RHYTTAC – Regional Meeting Frequently Asked Questions (RHY-HMIS)  
Provided by Family and Youth Services Bureau’s Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center  
RHYTTAC is Operated by: National Safe Place Network - www.nspnetwork.org  www.rhyttac.net

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM  
(RHY-HMIS)  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Program is funded by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) to provide specific services, as defined by federal legislation, regulations, and language included in applicable funding opportunity announcements. RHY grantees have shared questions specific to RHY-HMIS, and to the extent possible, guidance has been provided in this document. Where applicable, specific links to resources have been included in the answers.

RHY-HMIS Technical Assistance

- Grantees and staff with questions about your data upload to include logins, files and error messages please contact the RHY-HMIS On-line Service Desk at: www.RHYMISServiceDesk.net
- For assistance with issues concerning your agency’s CoC/HMIS or questions about RHY-HMIS data, please email FYSB/HHS staff at: RHYMIS@acf.hhs.gov
- Questions regarding HMIS: Contact the HUD Exchange, Ask A Question HMIS Desk: https://www.hudexchange.info/get-assistance/my-question/

Questions related to RHY-HMIS

1. **How does FYSB utilize RHY-HMIS data?**

FYSB uses RHY-HMIS data to measure the effectiveness of RHY programs, inform the design of future changes, ensure grantees have access to their data, inform funding decisions, and provide information to FYSB Federal Project Officers as part of their grantee monitoring process. As required by the Runaway and Youth Homeless Act, FYSB also uses RHY-HMIS data to report on performance measures for the Congressional Justification budget and inform its bi-annual Congressional report regarding:

- The demographics of the RHY population served
- The needs of the youth served by RHY grantees
- The type and level of services provided by RHY grantees
- The impact of RHY services, as measured by outcomes addressing, for example, destination upon program exit, health status, education/school attendance, and employment status

2. **How should programs document prevention services and aftercare in RHY-HMIS?** In particular, how should programs document: (a) services provided to homeless youth who have been discharged from a Basic Center Program-Emergency Shelter (BCP-ES) program and who are living on the street or some other unstable situation; and (b) services provided to homeless youth who move back and forth between a BCP emergency shelter program and the street or another unstable situation?

Every Continuum of Care (CoC) has a designated HMIS Lead. The HMIS lead is the person or entity responsible for, among other things, RHY-HMIS project setup. That includes setting up the RHY-HMIS so that each Basic Center Program (BCP) has two components: BCP-ES (Emergency Shelter) and BCP-P (Prevention). It also includes making sure the RHY-HMIS has an Aftercare Plans field. This data element is used to describe aftercare plans executed after the youth’s exit from the BCP project. Aftercare plans are required for all RHY programs, except SOP, and should cover a period of up to 90 days after exit from the RHY project. Grantees
are expected to begin discharge planning at intake. Case planning, even over the course of 24 hours, should focus on anticipated shelter needs, potential referrals and after-care planning.

3. What is the distinction between Shelter and Prevention

Over the course of their participation in a BCP program, a youth may receive either prevention services (BCP-P) or emergency shelter services (BCP-ES) or both prevention services and emergency shelter services but not simultaneously. Since emergency shelter services can be provided within the shelter building or in other locations, the following guidance may be helpful in determining whether services provided outside the actual shelter constitute prevention services or emergency shelter services for youth staying in a BCP emergency shelter.

- If a youth receives BCP services but is not staying in a BCP emergency shelter or other RHY residential programs, data about their status and services would be entered into the BCP-P RHY-HMIS project.
- If a youth who has been receiving BCP-P services makes the decision to enter a BCP emergency shelter, the youth should be exited from the BCP-P RHY-HMIS project as of the date they entered the shelter, and the youth should then be enrolled in the BCP-ES RHY-HMIS project effective the date the youth entered the shelter. It is acceptable, if the RHY-HMIS has such capacity, to automate the exit from the BCP-P project when such a youth is enrolled in the BCP-ES project.
- If a youth is staying in the BCP emergency shelter, data about the youth’s status and services would be entered into the BCP-ES RHY-HMIS project.
- If an unsheltered youth begins receiving BCP services and decides to enter the shelter that same night, data about all the services they received that day can be entered into the BCP-ES RHY-HMIS project, and there is no need to enroll them in the BCP-P RHY-HMIS project.

