, leading to more detailed and comprehensive information on clients and on the homeless community at large
- Can access a variety of assessment tools to assist with community-wide client prioritization
- Ability to create reports that give the community an understanding of the contributing factors to homelessness
- Helps to connect service providers to support better communication

Benefits for the Homelessness Sector:
- Provides a national portrait of homelessness that informs decision-making and policy, and identifies potential gaps in the sector
- Allows for research to be conducted on homelessness in Canada

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Supporting a Coordinated Approach

COORDINATED APPROACH

Service Provider 1 — Service Provider 6 — Service Provider 5 — Service Provider 4 — Service Provider 3 — Service Provider 2 — CLIENTS
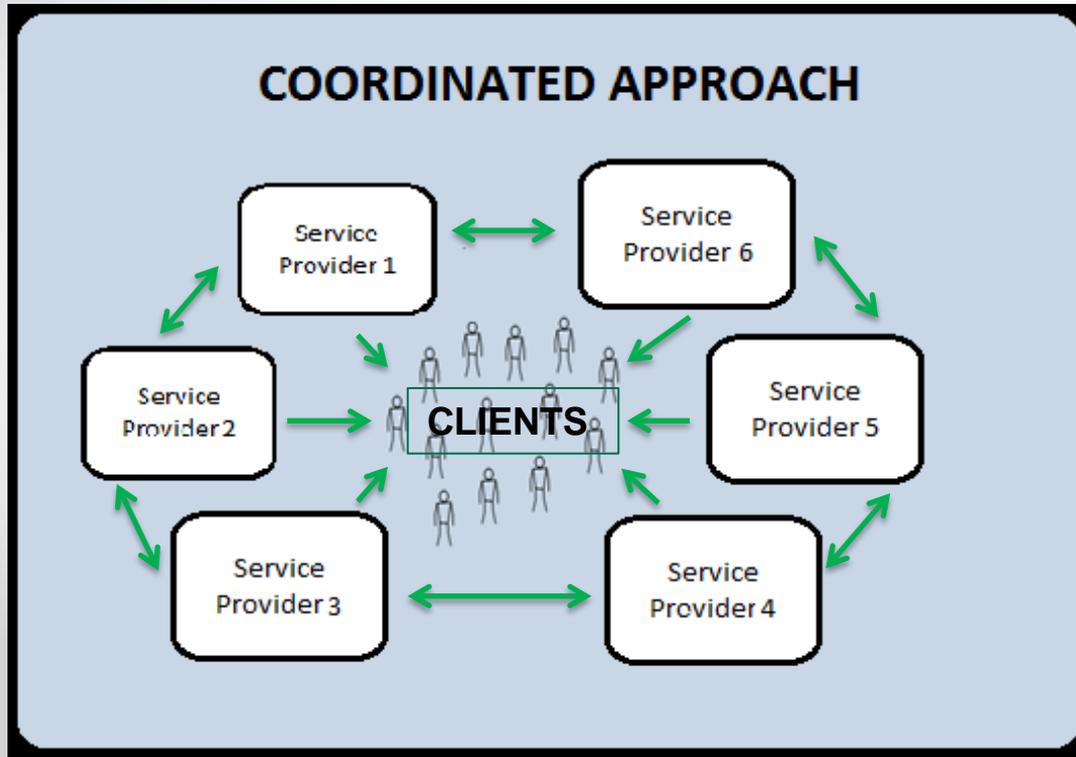
- Develop and maintain active by-name lists of clients identified as experiencing homelessness
- Helps clients access the right services at the right time
- Supports coordination among service providers
- Aligns and monitors common standards to achieve best outcomes

Data-sharing

Through a series of legal agreements and user protocols, both communities and service providers can independently decide what data can be shared, when, with whom, and by whom.

