



May 15, 2006
Amarillo Homeless Management Information System
(AHMIS)
Policy and Procedures Manual

1. Roles and Responsibilities

(a) HMIS Coordinator and System Administrator

Policy: The City of Amarillo Community Development's Office is responsible for project management of the AHMIS. The AHMIS will provide two staff members to assist with this project.

Procedure: The duties of both the HMIS Coordinator and the System Administrator will be a joint effort.

(b) HMIS Support

Policy: The City of Amarillo Community Development Department (CDD) will assist in the implementation the AHMIS. The CDD will oversee and monitor the purchase and installation of hardware and internet-access and will coordinate the reimbursement process. CDD will also help the agencies to gain access to the database system, assist in developing any necessary custom reports, assist with training and help provide technical assistance to the HMIS participants.

Procedure: CDD will assist with the implementation of the AHMIS process as part of the core group. Agencies will participate in the Core Group meetings and assist with duties in the HMIS implementation.

(c) Core Group

Policy: The core group will consist of staff members from both Shelters and Service Agencies. The core group will work in concert with the City in setting and adhering to HMIS Policy. The Core Group will review all broadcast email. In addition, all documents, manuals, and web postings will be reviewed first by the HMIS Coordinator and System Administrator prior to distribution to the AHMIS System Administrators, End Users or members of the Advisory Group.

Procedure: The core group will meet on a routine basis to plan for trainings, trouble shoot problems with the database system and provide feedback to the HMIS agencies that request assistance. The HMIS Coordinator and the System Administrator will be involved with the project throughout its implementation. The HMIS Coordinator and System Administrator will review all broadcast email, manuals, and web postings.

(d) Agency Administrators

Policy: Each participating agency will designate an HMIS Agency Administrator. The HMIS Agency Administrator is required to have an email address.

Procedure: Each participating agency should choose its Agency Administrator and send that person's name and contact information to the HMIS Coordinator at the City of Amarillo. Changes to that information should be promptly reported to the HMIS Coordinator.

(e) Participating Agencies

Policy: Any agency participating in the AHMIS will abide by all policies and procedures outlined in this manual.

Procedure: Any agency, organization or group who has signed an HMIS Agency Agreement with the City of Amarillo will be given access to the AHMIS database. These agencies will connect to Service Point independently via the Internet.

(f) HMIS User

Policy: Any individual who is a paid employee or volunteer of a Participating Agency may be assigned the right to access AHMIS.

Procedure: Any individual who uses ServicePoint must have a signed End User Agreement on file with the City and abide by all policies and procedures in this Manual.

(g) HMIS User Access Levels

Policy: All AHMIS users will be assigned an appropriate level of access to HMIS data as determined by the Agency Administrator.

Procedure: The Agency Administrator, in consultation with the HMIS System Administrator, will assign appropriate user levels when adding new users.

(h) Communication with Participating Agencies

Policy: The Core Group is responsible for relevant and timely communication with each Participating Agency regarding the AHMIS. Agency staff will be notified prior to any aggregate report that is generated or any ServicePoint upgrade that is added to the database.

Procedure: General communications from the Core Group will be directed towards the Agency Administrator. Specific communications will be addressed to the person or people involved. The Core Group will be available via email, phone, and mail. The ServicePoint Newsflash feature will also be used to distribute HMIS information.

(i) Participating Agency Communications with the Core Group

Policy: Participating Agencies are responsible for communicating needs and questions regarding the AHMIS directly to the Core Group.

Procedure: Users at Participating Agencies will communicate needs, issues and questions to the Core Group. If the Agency Administrator is unable to resolve the issue, he/she will contact the Core Group via email, phone, or mail.

(j) System Availability

Policy: The City, the System Administrator, and Bowman Internet Systems will provide a highly available database server and will inform users in advance of any planned interruption in service by email and a note on the Newsflash.

Procedure: In the event that the database server is or will be unavailable due to disaster or routine maintenance, Bowman Internet Systems will contact the AHMIS Systems Administrator. The System Administrator will contact Agency Administrators and inform them of the cause and duration of the interruption in service. The System Administrator will log all downtime for purposes of system evaluation.

(k) Inter-Agency Data Sharing

Policy: Data included in the Profile section of a client record will be able to be viewed by all users. Participating Agencies will determine which other Participating Agencies will have access to the data

entered by each of their users that is not in the profile section. Participating Agencies will specify the Participating Agencies with which it will share data, and the data sections that will be shared.

