IL509 CoC
Governance Charter

A. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this Governance Charter is to confirm agreements between the Continuum of Care and the Institute for Community Alliances (hereinafter HMIS Lead Agency). As such, the Governance Charter sets forth the general understandings, and specific responsibilities of each party relating to key aspects of the governance and operation of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS.) This Governance Charter is effective upon execution by the DeKalb County Continuum of Care and the Institute for Community Alliances.

B. Background

The HMIS is a collaborative project of the DeKalb County Continuum of Care, the HMIS Lead Agency, and participating Partner Agencies. HMIS is an internet-based data collection application designed to capture information about the numbers, characteristics and needs of homeless persons and those at risk of homelessness over time. Use of HMIS is mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for specific programs to provide housing and services to persons experiencing homelessness.

The Continuum of Care is a community-wide initiative that works to provide a range of housing and services for the homeless. The continuum of care system includes homelessness prevention assistance, emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent affordable and permanent supportive housing, supportive services, specialized programs and outreach for designated homeless subpopulations, and integration with mainstream programs. HMIS enables homeless service providers to collect uniform client information over time. HMIS is essential to efforts to streamline client services and inform public policy decisions aimed at addressing and ending homelessness at local, state and federal levels. Through HMIS, homeless people benefit from improved coordination in and between agencies, informed advocacy efforts, and policies that result in targeted services. Analysis of information gathered through HMIS is critical to the preparation of a periodic accounting of homelessness in DeKalb County, which may include measuring the extent and nature of homelessness, the utilization of services and homeless programs over time, and the effectiveness of homeless programs. Such an unduplicated accounting of homelessness is necessary to service and systems planning, effective resource allocation, and advocacy. The parties to this Governance Charter share a common interest in collaborating to end homelessness and successfully implementing and operating the HMIS.

C. General Understandings

1. Continuum of Care Governance

The DeKalb County Continuum of Care (CoC) is responsible for governance of the HMIS. The CoC is the lead-planning groups for efforts to end homelessness and for implementing and operating homeless service delivery systems in DeKalb County, Illinois. As such and under HUD policy (24 CFR part 580), the CoC is responsible for HMIS oversight and implementation, including planning, software selection, HMIS Lead Agency designation and setting up and managing the HMIS in compliance with HUD's national HMIS Standards. The CoC's oversight and governance responsibilities are carried out by the HMIS Governance Committee (described below), which reviews and approves all HMIS policies and procedures.

2. HMIS Lead Agency Designation

The CoC designates the HMIS Lead Agency to manage HMIS operations on its behalf, and to provide HMIS administrative functions at the direction of the CoC through the CoC Board and the HMIS Governance Committee.

3. Homeless Management Information System Governance Committee

The CoC members and HMIS Partner Agencies actively participate with the HMIS Lead Agency through the HMIS Governance Committee in the management of the HMIS. The HMIS Governance Committee is responsible for establishing policies, procedures, and protocols for functions essential to the viability and success of the HMIS, including, but not limited to, data privacy, data quality, analysis, reporting, data sharing protocols. All CoC HMIS participating agencies will be represented on the HMIS Governance Committee to ensure shared responsibility and accountability.

3.1 Governance Committee Requirements

a. Meetings - Meetings will be held annually. Important HMIS policy items that emerge in between meetings will be handled by the committee via email, conference call, or an online meeting.
b. Attendance - Governance Committee members are required to attend all meetings. A majority of the Governance Committee is one half plus one of the members present at the meeting when the vote is taking place.
c. Accessibility - Committee members will be publicly identified and available for contact by HMIS users and agencies in the CoC.
d. Policies and Procedures - Approval of policy, procedures and HMIS protocols will be attempted through consensus and conversation, but will ultimately be decided by simple majority.
e. Voluntary Committee Membership – Governance Committee members are volunteers and are not compensated for their participation.

4. Funding

Funding for the software and operations of the HMIS shall be provided by a HUD Continuum of Care program HMIS grant and other funding from the CoC. Partner Agencies may be required to pay user fees for the HMIS software and reporting licenses assigned to their agency. In the event there is a shortfall in funding for the software or operation of the HMIS, the CoC Board will explore options to increase revenue.

5. Software and Hosting

The CoC has selected a single software product to serve as the sole HMIS software application, in this case Mediware ServicePoint. All Partner Agencies agree to use the product as configured for the CoC.

6. Compliance with Homeless Management Information System Standards

The HMIS is operated in compliance with the HMIS Data and Technical Standards and any other applicable laws. The parties anticipate that HUD will release revised HMIS Standards periodically. The parties agree to make changes to this Governance Charter, the HMIS Policies and Procedures, and other HMIS operational documents, to comply with the revised standards within the HUD-specified timeframe for such changes.

