

## Alameda County's ICF HMIS Assessment Overview

### Executive Summary

After receiving a Technical Assistance assignment from HUD in January 2019, ICF held a series of meetings with Alameda County's HMIS Lead Agency, Housing and Community Development (HCD), EveryOne Home, and the HMIS vendor Clarity Bitfocus to better understand the current configuration of Alameda County's HMIS system as well as the overall implementation of the system across the Continuum of Care. ICF was originally tasked to conduct an HMIS assessment as a result of the lack of Coordinated Entry data available during the launch of HUD's Unsheltered TA Initiative. Based on these discussions, ICF conducted an onsite assessment (*February 25<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> 2019*) of Alameda County's HMIS as well as the HCD's administration of the software, decision making and use of the system. ICF focused on the overall transition to and effectiveness of Clarity Bitfocus from both HCD's perspective and the overall community perspective. While onsite, ICF also assessed Alameda County's current use of HMIS for Coordinated Entry and the CoC's HMIS Governance Structure in addition to providing direct TA in the topic areas of HMIS Privacy, Data Quality and Monitoring, and HMIS Staffing Structures. ICF also interviewed key stakeholders (*outlined in Table 1.0 attached*) from the City of Oakland, the City of Berkley, the HUD CoC Board, Alameda County Care Connect, providers and HMIS system end-users.

### General Findings

ICF observed notable gaps in the HMIS implementation where the HUD COC Committee and HCD should be focusing their efforts to bring the implementation in closer alignment to HUD Regulations, local priorities and best practice standards. Furthermore, in comparison to best practices and common protocols for administering HMIS among national implementations, ICF identified several additional areas where both HCD and the HMIS Oversight Committee would benefit from added capacity and a more defined governance structure to improve its administration of HMIS across the Continuum.

During the assessment, ICF found that there were overarching gaps in the oversight and monitoring structure of HMIS to ensure systems, processes and providers were operating with fidelity to the system as it was designed. There were also challenges in the designation and commitment to roles and responsibilities pertaining to data quality and training, and overall system monitoring. A significant factor adding to these challenges across the CoC is the current configuration of the HMIS software, specifically to support Coordinated Entry (CE). The current HMIS configuration prohibits the System Coordination Committee from managing, tracking or reporting on the current CE system – instead CE regional prioritized lists and referrals are managed outside of HMIS, giving the community very little ability to report on or evaluate the effectiveness of the system. The following challenges and observations were collected by means of in-person and remote interviews, group discussions, and document reviews of applicable HMIS policy and procedure documents.

## Governance Structure Challenges

### 1) Unclear Roles and Responsibilities

**Housing and Community Development- HMIS Lead:** HMIS Oversight Committee, provides inconsistent requests and unclear guidance regarding the CoC's HMIS short- and long-term priorities, affecting HCD's ability to complete tasks in the manner the HMIS Oversight Committee had originally intended, and therefore, leads to extensive frustration and inefficient back and forth communication.

**EveryOne Home:** As a community organizing entity on behalf of the HUD CoC, EveryOne Home is responsible for organizing the HMIS Oversight Committee. Due to lack of commitment from HCD to honor and follow through with requests set forth by the HMIS Oversight Committee creates uncertainty among EveryOne Home in determining how to best organize and represent the HUD CoC. This, in turn, affects the HUD CoC Committee's ability to set tangible benchmarks and targets for overall system improvement.

**HMIS Oversight Committee:** The committee is not operationalizing the documented roles and expectations according to the current EveryOne Home Governance Charter. For the CoC and HMIS Lead to continue to build a strong HMIS system, expectations need to be clarified across the implementation, including developing a community driven vision for HMIS, clear expectations on the role of the Oversight Committee, and the long-term goals for HMIS. Identifying a common vision, and priorities to move that vision forward, will form a foundation from which the CoC and HCD can work collaboratively to meet their shared goals.

### 2) Lack of Monitoring and System Oversight

In accordance with HUD regulations CoC Program Interim Rule 578.7(a) (6), the CoC is required to monitor all recipient and subrecipient's performance, evaluate outcomes, and take action against poor performers; and that all expectations outlined in the contract and formal MOU are complied with. There does not currently exist monitoring processes from CoC to HMIS Lead, HMIS Lead to CHO's or HMIS Lead to HMIS software vendor.