Procedure: Participating Agencies will specify the data sections that will be shared with other Participating Agencies to the HMIS coordinator and System Administrator. Participating Agencies will amend this in the event that these data sharing practices change.

(l) Ethical Data Use

Policy: Data contained in the AHMIS will only be used to support the delivery of homeless and housing services in the City of Amarillo. Each HMIS User will affirm the principles of ethical data use and client confidentiality contained in the AHMIS Policies and Procedures Manual and the HMIS User Agreement.

Procedure: All HMIS users will sign an HMIS User Agreement before being given access to the AHMIS. Any individual or Participating Agency misusing, or attempting to misuse HMIS data will be denied access to the database, and his/her/its relationship with the AHMIS will be terminated.

(m) Access to Core Database

Policy: No one will have direct access to the AHMIS database through any means other than the ServicePoint software, unless explicitly given permission by the System Administrator during a process of software upgrade or conversion.

Procedure: In contract with The City, Bowman Internet Systems will monitor access of the database server and employ security methods to prevent unauthorized database access.

(n) Client Confidentiality

Policy: The AHMIS System Administrator and Participating Agencies will ensure the confidentiality of all client data. No identifiable client data will be entered into the AHMIS without written client consent, and no identifiable client data will be shared outside of the limits of that written consent.

Procedure: Access to client data will be tightly controlled using security technology and restrictive access policies. Only individuals authorized to view or edit individual client data will have access to that data.

(o) Client Grievance

Policy: Clients will contact the Participating Agency with which they have a grievance for resolution of HMIS problems. Participating Agencies will report all HMIS-related client grievances to the HMIS Coordinator or System Administrator.

Procedure: Clients will bring HMIS complaints directly to the Participating Agency with which they have a grievance. Participating Agencies will provide a copy of the AHMIS Policies and Procedures Manual upon request, and respond to client issues. Participating Agencies will send written notice to the HMIS Coordinator of any HMIS-related client grievance. The HMIS Coordinator will record all grievances and will report these complaints to the Core Group.

(p) Participating Agency Hardware/Software Requirements beyond initial HMIS purchase

Policy: Participating Agencies will provide their own computer and method of connecting to the Internet, and thus the AHMIS. Should the agency need additional equipment, HMIS Coordinator will work with the agency to identify the need and issue equipment if necessary and available.

Procedure: It is the responsibility of the Participating Agency to provide a computer and connection to the Internet. If desired by the Participating Agency, the AHMIS System Administrator will provide advice as to

the type of computer and connection. The Agency must contact HMIS Coordinator prior to the purchase of any HMIS related equipment to assure adequate compatibility.

(q) Participating Agency Technical Support Requirements

Policy: Participating Agencies will provide their own technical support for all hardware and software employed to connect to the AHMIS.

Procedure: Participating Agencies will provide internal technical support for the hardware, software and Internet connections necessary to connect to the AHMIS according to their own organizational needs.

2. Security

(a) User Access

Policy: Agency Administrators will provide user names and initial passwords to each Participating Agency user. User names will be unique for each user and will not be exchanged with other users. The System Administrator and the Agency Administrator will have access to the list of user names.

Procedure: Agency Administrators will provide unique user names and initial passwords to each user upon completion of training and signing of a confidentiality agreement and receipt of the Policies and Procedures Manual. The sharing of user names will be considered a breach of the HMIS Agency Agreement.

(b) Passwords

Policy: Users will have access to the AHMIS via a user name and password. Passwords will be reset every 45 days. Users will keep passwords confidential. Upon employment termination, the passwords will become null and void.

Procedure: The Participating Agency Administrators will issue a user name and password to each new user who has completed training. Every 45 days, passwords are reset automatically. Agency Administrators will notify the System Administrator immediately of each employee termination so the password can be deactivated.

(c) Data Retrieval

Policy: AHMIS Users will maintain the security of any client data extracted from the database and stored locally, including all data used in custom reporting. AHMIS users will not electronically transmit any unencrypted client data across a public network.

Procedure: Data extracted from the database and stored locally will be stored in a secure location and will not be transmitted outside of the private local area network unless it is properly protected. Security questions will be addressed to the System Administrator.

(d) Data Access Location

Policy: Users will ensure the confidentiality of client data, following all security policies in the AHMIS Policies and Procedures Manual and adhering to the standards of ethical data use, regardless of the location of the connecting computer. All users are prohibited from accessing the HMIS database from any location other than a designated and approved work site.

