

Questions & Answers

AHFE Data Quality Plan - 2018 Update

➤ Why do we need a DQ Plan?

It essentially boils down to two reasons:

- **To have complete and up-to-date information readily available** to make program decisions, monitor client progress, and inform HMIS stakeholders.
- **To maintain compliance to HUD** (see [HMIS Data and Technical Standards](#)). We are expected to review, revise, and approve a data quality plan for the HMIS annually.

➤ How was the updated plan developed?

The goal from the beginning was a bottom-up approach. We wanted the changes to come from real feedback from users in the field. In June and August, a **workgroup of dedicated users from multiple agencies representing the diverse spectrum of our system**—families, adults, youth, culturally-specific, DV, and veterans—convened to discuss the DQ Plan. This information was used to draft the updated plan, which then went through **multiple review cycles by Data In**. We solicited public comments through a survey in October. Lastly, Data In reviewed the survey results and recommended the final changes.

➤ How is the updated version different from the old DQ Plan?

The [DQ Plan from 2016](#) was based on the HUD data standards at the time. Since then, there have been many changes, plus new elements including the Housing Move-In Date, revisions to the APR, and reports that have retired. The updated version aims to be **more functional and helpful for the user**. First, we have new **community benchmarks that promote complete, accurate, and timely data**. Information on reports has been updated and reorganized into a quick summary table. For advice on where to find help or how to get started, we added a **general list of resources and strategic focus areas**. Last but not least, you will find the **cutoff dates for the homeless services system-wide reports**, sent to the Joint Office every quarter.

➤ Could you clarify what ES, SO, TH, and PH mean?

Certainly! Please see the table below. We agree that the abundance of acronyms is a challenge. That is why, in this update, we've added an emphasis on communication, particularly, brainstorming ways we can make the jargon easier to understand. Always feel free to send us your ServicePoint or HMIS questions; system administrators are here to help you find the answers! For great self-help on common acronyms, refer to the [Data Expectations and Exceptions](#) and the [Community Data Standards](#), found on PHB's website.

Chronic Homelessness
Reduce records unable to calculate

- ✓ ES + SO < 20%
- ✓ TH < 10%
- ✓ PH < 10%

CoC-APR (6d)

Acronym	Project Type	General Description
ES	Emergency Shelter	Short-term, temporary shelter for people experiencing homelessness. May include motel vouchers. Length of stays vary from one night to a few months.
SO	Street Outreach	Outreach services directed towards people who are unsheltered and homeless in order to connect them with housing and services.
TH	Transitional Housing	Medium-term, temporary housing that may be used to bridge between homelessness and permanent housing. Stays typically no more than 24 months.
PH	Permanent Housing	Long-term housing for 2 years or more. PH is a broad category that includes Rapid Rehousing (RRH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) . There may or may not be a disability requirement depending on the contract or funder.

➤ In the benchmark for Program Specific Data Elements, does it mean you want us to review quarterly?

Yes, that's correct. After this feedback, we adjusted it make it clearer. Many programs submit quarterly reports to their contract manager. Based on best practices and your funder requirements, it is likely that staff will review the data before submitting reports. Those checks and the contract manager's review satisfy this measure. Quarterly check-ups not only improve the data, but also help you to avoid, or at least reduce, the stress of massive data clean-up right before year end.



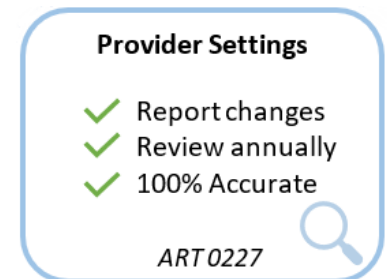
➤ How does Housing Move-In Date fit in the DQ Plan?

Housing Move-In Date (HMID), the **essential indicator of a person's housed or unhoused status**, is a major focus within the program-specific data elements. We could not set a completeness benchmark like we did with the universal data elements (UDE) because **there are times when a blank HMID is appropriate** (e.g. person is unhoused, staying in emergency shelter). Instead, with the more general requirement to **review your data quarterly**, the idea is that with each review, the data will get better and better. Regular practice will also help users train their ability to recognize and fix errors.

The current plan is to use the custom local ART 0260 to monitor a general increase in HMID completeness. We will look to see that **users understand how to complete the value and that the data is being updated as needed**. For more information, also see the [Housing Move-In Date FAQ](#).

➤ What is the 0227 report and can I get training on it?

The 0227 is the Project Descriptor Elements Data Quality report, **used by system admins and agency admins to review provider settings**. It is available to all users with an Advance Reporting Tool (ART) license. We need 100% accuracy to ensure that your reports cue off of the correct settings. For training, feel free to schedule a time with your system admin by phone, email, or in person. Agency admins can run the 0227 on CoC Code (OR-501), with the dates (07/01/2018 – Today), to see what the report offers.



➤ What types of provider information do I need to communicate to my system admin?

This list is not all-inclusive. When in doubt, give us a shout. We can help!

- New projects or funders
- Changes to current projects: Project type (e.g. RRH to TH), etc.
- Bed counts for the annual Housing Inventory Count (HIC)
- Closed projects and their operational end date

➤ What happens if my project doesn't meet the standards?

Technical assistance and a range of resources are available to help agencies meet the benchmarks. If a project falls below, the appropriate system administrator will work with that agency to find out why and develop a plan. There is no penalty enforced by the DQ Plan, but the effects of poor data are things we want to avoid: wasted data entry time due to unusable data, duplicate work, or worse, loss of funding.

➤ **Our agency has limited resources. Where can we get help?**

Glad you asked! We offer a variety of trainings from “Intro to ServicePoint” to “How to Use Reports.” Join us via WebEx for the **Agency Admin/Key User meeting every other month to learn about the latest updates, discuss technical issues, and pick up training tips.** Handbooks, training videos, and FAQs are available online or through your trainer: [PHB](#), [Multnomah County Youth and Family Services](#), and the Joint Office’s [A Home for Everyone](#). We plan to develop a **Data Quality Toolkit** that will show how to fix common data errors. For the collaborative events and meetings, we want your organization involved! Share your knowledge and experience, so we can leverage our community strengths and learn what works.

➤ **What are some common challenges to data quality? Are other agencies experiencing the same difficulties as our organization?**

We asked, and you answered. We hear from the agencies loud and clear, that it can be difficult. This is our **starting point to find best practices, new ideas, and better support** to tackle many of the challenges that we have in common.

- **Human and staffing challenges:**
 - Human error
 - Unfamiliarity with technology
 - High turnover
 - Lack of training
- **Lack of communication:**
 - Communication breakdown between system admins, agency staff, and end users
 - Users not hearing announcements about new changes, updates, new training guides
 - Conflicting understanding of data elements (varying definitions or meaning unclear)
- **Limited resources and no extra funding specifically for data quality:**
 - Staff prioritize housing clients over data entry
 - Difficulty finding time for data entry
 - Busy seasonal periods where there is even less time for data entry
- **Reports and other data challenges:**
 - Historical clients that are still active, weighing down entry timeliness rating
 - Don’t Know/Refused are valid answers but are often counted in error rate
 - Reporting errors and complications
 - Need for more training on how to use reports
 - Shared data that might not match my agency’s records