

# CRS Report for Congress

## Counting the Homeless: Homeless Management Information Systems

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Libby Perl  
Analyst in Social Legislation  
Domestic Social Policy Division



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# Counting the Homeless: Homeless Management Information Systems

## Summary

In 1998, Congress directed the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop a process for collecting data about the homeless. Together with local communities, HUD began in 2001 to implement a series of Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). Two categories of federal fund recipients are required to participate in HMIS: organizations that receive grants through the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program and organizations that receive HUD Homeless Assistance Grants. The HOPWA program provides housing and supportive services for persons living with AIDS, while the Homeless Assistance Grants fund transitional and permanent housing, as well as services, for homeless individuals.

Local jurisdictions called “Continuums of Care” (CoCs) — typically cities, counties, or combinations of both — are the entities that implement HMIS. Homeless service providers in these CoCs collect and store information about homeless individuals they serve, and the information is aggregated in computer systems at the CoC level. HUD anticipates that information about homeless individuals from CoCs across the country eventually will help it to better serve the needs of the homeless.

HUD released the first analysis of data from a sample of participating HMIS jurisdictions — the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) — in February 2007. The AHAR used HMIS data from a sample of 64 communities to derive national-level estimates of the number of homeless at two points in time in 2005, and over a three-month period from February to April 2005. The report also provided point-in-time estimates of homeless individuals from counts done by local communities in January 2005. It is expected that data from HMIS eventually will provide an unduplicated count of the number of homeless from communities across the country.

Congress initially allocated funds for homeless data collection in the FY2001 HUD Appropriations Act (P.L. 106-377), and has continued to allocate funds in all HUD spending bills from FY2002 to FY2007. Local communities can then apply to HUD for available funds that they may use to implement HMIS. According to the most recent HUD progress report to Congress regarding HMIS, 72% of local CoCs were implementing HMIS, meaning that they had established systems into which data are entered. Approximately 20% of CoCs had decided to implement an HMIS, and were in the process of planning the system, and 7% of CoCs were not yet planning an HMIS.

This report describes the development of HMIS, summarizes information released in the AHAR, describes previous attempts to count the homeless, and reports on the continuing progress of HMIS. It will be updated as events warrant.

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# Counting the Homeless: Homeless Management Information Systems

## Introduction

It is difficult to ascertain the number and characteristics of the homeless due to the transient nature of the population.<sup>1</sup> Although attempts to count and describe the homeless have been made in recent decades, no systematic method for tracking the homeless has existed until now. In response to a directive from Congress, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) began to develop a system to track the homeless in 2001, with the goal of full implementation by 2004 (the goal of full implementation has not yet been reached). The HUD plan calls for local communities and their homeless service providers to gather information about homeless individuals, and enter and store the information in databases at the local level. These data collection, organization, and storage systems have been termed Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS).

HUD is implementing HMIS through local “Continuums of Care” (CoCs), which acquire and process data from all participating local service providers. CoCs are local boards formed by communities — typically cities, counties, or combinations of both — made up of representatives from nonprofit service providers, advocacy groups, local government, and other interested organizations.<sup>2</sup> Local boards identify the needs of the homeless in their communities and try to ensure that they receive the appropriate mix of preventative assistance, emergency services, transitional housing, supportive services, and permanent housing. Local homeless services providers submit requests for funding to their local boards, which each in turn submit single consolidated applications to HUD. In FY2006, 436 CoCs received funding from HUD.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (P.L. 100-77), a homeless person is “(1) an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and (2) an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is — (A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); (B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or (C) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.”

<sup>2</sup> States may also constitute CoCs to coordinate funding in sparsely populated areas.

<sup>3</sup> Statement of Mark Johnston, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Needs, HUD Office of Community Planning and Development, FY2007 Continuum of Care NOFA Webcast, (continued...)

