



# PATH Program HMIS Manual

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Projects for Assistance in Transition  
from Homelessness Program

Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

U.S. Department of Health and Human  
Services

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## Introduction

The *PATH (Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness) Program HMIS Manual* is intended to support data collection and reporting efforts of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead Agencies and PATH program grantees. This manual provides information on HMIS program setup and data collection guidance specific to the PATH Program.

The guidance provided in this document aligns with requirements around using HMIS as stated by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and refers to the data elements required for PATH in an HMIS as established in the [2014 HMIS Data Standards](#). This document is not intended to replace the HMIS Data Dictionary or the Data Manual, but to complement them and relate PATH Program-specific requirements. This document is not a replacement for any specific program guidance, requirements, regulations, notices, and training materials on the PATH program. This manual only addresses the use of HMIS for PATH.

For additional assistance please refer to the following:

- Guidance about the PATH Program and its requirements can be found on-line at [the PATH Program](#) page.
- To ask a question about any PATH Program HMIS requirement go to the [Ask A Question](#) section of the HUD Exchange. Please be sure to select “HMIS” for your question under “My Question is Related To.” HUD and PATH program staff are working together to answer questions that come in on Ask A Question related to PATH and HMIS.
- Information on HMIS is located in the [HMIS Section on the HUD Exchange](#).

## HMIS Project Setup Steps

It is important to be sure that communities understand the difference between a **program** and a **project** because they have distinct meanings in this context. A program is the source of funding that the organization is receiving to run its project (e.g., PATH Program funding for ABC Street Outreach project). For data collection purposes, HUD and its federal partners refer to categories of funding within a program as **components**.

### 1. Identify Projects for Inclusion in HMIS

Identify all the **projects** within the HMIS implementation that receive PATH funding.

### 2. Identify Funding Components for each Project

Identify the **component** for each project funded by the PATH grantee (the state/territory). The PATH Program includes two components:

- The **Street Outreach** component of PATH is used by PATH projects that provide street outreach. These PATH activities are designed to meet the immediate needs of unsheltered homeless persons by connecting them with emergency shelter, housing, and/or critical health services.
- The **Supportive Services** component of PATH is used by PATH projects that provide PATH-funded services to enrolled PATH clients.

Note: A single PATH project in a local community may be funded to do both Street Outreach and Supportive Services.

### 3. Set Up Projects in HMIS

For projects new to HMIS, the System Administrator will need to follow the normal setup procedures that are required for the community's HMIS. Existing projects, in HMIS, should be checked to make sure they meet the requirements outlined in this manual. All projects with existing HMIS records should be checked for accuracy and consistency with the 2014 HMIS Data Standards and this guidance. This must include setup of the following Project Descriptor Data Elements:

- **Organizational Identifiers (2.1)** – The name of the agency/organization receiving PATH funding must be entered or identified with the PATH specific project. An identification number will be generated by the HMIS. There should be a single record in HMIS for each agency/organization, regardless of how many projects they operate.
- **Project Identifiers (2.2)** – The name of the project receiving PATH funding must be entered or identified with the PATH specific project. An identification number will be generated by the HMIS. HMIS administrators should note that often the name of the project on the grant

agreement is not the same as the name the project is called by the organization and/or the common name in the community and often not the same name as is used on the Housing Inventory Chart (HIC). System administrators should maintain mapping information to correlate grant names, HIC names, and common names with the project identifiers either within the HMIS itself or separately.

The PATH Program funds states and territories who then distribute the funding to projects throughout their state that operate PATH. If an HMIS implementation includes more than one state in its implementation (which is the exception) and the same organization provides the same service to the same population of focus in two separate states, then two separate projects must be established in the HMIS (one for each state) in order to support reporting to the correct state contact.

- **Continuum of Care (CoC) Code (2.3)** – Each CoC is associated with a geographic area and has a code assigned by HUD. Select the CoC Code based on the location the project operates in. A project with multiple CoC jurisdictions within its service area should list all the applicable CoCs
- **Project Type (2.4)** – Select the correct project type for each project. Each project in an HMIS must be set up for the correct project type. No single project within an HMIS may have two project types. Therefore, no agency that receives an award consisting of multiple components may have both components set up in the HMIS as the same project.

