

REGIONAL & STATEWIDE DATA WAREHOUSING

WHAT is BACHIC & RHINo?

The Bay Area Homeless Information Collaborative (BACHIC) is a group of representatives from 11 Continuums of Care, which comprise the 11 central California coastal counties surrounding the San Francisco and Monterey Bay areas. This entire metropolitan region represents a combined population of approximately 7.5 million people.

The BACHIC group came together to leverage learning and expertise across the multiple communities.

As part of the BACHIC collaboration, the group created and oversees RHINo (Regional Homeless Information Network organization) that brings county HMIS data together in a data warehouse environment for the creation of a composite picture of the homeless population and services across the BACHIC region.



Overall Vision:

The vision of RHINo is to enhance collaboration and data collection capabilities, leading to a better understanding of the homeless population in the region. RHINo is a rich repository of information that provides data which will be utilized to analyze trends, gaps in services, and mobility patterns among homeless people, and inform homeless funding and policy directions. RHINo will give policy makers, service providers and funders a better understanding of homelessness within the region. The analysis of regional data allows for better planning and resource management and an increased ability to address the present and future needs of homeless people in the BACHIC region.

Coordinating efforts across the broader region leverages the Homeless Management Information

Regional & Statewide Data Warehousing: WHAT is BACHIC-RHINo?

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System (HMIS) from individual Continuums of Care (CoCs) into a more complete regional system that better serves the needs of all the constituencies involved. The primary advantages for working with data at a regional level include:

- The ability to bring together a consolidated, non-duplicated picture of homelessness across the region in order to better understand the dynamics and migration patterns of the homeless population and how this effects individual communities and agencies within the region;
- The ability to identify the prevalence of chronic homelessness which crosses county boundaries thereby enabling service agencies to offer and provide more appropriate services to the affected homeless population; and
- The ability to provide funders of homeless service agencies a better regional picture of the effectiveness of the programs they sponsor and the ability to better target their investments with the homeless population.

Among the specific data analyses that are possible with a regional system are:

- Developing an unduplicated regional count of homeless persons, including pertinent demographic information;
- Tracking client movement across continuum boundaries throughout the region;
- Tracking service usage across continuum boundaries and throughout the region; and
- Quantifying the effect of service-level gradients across communities and understanding the causes, trends and effects of mobility.

With this vision in mind, BACHIC member CoCs decided to build a data warehouse and agreed to warehouse all the Universal and Program-Specific data elements from the HUD Data Standards excluding certain sensitive protected personal information (PPI). Currently, CoCs upload their data monthly into RHINo using the Comma Separated Value (CSV) format, but ultimately BACHIC plans to use the HUD XML schema. Using a Regional Unique Identifier protocol, the data warehouse gives participating CoCs an unduplicated count of the number of people experiencing homelessness within the region, their service use patterns, the movement of homeless persons across the community and the extent of chronic homelessness in the region.

The individual Continuums of Care retain responsibility for their strategic HMIS planning within their county. They are ultimately responsible for the deployment of the system within their respective community. Each Continuum of Care and their respective agencies retain ownership of any and all data entered into the Regional HMIS system on their behalf. Each Continuum of Care is responsible for developing and implementing policies and procedures regarding what individuals or organizations from their community will have access to their data in the warehouse, how it may be accessed, and how it may be used. The lead agency does not disclose or release any county specific information in the system to third parties, except under direction of the owning Continuum of Care.

Each Continuum of Care is responsible for its own data analysis relating to its own specific community. The lead agency is responsible only for the analysis of regional aggregate data.

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The RHINo project has also developed a set of reference manuals, data dictionaries, data sharing agreements and other documentation that can be used as a toolkit for other communities interested in starting their own data-warehousing project.

For more information about the BACHIC data warehouse project please contact Community Technology Alliance, 408-437-8800, Admin@ctagroup.org.