Two types of organizations are required to participate in HMIS: those that receive funding through the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program and those that receive Homeless Assistance Grants. The HOPWA program, enacted in 1990 (P.L. 101-625) provides housing and supportive services for persons living with HIV/AIDS.<sup>4</sup> The Homeless Assistance Grants, enacted as part of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (P.L. 100-77),<sup>5</sup> consist of both formula grants, which are distributed through the Emergency Shelter Grants program, and competitive grants, which are available through the Shelter Plus Care program, Supportive Housing Program, and Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation Assistance for Single Room Occupancy Dwellings program.<sup>6</sup> Other service providers that serve the homeless but do not receive federal funds from these sources are also encouraged to participate in HMIS.

## Development of the HMIS Network

### Congressional Direction

Beginning in 1998, Congress asked HUD to count the homeless and gather data about both their characteristics and use of homeless assistance services. The FY1999 HUD spending bill (P.L. 105-276) set aside up to 1% of the total appropriation for Homeless Assistance Grants for systems to track the homeless. The law referred to the House Appropriations Committee report (H.Rept. 105-610), which specifically described the type of data that HUD should collect. The data elements listed in the report include an unduplicated count of the homeless; characteristics such as age, race, sex, disability status, health status, and income; types of services that homeless clients received; and client outcomes such as length of stay in transitional housing, success in acquiring permanent housing, and employment status. The report language concluded that this information would allow HUD to better assess the quality of service programs supported with federal funds.

Congress provided further direction to HUD in the HUD Appropriations Act for FY2001 (P.L. 106-377). The law made Supportive Housing Program funds available for local CoCs to implement management information systems.<sup>7</sup> The conference report (H.Rept. 106-988) directed HUD to work with local jurisdictions to develop

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<sup>3</sup> (...continued)

Mar. 27, 2007, available at [<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/index.cfm>].

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the HOPWA program, see CRS Report RS20704, *Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)*, by Libby Perl.

<sup>5</sup> P.L. 100-77 is codified at 42 U.S.C. §§11301-11435.

<sup>6</sup> For more information about the Homeless Assistance Grants, see CRS Report RL33764, *The HUD Homeless Assistance Grants: Distribution of Funds*, by Libby Perl.

<sup>7</sup> The provision allowing HMIS funding from the Supportive Housing Program (SHP) is codified at 42 U.S.C. §11383(a)(7). HUD enumerated the ways in which CoCs may use SHP funds for management information systems in *Federal Register*, volume 69, no. 146, July 30, 2005, p. 45890.

a system to collect data, and to be ready to analyze the data within three years of passage of the appropriations bill. Congress also requested that HUD provide Congress with a report on its findings containing an unduplicated count of the homeless and a descriptive profile of the population.<sup>8</sup> The FY2001 Appropriations Act once again allocated funds to pay for data collection, this time setting aside 1.5% of the total appropriation of \$1.02 billion. Congress has continued to allocate funds for homeless data collection in spending bills from FY2002 to FY2007.

## HUD Actions

In the time since Congress directed HUD to implement a system to count the homeless and collect information on their characteristics, HUD has issued five annual reports to Congress updating its progress. In an initial report, dated August 2001, HUD stated that it would help CoCs collect homelessness data through four means:<sup>9</sup>

- flexibly implementing the new Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) eligible activity under the Supportive Housing Program in the 2001 McKinney-Vento competition;
- initiating a comprehensive technical assistance program to help local jurisdictions collect unduplicated client-level data by 2004;
- developing an approach to obtaining meaningful data for an Annual Homeless Assessment Report from a nationally representative sample of jurisdictions; and
- analyzing the most viable approaches to obtaining homeless client-level reporting.