Procedure: All Policies and Procedures and security standards will be enforced regardless of the location of the connecting computer. Users will be instructed in both policies and security. The System Administrator will provide any additional clarification. All users will be informed at the time they are assigned passwords

that they are prohibited from working at home. All HMIS related data entry will be processed at a designated and approved work site.

Agencies wishing to use wireless networks will have to ensure the wireless net work is password protected, and inform the System Administrator in advance to gain approval for wireless connections.

3. Access to AHMIS

(a) HMIS Agency Agreements

Policy: The Executive Director (or other authorized officer) of any agency wishing to connect to the AHMIS will sign an HMIS Agency Agreement with the City of Amarillo before any member of that organization will be granted access.

Procedure: Participating Agencies will be given a copy of the HMIS Agency Agreement, the Policies and Procedures Manual, and any other relevant paperwork in time for adequate review and signature. Once that paperwork has been reviewed and signed, agency users will be trained to use ServicePoint. Once training has been completed, each user will be issued a user name and password.

(b) User Licenses

Policy: If necessary, Participating Agencies will purchase additional User Licenses from Bowman Internet Systems. The cost for User Licenses will be determined by Bowman Internet Systems, and will not be charged to the City of Amarillo HMIS Grant.

Procedure: Participating Agencies wishing to purchase additional User Licenses over and above the current agency maximum, or future License allocations allowed by renewal grants, will purchase licenses directly from Bowman and inform the System Administrator of their intent to acquire additional User Licenses. The System Administrator will assign additional user names and passwords upon Bowman's receipt of payment for additional user licenses.

(c) User Activation

Policy: Each new user will be issued a user name and password to access the AHMIS upon approval of the Participating Agency, completion of ServicePoint training, and signing of the HMIS User Agreement.

Procedure: Agency Administrators will distribute user licenses for their Participating Agency, adding and deleting users as needed. Agency Administrators will be responsible for training new users. The AHMIS System Administrator will provide training to Agency Administrators and will supplement this training as necessary.

(d) HMIS User Agreements

Policy: Each Participating Agency User will sign an HMIS User Agreement before being granted access to the AHMIS.

Procedure: The Participating Agency Administrator will distribute HMIS User Agreements to new HMIS Users for signature. The user will sign the HMIS User Agreement. The Agency Administrator will collect and store signed HMIS User Agreements for all users. A copy of all signed user agreements must be forwarded to the City of Amarillo for the permanent HMIS file.

(e) Training

Policy: The Core Group will coordinate adequate and timely ServicePoint training.

Procedure: The Core Group and the staff of Bowman Internet Systems will provide training to all new users at the beginning of the HMIS implementation. Agency Administrators will be given additional training relevant to their position. After the initial training, Agency Administrators will be expected to train new Participating Agency user with the assistance of the Core Group. The System Administrator will provide periodic training updates for all users.

4. Data Collection

(a) Required Data Collection

Policy: Participating Agencies will collect a required set of data variables for each client, which will be specified in the HMIS Agency Agreement.

Procedure: The HMIS Agency Agreement will contain a listing of data elements to be collected for each client contact. These data elements may change from time to time.

(b) Informed Client Consent

Policy: Participating Agencies will collect and retain signed client consent forms before any client data will be entered into the AHMIS. Participating Agency staff will thoroughly explain the client consent to each client.

(c) Appropriate Data Collection

Policy: AHMIS users will only collect client data relevant to the delivery of services to people experiencing a housing crisis in the City of Amarillo.

Procedure: AHMIS users will ask the System Administrator for any necessary clarification of appropriate data collection. The System Administrator will periodically audit pick-lists and agency-specific fields to ensure the database is being used appropriately.

5. Data Entry

(a) Required Fields

Policy: Participating Agencies will enter into the AHMIS a required set of data variables for each client, which will be specified in the HMIS Agency Agreement.

Procedure: The HMIS Agency Agreement will contain a listing of data elements to be entered into the AHMIS for each client contact.

(b) Profile Information

Policy: Users will designate profile information as either open or read-only in the client security portion of the profile section of the client record in ClientPoint. No user will close the profile section of a client record.

Procedure: Users will designate profile information as either open or read-only. The System Administrator will report any closed profiles and ask users to change or delete these records.

(c) Data Element Customization

Policy: Participating Agencies will have fields available for agency-specific customization.