7. Operational Policies and Agreements

The HMIS operates within the framework of agreements, policies, and procedures that have been developed and approved over time by the HMIS Lead Agency and the CoC through the HMIS Governance Committee. These agreements, policies and procedures include but are not limited to the Policies and Procedures Manual, Privacy Policies and the Consumer Notice, Partner Agency Agreements, and User Agreements. All operational agreements and policies and procedures are reviewed annually by the HMIS Lead Agency, the HMIS Governance Committee, and the CoC to comply with the HMIS Standards or otherwise improve HMIS operations.

8. Data Ownership

The data entered into the HMIS is owned by the Partner Agency responsible for entering the client-level information. The HMIS Lead Agency and Partner Agencies are jointly responsible for ensuring that HMIS data processing capabilities, including the collection, maintenance, use, disclosure, transmission and destruction of data, comply with the HMIS privacy, security and confidentiality policies and procedures. The Partner Agencies have the final authority to approve or disapprove the use of the data that is contained in the HMIS.

D. Specific Responsibilities of the Parties

1. DeKalb County Continuum of Care

Responsible for oversight, project direction, formalizing policy setting, and guidance for the HMIS project. It is the responsibility of the CoC to:

a. Designate the HMIS Lead Agency, the software to be used for HMIS, and approve any changes to the HMIS Lead Agency or software.
b. Request revision to any HMIS operational agreement, policy or procedure developed by the HMIS Lead Agency, and approved by the HMIS Governance Committee.
c. Conduct outreach to homeless assistance agencies not using HMIS, and encourage these agencies and other mainstream programs serving homeless people to participate in HMIS.
d. Work to inform elected officials, government agencies, the nonprofit community, and the public about the role and importance of HMIS and HMIS data.
e. Promote the effective use of HMIS data, including its use to measure the extent and nature of homelessness, the utilization of services and homeless programs over time, and the effectiveness of homeless programs.
f. Provide all local information as necessary for compilation of the Continuum of Care Housing Inventory Count, and support the HMIS Lead Agency in preparing the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) and HUD System Performance Measures (SPM).

2. HMIS Governance Committee

The CoC exercises the following responsibilities for HMIS governance through the HMIS Governance Committee.

a. Implement and continuously improve the HMIS.
b. Ensure the HMIS scope aligns with the requirements of agencies, HUD and other federal partners, and other stakeholder groups.
c. Address any issue that has major implications for the HMIS, such as HMIS Data Standards revisions released by HUD, or HMIS Vendor performance problems.
d. Review, revise and approve all HMIS operational policies developed by the HMIS Lead Agency and submit all approved operational documents to each CoC Board of Directors or equivalent CoC governing body.

    e. Ensure agency and user compliance with the federal HMIS Standards, and all HMIS operational agreements, policies and procedures.

    f. Provide guidance and oversight of HMIS related user and agency compliance monitoring undertaken by the HMIS Lead Agency.

    g. Approve HMIS Lead Agency recommendations to terminate a user license or restrict the HMIS participation of a Partner Agency.

3. HMIS Lead Agency

The Institute for Community Alliances presently serves as the lead agency for the DeKalb County Continuum of Care HMIS project, managing and administering all HMIS operations and activities. The HMIS Lead Agency exercises these responsibilities at the direction of the HMIS Governance Committee. These responsibilities are contingent on receipt of the appropriate funding from participating CoCs and Partner Agencies. The responsibilities of the HMIS Lead Agency include:

I. General

    a. Obtain and maintain the contract with the selected software vendor.

    b. Determine the parameters of the HMIS as it relates to continuity of service, ability to limit access to the data, hosting responsibilities, general security and maintenance issues, data storage, back-up and recovery, customization, compliance with HUD Data standards, reporting needs, training and technical support.

    c. Provide overall staffing for the operation of the HMIS.

    d. Develop and maintain all HMIS operational agreements, policies and procedures, including a written privacy notice.

    e. Obtain signed Partner Agency Agreements and User Agreements.

    f. Invoice Partner Agencies and jurisdictions for HMIS fees approved by the HMIS Governance Committee.

    g. Monitor Partner Agencies and users to ensure compliance with HMIS operational agreements, policies and procedures on behalf of, and at the direction of, the HMIS Governance Committee.

    h. Convene a meeting of the HMIS Governance Committee annually.

    i. Participate as a voting or non-voting member of the CoC's Board of Directors or equivalent decision making body.

    j. Attend the HMIS and Data Committee meetings of the CoC.

    k. Provide and maintain the HMIS website.

    l. Comply with federal HMIS Standards (including anticipated changes to the HMIS Standards) and all other applicable laws.

    m. Apply as the project applicant for all HUD CoC Program HMIS Projects within the CoC.

    n. Serve as the liaison with HUD regarding HUD HMIS grants.