Since issuing this 2001 report, HUD has initiated a number of activities to follow through on its pledge to assist CoCs. It specified that CoCs may use Supportive Housing Program funds for computer hardware, software, and personnel to manage and operate information systems, analyze HMIS data, and produce reports. HUD technical assistance teams hold training sessions for CoCs across the country. In 2004, 2005, and 2006, HUD sponsored national conferences in which it provided sessions on a wide range of topics, including data entry, strategies for including data on domestic violence clients and the chronically homeless, and how to use HMIS to evaluate program performance and improve services to the homeless. HUD established a website — HMIS.Info — where information about HMIS

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<sup>8</sup> Senate Appropriations Committee. *Department of Veterans Affairs, and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act 2001*. S.Rept. 106-410 to accompany H.R. 4635. 106<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., Sept. 13, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Report to Congress: HUD's Strategy for Homeless Data Collection, Analysis and Reporting*, Aug. 2001, p. 1, available at [<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/strategy/congressreport.pdf>].

implementation across the country can be disseminated.<sup>10</sup> Since October 2004, the HMIS.Info site has published a newsletter, managed a listserv, and hosted conference calls. In addition, a number of publications on implementing management information systems are available on the HMIS.Info website.

**HMIS Data and Technical Standards.** On July 30, 2004, HUD released its final notice on HMIS data and technical standards that local CoCs are expected to follow when they collect information about their homeless clients.<sup>11</sup> The standards describe two levels of data collection — universal data, which homeless service providers must collect from all clients, and program-specific data, which programs that receive certain types of funding must collect, but that other programs are encouraged to collect as well.

All participants must report on universal data elements, which include name, date of birth, race, ethnicity, gender, veteran's status, Social Security Number, prior residence, and disabling conditions.<sup>12</sup> In general, all programs that receive funds under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and HOPWA are required to provide program-specific data; this requirement is not new, as HUD already requires grantee organizations to provide this information in their Annual Progress Reports.<sup>13</sup> Included in program-specific data elements are amount and sources of income, receipt of non-cash benefits, physical and developmental disabilities, HIV status, mental illness, substance abuse status, and domestic violence status.<sup>14</sup>

**Confidentiality of Domestic Violence Victims.** Due to the sensitive nature of much of the information that homeless service providers must collect, some groups that provide services to domestic violence victims raised privacy concerns to HUD after its release of proposed data and technical standards but prior to release of final standards in 2004. These organizations requested that information about domestic violence victims not be included in HMIS.<sup>15</sup> At the time, HUD acknowledged the sensitivity of certain information, but concluded that CoCs could collect the information in such a way that would protect the identity of those in the system. To this end, HUD included privacy and security standards in the data and technical standards that all organizations must follow.

However, on January 5, 2006, President Bush signed the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act (P.L. 109-162), which included provisions to (1) amend the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to prevent victim service providers from disclosing personally identifying information through HMIS, and (2) permit disclosure of non-personally identifying information only after a public notice and comment period. On March 16, 2007, HUD released

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<sup>10</sup> The website is [<http://www.hmis.info>].

<sup>11</sup> *Federal Register* vol. 69, no. 146, July 30, 2004, pp. 45888-45934.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45905.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45913-45914.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45914.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45891-45892.

a notice regarding HMIS and the amendments to McKinney-Vento made by P.L. 109-162.<sup>16</sup> In the notice, HUD confirmed that it would require disclosure of non-personally identifying information only after going through a notice and comment period. Until HUD does so, it has instructed organizations that provide services to domestic violence victims not to input information about their clients into HMIS.

## Counts of the Homeless

Since the 1980s, numerous attempts have been made to estimate the total number of homeless in the country, as well as describe their characteristics. Although the specific methods used in the studies have varied, in each, researchers surveyed a sample of the homeless population and used the sample to estimate the total number of homeless persons in the country. The time periods covered by these counts vary. Some are “point-in-time” counts that estimate the number of homeless on a single night during the year. Others estimate the number of persons who are homeless during longer periods — a week or span of months. Researchers have also used samples to estimate the total number of persons who are homeless at some point during the year.

