

Homelessness 101

00:11 Stephanie: Hi. Welcome to Homelessness 101. My name is Stephanie Reinauer from Abt Associates.

00:18 Nastacia: And hi. My name is Nastacia Moore from C4 Innovations.

00:26 Stephanie: The National Human Services Data Consortium, NHRDC, is an organization focused on developing effective leadership for the best use of information technology to manage human services. NHRDC holds two conferences each year that convene human services administrators, primarily working in the homeless service data space together to learn best practices and share knowledge. This content was developed for the Spring 2020 Conference, co-sponsored by HUD. We are sad not to be meeting you face to face in Minneapolis this spring, but we are grateful for the opportunity to share conference materials with you remotely, from the safety of our home offices. We hope you are staying safe too.

01:14 Nastacia: All right, thank you, Stephanie. Let's get into our learning objectives today. We'll start with the basics, with fully defining homelessness and how this definition varies across different partners. We will touch on what homeless services are available, data used to measure and document progress towards ending homelessness. And so the plan is to briefly review some national initiatives that are in place to better understand how these initiatives work together. And finally, we'll discuss how HMIS fits into the larger picture of homelessness, our services, and how it's critical, and how it's a critical tool for understanding the complexities of our crisis response system.

01:54 Nastacia: All right. So if you're wondering if you're in the right place and if this presentation is most appropriate for your needs, this presentation is designed specifically for folks who are new to the field of homeless services and are new to their position within their agency. So again, today we'll focus on, one, understanding various definitions of homelessness and what we currently know about the causes of homelessness. Two, getting some familiarity with national-level initiatives to end the homeless across federal agencies, departments, and to understand the intersectionality of these initiatives.

02:33 Nastacia: Then again, we want to review and discuss how homelessness is measured using HMIS and to provide an outline for understanding how HMIS fits into data universes. And then lastly, we're gonna gain some familiarity with some different tools and resources to further our learning with this type of stuff.

03:04 Nastacia: So, key questions. How do we define homelessness? These are some of the things you wanna keep in mind as we continue the conversation and as you're seeking some questions for today, just continue to think about these things. How do we define homelessness? How do we end homelessness? Who is working to end homelessness, and how do we measure our progress in ending homelessness?

[pause]

03:37 Nastacia: All right, let's talk a little bit about factors that lead to homelessness. So the image you see here is not comprehensive, it's not a comprehensive list of all the examples and factors that lead into homelessness. People who experience homeless are mainly at risk because they lack support. It's a lack of support and systems and safety nets in their lives. It's important to remember that every individual has their own set of circumstances, their own set of experiences, and their own

perspectives. It's not realistic, folks, to believe that just one thing causes homelessness. It's so way more complex than that.

04:19 Nastacia: There are many factors and circumstances including structural inequality, gaps in safety nets, individual vulnerabilities, and a lack of housing that may lead to individuals or households to experience homeless. It's important to know that there are several factors and series of events that also may occur prior to someone entering homelessness. For example, take poverty and economic disparities, for example, and how they play a role in leading someone to experiencing homelessness. But let this not confuse you. Not all folks who are low-income experience homelessness. Not the case.

05:00 Nastacia: As a matter of fact, folks who are low-income only make up a small percentage of the total homelessness population. Most often, it's a number of factors, including the ones I just mentioned, that lead to individuals experiencing homelessness. You should also note that periods of homelessness can and do vary dramatically. There are folks that experience homelessness for a few days, a few months, and others, much longer than that. And so we have to make sure that we're taking these complex needs and circumstances and barriers folks experience into consideration when we talk about periods of homelessness.

05:43 Nastacia: Let's imagine. Imagine yourself or imagine someone else you know living paycheck to paycheck and having unexpected expenses pop up. This happens. Most of us may have friends or family that are there to support us and may be able to help with covering a month's expense of rent or a month's expense of a car payment or whatnot. But imagine if there is not a support network there. Imagine how scary that is. Scary enough that our housing could be jeopardized. And so these are some of the things to think about in some of the cases when we talk about factors that lead to homelessness.

06:40 Nastacia: What about talking about structural factors? We also have to take a step back and consider how are we centering race equity into our everyday work and what factors contribute to structural racism in our homelessness networks? I wanna share that some studies and research and data show that black and brown people are more likely than white people to experience homelessness. This is a result of centuries of structural racism that have excluded history of oppressed people, particularly black and Native Americans from equal access to housing, community support, and opportunities for economic mobility.

07:22 Nastacia: I wanna talk a little bit about what each of these factors include. So we have housing, so you have the unavailability of safe, decent, affordable and desirable housing. There is housing policy and practices that still exist that perpetuate discriminatory housing practices. What about work, economic mobility? Black and brown people who are experiencing deep poverty more than white people due to the lack of good jobs, good paying jobs, consistent jobs.