Procedure: Agency Administrators will be trained to customize the agency-specific fields.

(d) Additional Customization

Policy: Participating Agencies will purchase any additional database customization directly from Bowman Internet Systems. The System Administrator will not provide additional customization.

Procedure: Participating Agencies will contact Bowman Internet Systems directly with additional customization needs.

6. Quality Control

(a) Data Integrity

Policy: AHMIS users will be responsible for the accuracy of their data entry.

Procedure: In order to test the integrity of the data contained in the AHMIS, the Systems Administrator will perform regular data integrity checks on the AHMIS. Any patterns of error will be reported to the Agency Administrator. When patterns of error have been discovered, users will be required to correct data entry techniques and will be monitored for compliance.

(b) Data Integrity Expectations

Policy: Participating Agencies will provide the following levels of data accuracy and timeliness:

- (i) All names will be accurate;
- (ii) Blanks or “unknown” entries in required data fields will not exceed 5% per month;
- (iii) All services provided will be compatible with the providing program;
- (iv) In all reports of shelter provided for a client, the client must be eligible to receive shelter services from the listed provider; and
- (v) Data entry for all services provided during one calendar month must be entered into the AHMIS by the tenth working day of the following calendar month. Each agency will strive to enter data in real time when possible.

Procedure: The System Administrator will perform regular data integrity checks on the AHMIS. Any patterns of error at a Participating Agency will be reported to the Agency Administrator. When patterns of error have been discovered, users will be required to correct data entry techniques and will be monitored for compliance.

(c) On-Site Review

Policy: The HMIS Coordinator or System Administrator will perform, at a minimum, annual on-site reviews at each Participating Agency of data processes related to the AHMIS.

Procedure: This review will be done as part of the renewal of the HMIS Agency Agreement. First year participants will be reviewed at mid year.

7. Data Retrieval

(a) Participating Agencies

Policy: Participating Agencies will have access to retrieve any individual and aggregate data entered by their own programs. Participating Agencies will not have access to retrieve individual records entered by other programs except when data is explicitly shared through the HMIS system, and with the explicit consent of the client.

Procedure: At the time of data entry, HMIS users will determine the appropriate level of access to that data. When using the report writer module, users will only be able to extract data from those records, to which they have access.

(b) System Administrator

Policy: The System Administrator will have access to retrieve all data in the AHMIS. The System Administrator will not access individual client data for purposes other than maintenance and checking for data integrity. The System Administrator will only report client data in aggregate form.

Procedure: The System Administrator will be responsible for ensuring that no individual client data is retrieved for purposes other than maintenance and performing data integrity checks.

(c) Bowman Internet Systems

Policy: Bowman Internet Systems will not have access to individual or aggregate data contained within the AHMIS without the explicit permission of the HMIS Advisory Committee for purposes of software maintenance and/or data conversion.

Procedure: Bowman Internet Systems will sign an agreement with the City prohibiting its access to the database except under the conditions described above.

(d) Client

Policy: Any client will have access on demand to view, or keep a printed copy of, his or her own records contained in the AHMIS. All requests for client information will follow agency policy guidelines for release of information. The client will also have access to a logged audit trail of changes to those records. No client shall have access to another client's records in the AHMIS.

Procedure: A client will submit a signed standard HMIS written request to his or her case manager to see his or her own record. The case manager, or any available staff person within AHMIS access, will verify the client's identity and print all requested information. The case manager can also request a logged audit trail of the client's record from the Agency Administrator. The Agency Administrator will contact the System Administrator who will print this audit trail and forward to the Agency Administrator for distribution to the client.

(e) Public

Policy: The HMIS Coordinator, on behalf of the HMIS Advisory Committee, will address all requests for data from entities other than Participating Agencies or clients. No individual client data will be provided to any group or individual that is neither the Participating Agency that entered the data, nor the client without proper authorization or consent.

Procedure: All requests for data from anyone other than a Participating Agency or client will be directed to the HMIS Coordinator. As part of the System Administrator's regular employment functions, periodic public reports about homelessness and housing issues in the City of Amarillo will be issued. No individually identifiable client data will be reported in any of these reports.

(f) Data Retrieval Support

Policy: Participating Agencies will create and run agency-level reports.

Procedure: The Agency Administrator will be trained in reporting by Bowman Internet Systems or by the System Administrator. The System Administrator will be a resource for report creation.