The HMIS initiative differs from these previous efforts to count the homeless and gather information. Instead of sampling only certain communities or counting the homeless on only a single night, CoCs gather information from all homeless assistance providers on all homeless individuals who use their services each day of the year. Eventually, once communities have fully implemented HMIS, the network of systems is expected to provide an annual unduplicated count of the homeless from each jurisdiction. Counting homeless populations on the street might continue to be important, however, as their use of services is unknown.<sup>17</sup> HUD recently released its first report to Congress using HMIS data, the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR). Because HMIS is not fully implemented in all jurisdictions around the country, the AHAR, like previous efforts to count the homeless, relies on a sample of jurisdictions.

## The Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR)

On February 28, 2007, HUD released the first AHAR.<sup>18</sup> The report collected HMIS data from a sample of 64 communities during a three-month period (February

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<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, “The Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005: Applicability to HUD Programs,” 72 *Federal Register* 12695-12700, Mar. 16, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *HUD’s Homeless Assistance Programs: A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*, October 2004, p. 11, available at [<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/library/countinghomeless/countingguide.pdf>] (hereinafter *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*).

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *The Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*, Feb. 2007, available at [<http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/ahar.pdf>].



to April 2005), and used these data to derive national-level estimates of the number of homeless persons. The report provides estimates of the number of homeless individuals at two points in time, an estimate of the number of homeless persons during a three-month period, and a description of characteristics of the homeless.

The HMIS data in the AHAR provided estimates only of the *sheltered* homeless population — individuals living in emergency and transitional housing — and did not include estimates of individuals living on the street or other places not meant for human habitation. As a result, the AHAR also reported data collected from CoCs during their one-night counts of the homeless in January 2005, which included street counts of the homeless. HUD requires CoCs to conduct these counts at least once every two years, and include the results in their annual grant applications.

**AHAR Estimates Using HMIS Data.** Using HMIS data and counts collected from CoCs, the AHAR reported two point-in-time estimates of the number of *sheltered* homeless, as well as an estimate of the number of persons who were homeless in the three month period from February 1 to April 30, 2005. (See **Table 1.**) These estimates do not include the homeless who were not residing in emergency shelters or transitional housing during the relevant time periods. Data from the HMIS sample communities provided that

- an estimated 313,722 persons in the country were homeless on April 30, 2005;
- an estimated 334,744 persons were homeless on an average day between February 1 and April 30, 2005; and
- an estimated 704,146 persons were homeless on at least one day between February 1 and April 30, 2005.

The AHAR did not attempt to use these numbers to estimate the total number of persons who were homeless at some point during the year.

The HMIS data collected over the three-month period in 2005 also provided information about the characteristics of the homeless surveyed. Information from the sampled jurisdictions was used to estimate that 65.7% of homeless persons were individuals or households without children, while 34.4% were comprised of households with children. Unaccompanied adult males made up the largest percentage of the population (47.4%). Children made up 21.2% of the population. The majority of homeless individuals in the three-month count were members of minority groups, 58.9%. Of the adult homeless population counted during the three-month period, 18.7% were veterans and 25.0% were disabled.

**AHAR Estimates Using CoC Point-in-Time Counts.** The AHAR also provided estimates of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons collected by CoCs as part of HUD-required one-night counts of the homeless. Beginning in the mid-1990s, HUD asked CoCs to provide a count of the sheltered homeless in their annual grant applications. In 2003, it broadened the requirement and asked CoCs to provide information on subpopulations of homeless, including the number of chronically homeless, those with mental illness and HIV/AIDS, and victims of domestic

violence. For the 2005 count, HUD provided more specific guidance, directing CoCs to conduct a one-night count during the month of January of both clients who used homeless services and those who were on the street.<sup>19</sup>

The CoCs' counts found that the sheltered homeless population consisted of 415,366 persons on a single day in the month of January 2005, while the unsheltered homeless numbered 338,781, for a total estimate of 754,147.<sup>20</sup> Note that these are not estimates of all those who are homeless at some point during the year. The HUD website provides a breakdown of the point-in-time estimates for each CoC.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the National Alliance to End Homelessness gathered the CoC point-in-time counts from HUD and published them in a report released in January 2007.<sup>22</sup>