08:00 Nastacia: How does criminal justice play a part in all of this? There is an over-representation of black and brown people, specifically black men entering and re-entering, exiting the criminal justice system. The result of black folks entering into the criminal justice system creates ongoing challenges to obtaining employment, that economic mobility piece and housing due to criminal records.

08:29 Nastacia: What about behavioral health? Our behavioral health systems lack cultural

responsiveness pretty much, especially for people of color experience severe mental illness and substance use. The question to think about here is, how might we interrupt systems that perpetuate racism at the structural levels in our homelessness networks to advance race equity in our communities? Now, you will probably learn more about centering race equity and incorporating equity into your work and to other presentations, but for now, this is just a snapshot of some structural inequities around race and racism.

09:23 Nastacia: Let's get into the definition of homelessness. So what is the definition of homelessness? I wanna share that this definition varies depending on the type of funding source and for purposes of our conversation today, let's explore HUD's definition which includes four separate categories in which individuals or households can be homeless, or eligible for homelessness assistance.

09:51 Nastacia: So category one, could be what does it mean to be literally homelessness? This is probably the most common category people think of when they talk about homelessness. Let's take a moment to briefly go through each characteristic for further understanding. So you have primary nighttime residence, that is public or private place, not meant for human habitation. What does this look like? So this looks like folks living in an abandoned structure, they could be living in a vehicle, a camp of some sort, or simply just living on the streets.

10:26 Nastacia: What about living in a publicly or privately operated shelter? What does this look like? Okay, I'll paint a picture. This looks like living in emergency shelter, a transitional housing project, a hotel, a motel, that was paid for another organization. So if it was paid for a community health center or a faith-based community, a social service organization, this would count here.

10:55 Nastacia: What about exiting an institution where a person has resided for less than 90 days, and who resided in a shelter or a place not meant for human habitation, immediately prior to entering that institution, what does this look like? So this would be someone who stayed in jail for 90 days or less, a hospital for 90 days or less, or a person that was in some sort of rehab facility for 90 days or less.

11:34 Nastacia: Category two, inmate risk. So these are individuals or family members who intimately lose their primary nighttime residence if the place of residence that they are living will be lost within a 14-day time period of some sort of assistance. No other housing placements have been identified and or if person or head of household lacks the resources needed to obtain permanent housing or other permanent housing placement.

12:21 Nastacia: Three, federal status. So category three is less popular among CoCs. So when you think about category three, think about unaccompanied youth under 25 years old, families with children and youth who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under the homelessness definition. Category three homelessness definition can only be used in really high-performing communities and must, must be approved by HUD. But this one is not one that folks really refer to because currently, there are no high-performing communities and so CoCs are not referring to category three when listing for homeless.

13:19 Nastacia: Category four. Fleeing, attempting to flee domestic violence is a bit more nuanced, particularly as it relates to youth homelessness. So as individuals and households present for services and are categorized into one of these four categories of homelessness, there's also a level of

documentation that needs to happen. While documentation and record-keeping isn't the focus for today's conversation, it's important to note that third-party documentation is always preferred. So we wanna think about third-party documentation could be a written observation made by a caseworker, a street outreach worker, or another entity. HMIS and comparable databases can record and can count as third-party documentation as well. And just a note for folks who are curious, third-party documentation is actually the preferred method. Individuals and households experiencing homelessness can also self-certify as documentation as well.

14:35 Nastacia: Let's talk a little bit about the chronic homelessness definition. Okay? So breaking down the criteria for an individual or family to be counted chronically homeless. So they have to have a qualifying disability. What does this look like? The head of household or the individual must have a qualifying disability such as a diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, post-traumatic stress disorder, cognitive impairment resulting from brain injuries or a chronic physical illness or disability. When we think about these types of disability, think long-term. These disabilities must be expected to be very long-term.

15:33 Nastacia: What about in terms of housing? So folks must live in a place not meant for human habitation, emergency shelter, safe haven or in an institution which they resided in for less than 90 days and has resided in a place not meant for human habitation, emergency shelter or safe haven immediately before entering said institution.

16:03 Nastacia: I wanna talk a little bit about the length of homelessness. And so folks have experienced a total of 12 months of homelessness over the past three years, and this can be 12 months consecutively or in a four or more episodes. This seems like a lot of information and I can only imagine how overwhelming all these definitions can be and placing the definitions where appropriate. HUD has a lot of guidance in regards to homeless definitions located on the HUD Exchange. As a side note, I highly recommend folks to go seek tools and resources from HUD Exchange to better grasp what these definitions mean and how to apply them.

17:04 Nastacia: All right, let's talk about the US. What does homelessness look like in the United States? So now that we have a better understanding about the definition of homelessness, we can take a look at some national statistics to get a bigger picture of homelessness across a broad spectrum. To do this, we will look at the PIT data, Point-in-Time. This data is collected each year by continuums and is reported to HUD. The information allows us to use and track trends over time to see what homelessness looks like at the local and national level.