4. What is the distinction between aftercare and prevention?

Aftercare services are provided after a youth is exited entirely from the BCP program. If the youth is discharged from the BCP emergency shelter and the minimum of 90 days of aftercare is provided, then the youth begins to BCP prevention services, the youth should be re-enrolled in the BCP-P RHY-HMIS project, and the youth's status and ongoing services should be tracked in that project.

Aftercare plan information may be entered only after a youth has been exited/discharged from the BCP she/he received services from and cannot be recorded before the youth has been exited from the appropriate RHY-HMIS project. Each RHY-HMIS system may handle aftercare plans differently but must enter whether aftercare was collected (yes/no/refused), the date information was collected, and the primary way service was provided (e.g., telephone, in-person: one-on-one).

5. Is there a way for data related to street outreach programs (SOPs) to be entered incrementally as more information about the youth becomes available?

Yes, FYSB understands that building a relationship with a youth on the street is very important, requires patience, and takes priority over data collection. An incremental process of data entry is encouraged. For example, a record may be created in RHY-HMIS that has “Name” equal to “boy with red backpack.” As a relationship is built over time, more information may be provided by the youth and added to the record.

6. Why does the quality of data reports vary so much across vendors?

The RHY-HMIS Data Completeness – Data Quality Report is the same for all RHY grantees. This report is generated from the RHY data uploaded by each RHY grantee’s RHY-HMIS into RhyPoint. Although all HMIS
vendors must follow the guidelines set forth in the HMIS Data Standards, each HMIS vendor may have slightly different data quality reports that are unique to their system. Variations may also result from different methodologies in each vendor’s report.

7. **Is it possible to make the upload window longer than three weeks?**
The FYSB contractor has explored that possibility and determined that extending the 3-week window would not make much of a difference. Instead, based on grantee feedback, the contractor is finalizing the dates of the submission window sooner, reaching out to grantees that have experienced trouble uploading their RHY data, reaching out to vendors experiencing trouble, and expanding the time to work with vendors to resolve issues they may have experienced. The contractor hopes the increased technical assistance ahead of the data submission window will better prepare grantees and vendors for a successful data upload. Of course, grantees should be entering and checking the quality of their data throughout the year and not just before the submission window opens.

8. **What do grantees do when the Continuum of Care (CoC) does not have an HMIS license?**
Each CoC is required to have a designated HMIS (database software). The HMIS lead within each CoC is responsible for setting up the RHY-HMIS projects and making sure that all grantees have access to their RHY-HMIS. If that has not happened in your CoC, you should contact FYSB through your RHY Federal Project Officer.

9. **How is vendor consistency ensured so that grantees are all entering the same types of data with the same functionality?**
Each HMIS vendor is required to align their HMIS with the specifications in the latest versions of HUD’s [HMIS Data Dictionary](#) and [HMIS Data Standards Manual](#). The latest version of the HMIS Data Dictionary (v1.3) was released in March 2018; the latest version of the HMIS Data Standards Manual was released in April 2018 and aligns with v1.3 of the Data Dictionary. If an HMIS vendor has not followed the requirements laid out in these documents, contact your CoC’s HMIS lead to work with the vendor to align the RHY data elements with the HMIS Data Standards Manual and HMIS Data Dictionary.

10. **Can the password change reminder be provided to more than one person in an RHY grantee agency?**
Yes. The password change reminder will be sent to all contacts in the RHY grantee database (not just the RhyPoint user for each grant). This includes authorized RhyPoint users, the grantee authorized users from Grant Solutions, RHY grantee agency staff that are signed up to receive a RHY-HMIS Data Quality report, and all others on the RHYTTAC listserv.

    Before each submission period (in the spring and fall), RHY-HMIS staff will alert all mentioned above that the new RhyPoint usernames and passwords are coming. Shortly after that alert, an individual email will be sent to the authorized RhyPoint user for each grant project with his or her username and new password.