## **Additional Sources of Information About the Homeless**

Previous attempts have been made both to arrive at an accurate count of the number of homeless in the United States and to describe their characteristics. In 1989, the Urban Institute released estimates of the number of homeless persons using data collected during March 1987. Researchers surveyed a sample of homeless persons who used soup kitchens and shelters, and estimated that the number of homeless persons during an average seven-day period in March 1987 ranged from 496,000 to 600,000.<sup>23</sup> The researchers used this seven-day estimate to project that approximately 1 million individuals were homeless at some time during 1987.<sup>24</sup>

The Urban Institute released a second estimate in 2000 using data collected in 1996 by the Census Bureau as part of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients (NSHAPC). The NSHAPC surveyed individuals who used numerous services such as emergency shelters, transitional and permanent housing facilities, soup kitchens, food pantries, and drop-in centers.<sup>25</sup> The researchers used the data to arrive at an estimate of the number of homeless individuals who relied on homeless services during two different seven-day periods in 1996. During a seven-day period in the fall of 1996, an estimated 444,000 clients used homeless assistance

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<sup>19</sup> *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> For the 2005 count, HUD directed CoCs to conduct a point-in-time count of the homeless during the last week of January 2005. Therefore, not all CoC point-in-time counts took place on the same day in January.

<sup>21</sup> The counts are available at [<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/local/index.cfm>].

<sup>22</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Homelessness Counts*, Jan. 2007, Appendix A, available at [[http://www.endhomelessness.org/files/1440\\_file\\_30099\\_NAEH\\_FINAL\\_lo.pdf](http://www.endhomelessness.org/files/1440_file_30099_NAEH_FINAL_lo.pdf)].

<sup>23</sup> Martha R. Burt and Barbara E. Cohen, *America's Homeless: Numbers, Characteristics, and Programs that Serve Them*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press, July 1989), 29.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> Martha Burt and Laudan Y. Aron, *America's Homeless II: Population and Services*, The Urban Institute: Feb. 1, 2000, available at [[http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/900344\\_AmericasHomelessII.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/900344_AmericasHomelessII.pdf)].

services, and during a seven-day period in the winter of that year, the number was estimated to be 842,000. The researchers used these numbers to estimate that during all of 1996, between 2.3 million and 3.5 million individuals were homeless at some time.<sup>26</sup>

A number of organizations have also collected information to describe the characteristics of the national homeless population. Using the NSHAPC data collected in 1996, the Urban Institute published demographic, income, and other information.<sup>27</sup> The U.S. Conference of Mayors has issued an annual report every year since 1984, in which between 20 and 30 large cities survey their social service providers' efforts to combat hunger and homelessness and provide housing.<sup>28</sup> The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) publishes an annual report in which it reports the results of surveys from VA staff, service providers, and veterans themselves, as well as a point-in-time estimate of the number of homeless veterans.<sup>29</sup> Finally, in 2000, the Census Bureau conducted several one-day surveys of homeless individuals and wrote a report that described basic characteristics of the homeless such as location, gender, race, and age.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Martha R. Burt, Laudan Y. Aron, et. al., *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve*, Urban Institute, December 1999, available at [<http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/homelessness.pdf>].

<sup>28</sup> The most recent U.S. Conference of Mayors report, the *USCM-Sodexo USA Hunger and Homelessness Survey 2006*, was published in December 2006, and is available online at [<http://usmayors.org/uscm/hungersurvey/2006/report06.pdf>].