17:45 Nastacia: So, quick snapshot of what homelessness on a national level look like for Point-in-Time, January 2019. Close to 567,000 people experienced homelessness, most of which of those people were sheltered. This means they were staying in a emergency shelter or a transitional housing facility. 37% Of those folks were unsheltered, so they stayed in places such as the street or places not meant for human habitation. About 70% or two-thirds of those folks were single adults, while about 30%, which is like one-third of those folks, were a part of a household with children, a family unit.

18:38 Stephanie: Also, really important and we touched on this in the beginning, black and brown folks have remained considerably over-represented among the homelessness population compared to the rest of the US population. African-Americans accounted for 40% of all people experiencing homelessness in 2019 and 52% of people experiencing homelessness as members of families with

children despite being 13, that's a super small percentage, despite being 13% of the US population. It's a huge disparity and this is why we also talk about how can we center equity and race equity into our work?

19:30 Nastacia: Okay, let's get into some trends. And so what we're gonna do now is here's a graph showing point-in-time numbers over time, since 2007. So looking at trends since 2007, all homelessness persons have a decreased to about 12%, shelter persons decreased to about 9%, unsheltered persons decreased of about 12%. And then looking at the data from '18 to '19, all homelessness persons, those numbers increased, shelter persons decreased, not by much but they decreased very little, and then unsheltered persons increased about 11%.

20:30 Nastacia: So, what else does it look like? What else does homelessness look like where we live? So nearly half of all the people experiencing homelessness in the country were in three states, California, New York, and Florida. California and New York had the greatest, had the largest number of people experiencing homelessness and the highest rates of homelessness at about 38 and 46 people per 10,000 folks, okay?

21:00 Stephanie: As large states, Florida and Texas contributed to large numbers of persons experiencing homelessness to the national estimates, they had rates of homelessness lower than the national average of 17 people per 10,000. More than half of all unsheltered folks in the country were in California and Florida, and had the next largest number of people experiencing unsheltered homeless locations across the US. And then just to know that there were five states: North Dakota, New York, Massachusetts, Maine, and Nebraska, they together, they sheltered at least 95% of people experiencing homelessness.

21:54 Nastacia: Okay, so what does homelessness look like in your CoC? A couple of things. Homelessness probably looks different right now in your CoCs due to the COVID-19 pandemic that we are experiencing. And so with that in mind, what does it look like? How is homelessness in your community similar or different than the national picture then and now, now? What about the rise or decline with sub-populations, what does youth look like, veterans, family, chronic homelessness? Are there more people in shelter right now, are there more unsheltered people right now? These are all things to consider, especially during the times that we're experiencing right now, but these are things that go back and think about and to analyze and to talk more with your organizations. At this time. I would like to pass this to my colleague, Stephanie.

22:53 Stephanie: Great, thank you Nastacia. So that was a really great overview of some of the foundational definitions and some of what we know nationally about homelessness. So, where do we go from here? We know we've looked at the prevalence and what do we do to solve homelessness? That's all why we're in this work, right? So homeless services then can appear very confusing if you're new to the system. Right now, it appears very confusing for some of us that have been in the system for a long time. There are many programs out there that are all, that have goals of helping address housing instability and homelessness, but each program has different eligibility requirements, depending on the funder, and the target population. We just had a good overview from Nastacia about data from 2019.

23:43 Stephanie: Since then, communities have had to adapt their crisis response to homelessness to slow the spread of COVID-19 in their shelter systems and in their unsheltered communities. At the same time many more households are facing housing instability. Some that have been living on

the edge of instability for a long time, and now that are pushed, being pushed farther into being precarious into homelessness and some people are experiencing economic and housing instability for the first time. It's really important to remember though, thinking about the structural context of though people are having individual crises in their lives, that the overall structure, structural inequities are gonna impact how those crises play out and who is impacted more or less during this time. It is a shifting landscape but it's more important now more than ever to rely on what we know has been effective in the past, even as things change, and to be working together across different silos.

24:47 Stephanie: This is just sort of an overview of some of just the different programs and best practices that are around to help address homelessness, and this is probably what it feels like if you're new to the system, it's just a lot of different information, and you're not sure how it all fits together. And this isn't an inclusive list at all. So I wanna introduce the concept of coordinated entry, which is sort of an organizing principle for a homeless crisis response system with the intention of helping them be more strategic and system focused rather than just an assembly of thoughts. We want them to work together to be the most effective. Again, it's more important now than ever to be really strategic and coordinated in our response to be the most effective.