The PATH Program Components (Street Outreach and Supportive Services) by themselves cannot be used for HMIS Project Typing. In order to correctly type a project in an HMIS the HMIS Lead must consult the PATH provider to determine the population of focus that the project is designed to serve.

**Continuum Project** should be answered ‘Yes’ for all projects funded under programs listed below. Appropriate project types will be critical to the CoC’s ability to produce System Wide Performance measures. PATH project types should be set up as follows:

PATH Program Component	Population of Focus	HMIS Project Type
Street Outreach and Supportive Services	Persons who generally reside in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g. streets, abandoned buildings, etc.)	Street Outreach
Street Outreach and Supportive Services	Persons who reside in a place other than one not meant for human habitation, or who are at risk of homelessness	Services Only
Supportive Services	The project serves only persons who are enrolled in PATH and only provide services other than Street Outreach.	Services Only

- **Special PATH notes on Project Type:**

PATH projects are not typed within an HMIS by where the project sees clients, but rather by who the population of focus is. For example – a street outreach program focuses on outreaching to persons experiencing homelessness who are living on the streets. The worker may find it helpful to see these clients on an on-going basis at a shelter clinic or a shelter lobby.

Projects may find that their clients move between the streets and emergency shelters and the street outreach worker continues to work with the client regardless of their living situation without exiting them from the Street Outreach project. As long as the population of focus is persons who generally reside on the streets, then the movement of a client to a shelter does not require a different project setup in an HMIS.

When a PATH project primarily contacts individuals in a service setting, it is to be project typed within the HMIS as Supportive Services Only for reporting purposes.

It is possible for one PATH funded project to serve two separate populations of focus. In such cases, the PATH project must have two projects set up in their HMIS – one as a Street Outreach project type for the street homeless clients and another as a Supportive Services Only project type for the sheltered or at risk homeless clients.

When Supportive Services Only is selected as a PATH Project Type, the response to the dependent field “Affiliated with a residential project” should be “no,” unless the project is funded as a Street Outreach component and is operating within an emergency shelter. Then the affiliation would be “yes” and the shelter(s) the project operates with would be listed.

- **Method for Tracking Emergency Shelter Utilization (2.5)** – This element is not relevant as the PATH Program does not fund emergency shelter projects. Not relevant for PATH.
- **Federal Partner Funding Sources (2.6)** – Projects funded in whole or in part by PATH funds are to be identified as **HHS:PATH – Street Outreach & Supportive Services Only**. Enter a grant identifier for each PATH grant the project receives along with the grant start and end dates.
- **Bed and Unit Inventory Information (2.7)** – Not relevant for PATH.
- **Site Information (2.8)** – Not relevant for PATH.
- **Target Population (2.9)** – Not relevant for PATH.

## **Data Collection Requirements**

All PATH projects are required to collect all of the Universal Data Elements and a select number of Program-Specific Data Elements. The Program-Specific Data Elements to be collected by each PATH project are as shown below:

Element Number	HMIS Program Specific Data Element	Street Outreach	Services Only
4.1	Housing Status	x	x
4.2	Income and Sources	Δ	Δ
4.3	Non-Cash Benefits	Δ	Δ
4.4	Health Insurance	Δ	Δ
4.5	Physical Disability	x	x
4.6	Developmental Disability	x	x
4.7	Chronic Health Condition	x	x
4.8	HIV/AIDS	Δ	Δ
4.9	Mental Health Problem	x	x
4.10	Substance Abuse	x	x
4.12	Contact	x	x
4.13	Date of Engagement	x	x
4.14 A	Services Provided – PATH Funded	x	x
4.16 A	Referrals Provided - PATH	x	x
4.20	PATH Status	x	x
4.21	Connection with SOAR	Δ	Δ

X = data collection required

Δ = data collection is pending approval as of publication of the Data Manual and is not required to be collected on October 1, 2014 for PATH projects. Projects may elect to collect this data now.