### 3) Lack of Data Quality Plan and Management

To date, there does not appear to be an operationalized process for monitoring data quality across the CoC. This in turn, results in little to no oversight or accountability of data completeness and timeliness rates, nor does it account for the importance of monitoring for data accuracy or consistency.

## HMIS Challenges

- 1) **HMIS Configuration:** The current HMIS configuration cannot pull data (beyond basic assessment data), develop reports or be leveraged to evaluate the current Coordinated Entry system. The HMIS system cannot produce HUD required SSO APR or fully capture and respond to the current Coordinated Entry System as it currently exists in Alameda County. As a result, HMIS is unable to support or report on Alameda's coordinated entry system.

## Recommendations

ICF's recommendations specifically fall into the following categories:

### Strengthen Existing Governance

The HUD CoC Committee works in coordination with HCD to strengthen the current HMIS Oversight Committee, working towards establishing that entity as the primary HMIS advising entity to provide recommendations to HCD and the HUD CoC decision making body. Given the wide range of roles and responsibilities the HMIS Oversight Committee is committed to, and direct membership from stakeholders of the city, county, and provider representation on the Committee, it does not have the buy-in or engagement from other informed policy makers and planners across the community that could help inform the use and strategic vision of HMIS in coordination with both the HUD CoC Committee and HCD. To better meet the needs of Alameda County's homeless population, it is imperative for the HUD CoC Committee to align the goals and prioritizes of regional decision-makers that represent the City of Oakland, the City of Berkeley, Alameda County Care Connect, HUD Continuum of Care, Alameda County Healthcare Services, Adobe Services, and Alameda County Housing and Community Development.

- Task 1: **Define Roles and Responsibilities**
- Task 2: **Establish processes to begin monitoring the HMIS Lead activity and performance**

### Evaluate HMIS Software Configuration

ICF recommends HCD transparently outlines the goals and outcomes of the reconfiguration plan. ICF recommends HCD clearly states in the plan their defined process for working with the HMIS vendor and the HUD CoC Committee to restructure the system configuration to meet the community's needs and expectations for coordinated entry. The plan should include a timeline for contact made with vendor, system design and implementation options available, effects on the Coordinated Entry System, and the pros and cons of each implementation possibility unique to the greater CoC's needs.

- Task 1: **Project Plan that outlines process for Bitfocus HMIS configuration strategy**

## HMIS System Administration

Based on interviews with HCD staff, HMIS directives from the HUD CoC Committee come through various methods of communication and priorities are unclear regarding the short and long-term tasks the HMIS team should be prioritizing. ICF also noted the importance for HCD to evaluate its current staffing structure and identify if staffing capacity should be added to support immediate day-to-day priorities of HCD, but also clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of current staff capacity that can lead to sustainable, more efficient practices long-term.

- Task 1: **Strengthen HMIS Lead Capacity**
- Task 2: **Increase HCD Capacity to align with current system demands**
- Task 3: **Develop Monitoring Plans**
- Task 4: **Develop, Document, and Enforce Formal Processes**

<b>Table 1.0 Alameda County HMIS Stakeholder Meetings: February 25<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> 2019</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Alameda County CoC Affiliation</b>
Patrick Crosby	HCD HMIS Lead
Riley Wilkerson	HCD HMIS Lead
Trevor Mells	HCD HMIS Lead
John Noe	HCD HMIS Lead
Elaine de Coligny	Everyone Home
Jessica Shimmin	Everyone Home
Julie Leadbetter	Everyone Home
Ruby Butler	Everyone Home
Teddie Pierce	Alameda County Care Connect Contractor
Andrew Wicker	City of Berkley- HUD CoC Board Chair
Robert Ratner	Alameda County Care Connect (AC3)- Alameda County
Lara Tannenbaum	City of Oakland-HUD CoC Committee Member
Nic Ming	City of Oakland-Oversight Committee Member
Katherine Naff	Berkley Food and Housing Project
Camille Mariateque	Berkley Food and Housing Project
Alameda County HMIS Oversight Committee	Governing body responsible for advising and overseeing the operation of the HMIS
HMIS End-User Focus Group	HMIS-participating agencies in Alameda County CoC