

Homeward Community Information System (HCIS) Client Privacy Notice

When you request or receive services from this agency, we collect information about you and/or your household that is entered into a computerized database called HCIS. This agency and other area agencies that provide services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness use this information to identify services and resources that may be of interest to you. This information is also used to improve service coordination and to produce reports.

Below is a description of the information that is being collected, how it is shared, the purpose for sharing, and how your information is protected.

What information is collected?

Depending on your situation, you may be asked for some or all of the following:

- Basic identifying information (examples: name, SSN, date of birth);
- Demographic information (examples: gender, race, ethnicity, veteran status, disability information, household relationships);
- Housing information (examples: prior housing situation, homeless status, reasons for homelessness);
- Income & Benefit information (examples: sources and amounts of household income, enrollment in benefit programs, employment information); and
- Health-related information (examples: diagnoses, mental health conditions, substance abuse history, medications).

Please note: Specific health-related information in HCIS is never shared among Partner Agencies.

How is information protected?

- Partner Agencies must abide by relevant state or federal laws protecting client data;
- HCIS Policies and Procedures establish additional protections for client data including requirements for hardware, software, security, confidentiality, and training;
- Data is entered into HCIS via a secure and encrypted internet connection; and
- HCIS data is encrypted and stored in a secured facility.

Why is information collected and how is it used or disclosed?

- To better assess your needs and the needs of others in the community;
- To make it easier for clients to receive services from several agencies;
- To track whether your needs, and the needs of others, are being met;
- To improve the quality of care and service for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness;
- To better provide or coordinate services among local service providers;
- To perform functions related to payment or reimbursement of services;
- To carry out administrative functions (such as legal, audits, personnel, oversight, and management functions); and
- To conduct research on issues and programs related to homelessness (either on de-identified (anonymous) data or with parties who have signed an agreement to protect your privacy).

Partner agencies offer a variety of services of interest to our clients. Connecting these agencies through HCIS makes referrals easier, and decreases duplicative intakes through many programs. By sharing your information with Partner Agencies, you will help them:

- Identify other services or programs you may be eligible for;
- More accurately count the number of homeless persons, the services available and what other services are needed; and
- Show the people who fund homeless programs that the services are needed and help the agencies to obtain other funding for programs that serve homeless persons.

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More rarely, disclosure of HCIS data may also be permitted:

- As required by law, including in response to lawful court order, court-ordered warrant, subpoena, or summons issued by a judicial officer,
- To avert a serious threat to health or safety
- To report abuse, neglect, or domestic violence to a governmental authority.

How is information shared?

Once you sign the Release of Information, your record is made available to regional Partner Agencies. A list of partner agencies is available here: http://homewardva.org/images/Providers_that_use_HCIS.pdf.

Other agencies that do not use HCIS may access your information to assist with coordination of services if they sign an agreement to protect your privacy. At any time, you may revoke your permission to share your information and this will prevent further sharing with Partner Agencies. Specific health-related information (e.g., diagnoses, mental health conditions, substance abuse history, medications) is never shared between Partner Agencies.

This policy may be amended at any time and amendments may effect information obtained before the date of the change.

You may obtain a copy of the information we have about you (unless we are unable to provide one due to legal proceedings), as well as request corrections be made to your information.

If you have questions or complaints regarding the privacy or security of your information in HCIS, you may write directly to:

Homeward
1125 Commerce Rd.
Richmond, VA 23224
email: info@homewardva.org