Information on the rationale, collection point, subjects, and instructions for each element can be found in the [HMIS Data Standards Manual](#).

## Special Data Collection Instructions

HMIS System Administrators and HMIS users should be aware of several special data collection issues that apply to PATH-funded projects.

### Street Outreach

- Data Collection Challenges:** A street outreach project is likely to encounter difficulty engaging homeless persons. Street Outreach projects may record a project entry with limited information about the client and improve on the accuracy and completeness of client data over time, by editing data in an HMIS as they engage the client. The initial entry may be as basic as the project entry date, a “made-up” name (e.g., Redhat Tenthstreetbridge) that would be identifiable for retrieval by the worker in the system, and gender. Over time, the data must be edited for accuracy (e.g., replacing “Redhat” with “Robert”) as the worker learns that detail.
- Contacts:** A street outreach project is expected to record every contact made with each client in the HMIS. A contact is defined as an interaction between a worker and a client designed to engage the client. Contacts may include activities such as a conversation between the street outreach worker and the client about the client’s well-being or needs, an office visit to discuss

their housing plan, or a referral to another community service. A contact must be recorded anytime a client is met, including when an engagement date or project entry date is recorded on the same day. PATH providers should refer to the [PATH Reporting Guide](#) for PATH reporting guidance and to review the PATH definition of a contact.

- **Engagements:** Per the HMIS Data Standards, by agreement across all federal partners, an engagement date is the date on which an interactive client relationship results in a deliberate client assessment or beginning of a case plan. The date of engagement should be entered into HMIS at the point that the client has been engaged by the outreach worker. This date may be on or after the project entry date and must be prior to project exit. If the client exits without becoming engaged, the engagement date should be left blank. If the client was contacted on the date of engagement, a contact must also be entered for that date.
- **Data Quality:** Reporting on data quality for street outreach projects is limited to clients with a date of engagement. Therefore, it is important that when a worker records the engagement date, he/she also reviews all of the Universal Data Elements and applicable Program Specific Data Elements for completeness and accuracy.
- **Enrollments:** An enrollment date is the date when a client has formally consented to participate in services provided by the PATH project. This definition is an overview of the general concept for HMIS staff; PATH providers should refer to the [PATH Reporting Guide](#) for a detailed definition of enrollment. The date of PATH enrollment should be entered into the HMIS at the point that the client has become enrolled, using the PATH Status element (4.20). It may be on or after the project entry date or engagement date and prior to project exit. If the client exits without becoming enrolled, the PATH Status element (4.20) needs to be completed, indicating that the client was not enrolled and the reason the client was not enrolled. If the client was contacted on the date that PATH Status was determined, a contact must also be entered for that date.
- **Additional PATH Reporting Notes:**
  - PATH reporting does not require the name of PATH enrollees or contacts; however, the name of PATH clients will be necessary for the HMIS system to determine an accurate count of client contacts and enrollees through a de-duplication process within HMIS.
  - PATH reporting currently reports upon clients with co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders. The 2014 HMIS Data Standards collect data, that when combined, can determine whether or not a client has a co-occurring substance use and mental health disorder.
  - PATH reporting requires that clients receiving services be enrolled in PATH and that services reported upon are PATH-funded (4.14 A Services Provided – PATH Funded). Please refer to the [PATH Reporting Guide](#) for PATH reporting guidance and definitions of PATH service categories.
  - PATH reporting requires that clients receiving assisted referrals be enrolled in PATH (4.16 A Referrals Provided – PATH). Please refer to the [PATH Reporting Guide](#) for PATH reporting guidance and definitions for PATH referral categories.

- PATH providers with questions regarding PATH reporting data elements and processes should reference the [PATH Reporting Guide](#).

### **Supportive Services Only**

- A supportive services only project setup should be identical to a street outreach project setup with one exception – the project type will be Services Only and not Street Outreach. All Universal Data Elements and Program Specific Data Elements are the same.