11. **What is the clarification of the following RHY-HMIS elements and how best to document?**
   a. **BCP-prevention:** Services only, before residential stay or after aftercare period.
   b. **BCP-emergency shelter:** Shelter stays. Exit date should be last date of stay (and may go beyond FYSB-funded portion of 21 days).
      i. Make sure you use both projects, as appropriate.
      ii. If you do not have a prevention project, please ask your HMIS lead to set it up in your RHY-HMIS to track youth who are receiving services only, and not staying in a RHY emergency shelter.
c. Aftercare Plans
   i. The Aftercare Plans field is for all RHY Programs (except Street Outreach Programs).
   ii. Aftercare is entered only after a client has been exited from the RHY program she/he received services from and cannot be entered into the HMIS before the client has exited from the RHY program.
   iii. Required for clients for up to 90 days after exit.
   iv. Each HMIS system may handle aftercare differently in its system but must enter whether aftercare was collected (yes/no/client refused), the date information was collected, and the primary way services were provided.
   v. If unsure, talk to your HMIS lead.

d. Date of engagement versus date of contact for Street Outreach Program (SOP)
   A contact (data element 4.12) is an interaction between an outreach worker and an individual youth. Record a contact each time a youth is encountered by grantee staff.

   The date of engagement (data element 4.13) is the date when a deliberate youth assessment or the beginning of a case plan occurs. There can be no more than one date of engagement per SOP program enrollment.
   - The date of engagement can be left blank if the SOP worker did not engage with the youth at a level that merits recording a date of engagement.
   - If a date of engagement is recorded, it should be on or after the project entry date (enrollment date) and before the project exit date. However, in any given reporting period, there may or may not be a date of engagement recorded for a particular youth.

12. Can the American Institutes for Research (AIR)/FYSB please provide guidance on how to pull the CSV report that outlines the multiple steps and necessary links?
   Unfortunately, each HMIS vendor uses a slightly different protocol for pulling the CSV report (your RHY data pulled from your local HMIS to upload into RhyPoint). Your CoC’s HMIS lead should provide detailed instructions on how to pull the report from your CoC’s HMIS. That said, every CoC’s HMIS should allow a user to select a CSV report (RHY data upload) for a specific program and date range (e.g., Street Outreach Program e.g., October 1, 2017 - September 30, 2018), and then extract the file, automatically de-identify the data, and create a ZIP file which the user can then upload into RhyPoint.

13. Can AIR/FYSB send guidance about changing the setting on emails to ensure that emails regarding data uploading, etc. are not sent to junk email?
   There is not a one-size-fits-all answer this question, given the diversity of software programs that RHY providers use to receive and screen emails. Even providers using the same type of software (e.g., Microsoft Outlook) may have different generations/versions of that software or may have different security systems protecting their computers from malware and viruses, which means that they would have to take different steps to ensure that emails pertaining to their RHY program or RHY-HMIS submission are not diverted to a junk email folder.

   Because the steps that must be taken by users to ensure the unimpeded delivery of RHY- and RHY-HMIS-related emails are determined by the systems in place at their provider agency, users are advised to consult with their in-house IT expert. Note that because emails pertaining to RHY-HMIS submission(s) may come from RHYTTAC, AIR, or WellSky (formerly Mediware Systems/Bowman Systems), users may need to separately designate as “safe senders” all of the email addresses from which RHY- or RHY-HMIS-related
correspondence originates, in order to ensure that none of that correspondence is diverted to your junk email folder.

It is generally good practice to periodically review your junk email folder, to ensure that nothing of importance escapes your attention.

14. How should BCP staff use RHY-HMIS to document the transition of a runaway and homeless youth from FYSB-funded shelter services into non-FYSB-funded services, after they reach the 21-day FYSB shelter limit?
BCP staff do not need to do anything to document that transition. Staff should make sure that the shelter entry and actual (physical) exit dates are entered into the RHY-HMIS, even if the exit date is after the 21-day limit governing RHY reimbursement for BCP emergency shelter services. In its RHY reporting, FYSB will automatically only include data about the use of RHY funding for the first 21 days of the client’s stay in shelter.

15. Are services beyond three months of aftercare considered “prevention?” If so, should a new prevention case be opened in RHY-HMIS for youth receiving such extended aftercare?
Services beyond three months of aftercare can still considered to be aftercare but do not have to be entered into RHY-HMIS. If after the three months of aftercare and there is no further contact with the youth and then the youth re-engages with the BCP, then this new set of services can be viewed as BCP-P or BCP-ES but a new record should be started.