<sup>29</sup> John Nakashima, Craig W. Burnette, James F. McGuire, and Amanda Sheely, *The Thirteenth Annual Progress Report on Public Law 105-114: Services for Homeless Veterans Assessment and Coordination* (Draft), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, April 15, 2007, available at [[http://www1.va.gov/homeless/docs/CHALENG\\_REPORT\\_FY2006\\_DRAFT.pdf](http://www1.va.gov/homeless/docs/CHALENG_REPORT_FY2006_DRAFT.pdf)]. The point-in-time estimate of homeless veterans in FY2006 was 195,827.

<sup>30</sup> Annetta C. Smith and Denise I. Smith, *Emergency and Transitional Shelter Population: 2000*, U.S. Census Bureau, October 2001. The report is available from the Census Bureau website, at [<http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/censr01-2.pdf>].

**Table 1. Estimates of the Number of Homeless Individuals**

<b>Data from Annual Homeless Assessment Report</b>			
<i>Time Period</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Population Sampled</i>	<i>Estimate</i>
One Day, April 30, 2005	HMIS	Sheltered Persons Only	313,722
Average Day, February - April 2005	HMIS	Sheltered Persons Only	334,744
One Day, January 2005	CoC Counts	Sheltered Persons Only	415,366
One Day, January 2005	CoC Counts	Sheltered and Unsheltered Persons	754,147
Three Months, February - April 2005	HMIS	Sheltered Persons Only	704,146
<b>Data from Previous Estimates</b>			
<i>Time Period</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Population Sampled</i>	<i>Estimate</i>
Average Week, March 1987	Urban Institute	Persons Using Shelters and Soup Kitchens	496,000 - 600,000
Average Week, October 1996	NSHAPC	Persons Using Various Services	444,000
Average Week, February 1996	NSHAPC	Persons Using Various Services	847,000
Full Year, 1996	NSHAPC	Persons Using Various Services	2.3 - 3.5 million

**Sources:** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *The Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*, February 2007, available at [<http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/ahar.pdf>]; Martha R. Burt and Barbara E. Cohen, *America's Homeless: Numbers, Characteristics, and Programs that Serve Them*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press, July 1989), 32; and Martha Burt and Laudan Y. Aron, *America's Homeless II: Population and Services*, The Urban Institute: Feb. 1, 2000, available at [[http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/900344\\_AmericasHomelessII.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/900344_AmericasHomelessII.pdf)].

## Status of HMIS Implementation

HUD's initial goal was that every CoC implement an HMIS by October 2004. According to HUD's 2006 Report to Congress, as of 2005, 72% of CoCs were implementing an HMIS (meaning actually inputting data), 20% had decided to implement an HMIS and were in the process of planning the system, and 7% were not yet planning an HMIS.<sup>31</sup>

At the local level, CoCs have several options for implementing and maintaining their HMIS databases. Not all CoCs are implementing their own HMIS. Some are collaborating to create a multi-jurisdictional HMIS. Others are planning to make individual CoC data accessible at the state level, while 14 states have decided to implement a state-level HMIS.<sup>32</sup> Local initiatives also differ in their methods of incorporating service providers into HMIS. Local CoCs may use one central HMIS, into which all service providers input client information. Another option is to allow service providers to use different database systems, but to have technical specialists available at the CoC level to merge all data into one unified system. A third option is to use side-by-side systems where individual service providers enter data into their own systems, and also enter data into a CoC-wide HMIS.

## Conclusion

HUD anticipates that a version of HMIS eventually will be active in each CoC across the country. Once established, a comprehensive HMIS network is meant to improve the ability of communities to provide services to the homeless as well as to help HUD determine how best to allocate resources.<sup>33</sup> In the coming years, the AHAR is expected to include data from a larger number of service providers, cover nonresidential populations, examine longitudinal data over a time period greater than three months, and include more information about the clients served.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Report to Congress: Fifth Progress Report on HUD's Strategy for Homeless Data Collection, Reporting and Analysis*, Mar. 2006, p. 6, available at [[http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/strategy/report tocongress2006.pdf](http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/strategy/report%20tocongress2006.pdf)].

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> *The Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.