Data-sharing within a community allows:

- Service providers to work together to collect and compile information to support clients
- Service providers to become more informed about homelessness as well as the needs of their clients
- Service providers to prioritize and refer clients to the right service at the right time without duplication
- ESDC to become more informed on national trends and conduct more advanced research on homelessness in Canada

Community

Service Providers — Service Providers

Community Host

Community

Service Providers — Service Providers

Community Host

Employment Social Development Canada (ESDC)

Reviews non-identifiable data from communities

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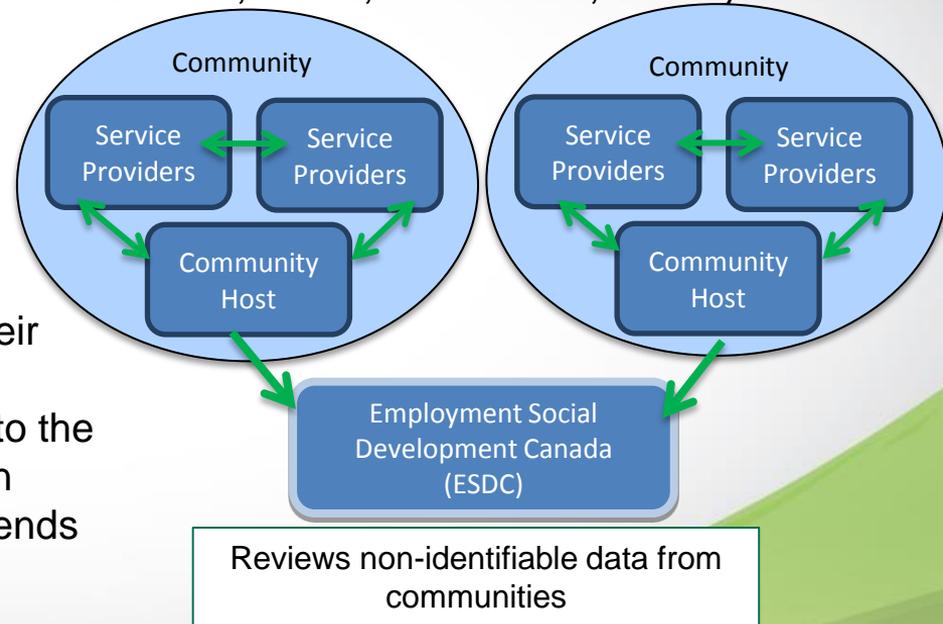
Features: Supports Client Registration (Intake)

A **client registration (intake)** system captures common data on an individual's point-of-entry. Elements collected can include name, social security, gender, age, and bed assignment. All client information is associated with a unique identifier that can be used to create an unduplicated count of homeless people served in a particular area.

HIFIS 4 Features:

- Collect and safely store clients' visit information
- Book (in and out), schedule, or refer clients
- Conduct surveys (PiT Count)
- Group client as families
- Support real-time information
- Integrate client consent

Features: Case Management

A **case management** module builds on client intake and provides a way to track information electronically throughout the process of client service provision. Collectively, the acquired data can be used to inform program design and system effectiveness while decreasing duplication in client intake and assessment.

HIFIS 4 Features:

- Report on client risk factors or incidents
- Capture housing history
- Assess client using Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) or Vulnerability Assessment Tools (VAT)
- Group client as families
- Support real-time information

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Features: Monitor Provision and Availability of Services

Service tracking modules serve as companions to the case management module. While the case management module tracks client information, the **service tracking module** records information about services delivered to a client by a provider.

HIFIS 4 features:

- Perform bookings and make bed reservations
- Provide real-time bed capacity
- Allow coordination with other service providers
- Manage client files
- Support case management
- Send messages and bulletins to employees and other service providers

Features: Facilitate Customized Reporting

Customized fields allow diverse communities to access relevant information that reflects their local needs.

HIFIS 4 features:

- View, create, and customize reports
- Export raw data into other applications for analysis
- Collect real-time information that improves the reporting capacity to support decision making
- Collect data over time to perform historical reports

Features: Customization and Platform Administration

Customized fields allow diverse communities to access relevant information that reflects their local needs.

HIFIS 4 features:

- Customize the appearance
- Develop custom tables, fields, and surveys
- Remove unused features
- Determine mandatory fields
- Select data to be shared
- Design the users' rights
- Delegate administrative tasks
- Built in Help Desk to support platform use and configuration

Features: Privacy

Data sharing among community service providers will require stringent privacy and security protections. All data sharing will be contingent upon written client consent and must comply with local, provincial, and federal legal requirements:

HIFIS 4 features:

- Integrated client consent
- Customizable data access rights for all users
- Configurable privacy and sharing settings for all service providers
- Determine the visibility and editing rights of each individual piece of data (this increases security)
- System, client, and data level protection capabilities

Key Considerations for a Successful Implementation

The implementation of a community platform is the product of proper governance, project management, planning, good design, and the collaboration of dedicated service providers within a community.