II. Administer the software, including:

    a. Ensure the software vendor complies with the responsibilities designated below in Section D.4.

    b. Report any concerns with the software vendor to the HMIS Governance Committee.

    c. Inform CoCs and agencies how each software release will change or impact current workflow and operations.

    d. Protect confidential data (in compliance with federal HMIS Standards, local privacy policies, and other applicable law), and abide by any restrictions clients have placed on their own data.

    e. In accordance with and by all HUD regulations and policies

III. Administer HMIS end users, including:

    a. Provide and manage end user licenses, including authorizing usage and the level of access to HMIS for all users.

    b. Add and remove partner agency administrators.

    c. Provide all training and user guidance needed to ensure appropriate system use, data entry, data reporting, and data security and confidentiality.

    d. Provide specific training for agency administrators and end users.

    e. Establish the training requirements for users and agency administrators.

    f. Maintain documentation of user training completion.

    g. Outreach to Partner Agencies to provide end user support.

    h. Develop and maintain a how-to manual that provides data entry guidance for users.

    i. Maintain an email helpdesk for user support.

    j. Communicate at least monthly with users through an e-newsletter. The e-newsletter will provide information on upcoming regulatory changes, software upgrades, current HMIS news, grants, training, etc.

IV. Ensure Data Quality

    a. Ensure all client and homeless program data are collected in adherence to the HUD HMIS Data Standards, the HMIS Policies and Procedures, and local additional requirements.

    b. Customize the HMIS application to meet local data requirements (within reason and within constraints of budget and other duties).

    c. Develop and implement a data quality plan.

    d. Monitor data quality and generate data quality reports under the data quality plan.

    e. Assist Partner Agencies and users to rectify data quality concerns.

    f. Carry out aggregate data extraction and reporting under the guidance of the HMIS Governance Committee.

    g. Assist Partner Agencies with agency-specific data collection and reporting needs, such as the Annual Progress Report and other program reports (within reason and within constraints of budget and other duties).

    h. Develop HMIS data entry workflow and requirements for HMIS data and reporting to meet Partner Agency reporting requirements.

V. Reporting

    a. Complete, or provide assistance for the completion of the Annual Homeless Assessment Report, HUD CoC Program Notice of Funding Availability, Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report, CoC 10 Year Plans, Partner Agency Annual Performance Reports, and other reports to funders from agencies federally mandated to use HMIS.

    b. Ensure the HMIS policies and procedures and recommend data entry workflow align with collecting the data necessary to complete the reports listed above in Section D.3.IV.a.

    c. Construct, run and publish all necessary system-wide reports to meet federal and local reporting compliance.

    d. Provide aggregate reports to groups or stakeholders requesting HMIS information within the constraints detailed in the HMIS Policies and Procedures Manual.

VI. Satisfactory Assurances Regarding Confidentiality and Security:
It is understood that the HMIS will contain client information that may be subject to the privacy and security protections and requirements of federal HMIS Standards, HIPAA Privacy Rule, other law, and local HMIS privacy and security policies and procedures. The HMIS Lead Agency hereby agrees that it will use protected client information only for purposes permitted by agreement with Partner Agencies and as permitted by the applicable law and Standards. Further, the HMIS Lead Agency agrees it will make use of all safeguards required by HUD Privacy Standards, HIPAA Privacy Rule, where appropriate, other law, and local HMIS privacy and security policies and procedures in order to prevent any unauthorized disclosure of protected client information.

      a.   Develop and implement security and confidentiality plans required by the HUD HMIS Standards.
      b.   Assist Partner Agencies to rectify agency data security and privacy concerns.

4. Software Vendor
The selected software vendor and HMIS database must meet all HUD regulations and policies, and the following requirements:

      a.   Ensure the HMIS design meets the federal HMIS Data Standards.
      b.   Develop a codebook and provide other documentation of programs created.
      c.   Provide ongoing support to the HMIS Lead pertaining to the needs of end users to mine the database, generate reports and other interface needs.
      d.   Administer the product servers, including web and database servers.
      e.   Monitor access to HMIS through auditing.
      f.   Monitor functionality, speed and database backup procedures.
      e.   Provide backup and recovery of internal and external networks.
      f.   Maintain the system twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.
      g.   Communicate any planned or unplanned interruption of service to the HMIS Lead Agency.
      h.   Take all steps needed to secure the system against breaches of security and system crashes.

E. Period of Agreement and Modification/Termination

1. Period of Operation and Termination
This Governance Charter shall remain in effect until terminated by the parties. Each party shall have the right to terminate this agreement as to itself only upon 30 days prior written notice to the HMIS Governance Committee in care of the HMIS Lead Agency. Violation of any component may be grounds for immediate termination of this Agreement.

2. Amendments
Amendments, including additions, deletions, or modifications to this Governance Charter must be agreed to by all parties to this Agreement.