Key considerations for community planning and implementation:

1. Governance
2. Investments
3. Privacy
4. Data conversion
5. Design, Develop, and Test
6. Training, Support, and Go-live

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Key Considerations: Governance at the Community Level

For many communities, implementing a web platform represents a culture change in how organizations work. Community implementation requires buy-in from service providers and consistent communication to ensure concerns around sharing information are heard.

A governance structure to support implementation include:

- A community Oversight Committee to take key decisions (e.g. endorse the business model, location of the server, develop a communication strategy, determine the HIFIS 4 configuration that best meets the needs and characteristics of the community). This committee could be composed of Service Providers' management representatives.

- A Project Management Committee that could support the Oversight Committee and implement its decisions. This Committee could be composed of representatives from the service provider's staff.

Key Considerations: Investments

HIFIS is a community investment that requires serious commitment from its partners. Sound planning ensures a smooth implementation that contributes to operational success.

Budget encompass:

- A Project Manager to coordinate the implementation (e.g. engaging with local service providers to explore collaboration, tasking assignments, documenting, developing budgets and establishing timelines)
- IT resources to configure HIFIS and to determine the features/modules that best represents the community's needs and desired output
- IT resources to implement, maintain, and secure the server
- Legal advice on data-sharing agreements, consent forms, Memorandum of Understanding
- Development of Reports (Crystal Report)
- Communication activities amongst service providers
- Training

Key Considerations: Privacy

An HMIS web platform requires an early dialogue amongst service providers on privacy to ensure compliance with provincial legislations. In order to ensure that the privacy of all clients are respected, a *Privacy Impact Assessment* and a legal framework which includes data-sharing agreements and consent forms (for both the clients and the service providers) needs to be established.

A privacy legal framework should include the following:

- **Data Provision Agreement (DPA)** between Site Coordinators and Government of Canada to allow the use and customization of HIFIS and data sharing (to be provided and signed on receipt of HIFIS)
- **Data Sharing Agreement (DSA)** between Site Coordinators and service providers to guide data-sharing
- **Service Level Agreement (SLA)** between Site Coordinators and service providers to govern platform use and partnerships between shelter and client
- **Consent form** for clients to explain the use of their information

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Key Considerations: Data Conversion

Before implementing HIFIS 4, a decision is required regarding how to move forward with service providers' historical data. Options include :

- Covert all HIFIS 3 data to HIFIS 4 via the HPS conversion tool
- Plan which data should be kept under current system vs data to be converted into HIFIS 4 (e.g. all historical data vs. active clients only)
- Start anew with HIFIS 4 and keep historical data into current system for research purposes

Service providers would also need to agree on data entry standards. Service providers should also consider dedicating resources to develop a data entry protocol in order to avoid duplication of files.

Key Considerations: Design, Develop, and Test

HIFIS 4 allows configuration in order to support community needs both in terms of platform and data protection. The community should make the following considerations:

- A pilot or a progressive deployment to test and validate business processes and functionality (e.g. user rights, data sharing, client consent, etc.)

- Review existing infrastructure to ensure it supports HIFIS 4

- IT Infrastructure and support properly implemented and configured (i.e.: servers, user support, password reset, training)

- Work with IT experts to support configuration and web security

- Review pilot results, and use lessons learned to finalize the configuration and deployment

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Key Considerations: Training, Support and Go-live

ESDC will continue to provide help desk support for HIFIS 4 users, as well as additional support materials such as user and training guides, webinars, and newsletters.

On a continuous basis, communities will need to consider:

- Training that targets different users (case management, intake, etc.)
- Develop a communication strategy to support implementation
- Collect post-launch feedback to improve the user experience
- Identify super users to support other employees using HIFIS 4
- Partner with other organizations to support training and the help desk

Related Information and contacts

For more information about the Homeless Partnering Strategy (HPS):

- **HIFIS Website:** www.hifis.ca

- **HIFIS 4 Demo:** www.demo.hifis.ca
  - Provides an opportunity to get a hands-on look at what HIFIS 4 can do

- **HIFIS Help Desk:** 1-866-324-2375 and support@hifis.ca

- **HPS Newsletter:** Subscribe at NC-HPSINFO-INFOSPLI-GD@hrsdc-rhdcc.ca
  - Provides monthly information on HPS, HIFIS, and other homelessness-related issues

- **Community Workspace on Homelessness:** www.workspaceonhomelessness.ca

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