25:35 Stephanie: So, let's talk about what this means, to shift to a systems approach. This shift has been happening in the homeless crisis response system, in our field of work for a while now, for 10 years or so, but each community is sort of in a different place of how far along they are in having a systems approach to addressing homelessness. In this PIT chart here, we have on the left a sort of description of what a non-coordinated, non-systems approach system is where people are really focused on how are individual projects and agencies performing and making decisions in an uncoordinated way? If your community is really in this way, you probably noticed people, agencies and projects are very competitive over resources and they're not thinking, and they're pitting their populations against each other. And if you're working more of a systems approach, the community is really planning together, doing coordinated entry, prioritizing services, making strategic funding choices based on serving the system as a whole, looking at system performance and not just individual project performance, and using data to inform all those decisions.

26:48 Stephanie: Another piece of that that we're gonna talk about in coordinated entry is using dynamic prioritization or sometimes called dynamic system management or prioritization based on need rather than just doing a first come, first serve prioritization. And so this is much harder but it's much more effective way to get resources to people who need it the most. And we do know that the more a system, coordinated system approach communities have, the more effective they are at addressing homelessness.

27:19 Stephanie: This is kind of a sample map of a coordinated entry system. I'm gonna briefly hit on the main components of coordinated entry. But I really recommend you, if you're unfamiliar to this, you dig into some of the great resources available on the HUD Exchange around coordinated entry and around dynamic system management as well. So, in a coordinated entry system, the key components are access, assessment, prioritization and referral and housing placement.

27:48 Stephanie: So access is how people are connected to the homeless system. It might be centralized; it might be decentralized as then people have different physical locations to access. Right now, what we're seeing is a lot of communities having to figure out how to do this with social distancing. So, do you have a phone number, can people call or is there a way people can access

services from wherever they are at? So, you really want is to be coordinated and so people are getting access in a consistent way, that that is adapted to meet people where they're at in a safe way.

28:22 Stephanie: Assessment is gathering information from a person about what they need and how vulnerable they are and anything that you might need to know to determine what project is gonna best meet their needs and what they'd be eligible for. What's happening in a lot of communities right now that are doing a good job with dynamic system management and prioritization is they're doing safe assessment. So, it means, instead of trying to spend an hour on your first phone call collecting everything you might ever wonder about a person, just collect the minimum you need to get them on your list and then you can collect more information as needed as you go. 'Cause it isn't really about trying to solve all their problems, it's about meeting their crisis response and their crisis needs and then getting them connected to a housing project to best serve their needs based on the opening that you have in your community.

29:13 Stephanie: And so that assessment is really used for prioritization and determining eligibility and then, of course, the goal is to get people connected to a housing placement. And in this ideal system, we see that many people are diverted or prevented from entering the homeless system and that's a really effective way to make sure that these limited resources are used most effectively to help the people that are most in need and that really will not be able to resolve their homelessness without that level of assistance.

29:47 Stephanie: This is really important to keep in mind right now as a lot more stakeholders are getting involved in homelessness and more people are experiencing housing instability and there's more resources available to address these issues. We don't wanna throw out what we've learned over the past decades about how to be most effective. And so this is gonna be really important now to make sure that we can keep people from entering the homeless system and be really strategic about who's most likely to become homeless without assistance, and that's what those targeted prevention is really all about. There's a lot of resources on that, online too. Again, this is an overview. We're gonna touch on a lot of topics, but not go deep in them, but there are resources on all these topics that you can learn more.

30:37 Stephanie: And so just kind of briefly to cover some of the key topics of systems supporting homelessness, continual care, or, you oftentimes hear the term CoC. And so this is the geographic jurisdiction that HUD funding for homeless projects goes through, and it's also the planning and coordinating body for all of these projects. And so, if you're not part of that system or you're not sure who those people are, you're gonna wanna connect with them right away. And really, all of the different stakeholders in your communities that are working with housing and homelessness need to be coordinating with each other.

31:18 Stephanie: Housing First is a really important concept, which means that housing should be provided low-barrier or no-barrier to people. So, this applies to both crisis housing like a shelter as well as permanent housing. And historically, there's been a lot of barriers placed on people to get into housing such as sobriety or criminal background checks or even requirements that they complete a lot of services or life skills before being housing ready. And so we really have moved away from this idea of housing readiness and we know that people are most effective at accessing other services and addressing their own challenges when they have stable housing, right? It's just like if you don't have food in your tummy or you haven't had a nice sleep, you're not gonna really be able to work on getting the rest of your life in order. I know that I can't, if I haven't had my basic

needs met.

32:13 Stephanie: So it's really, it's really that. It's both effective as well as just the right thing to do. By name list is a kind of a, it's a tactic of getting a list of everyone who is experiencing homeless in your community and keeping that list up-to-date and using that list to do all the things we've talked about, to prioritize, "Okay, who... We have a housing opening, who's on our list that is a good fit for that opening and is most vulnerable and most in need right now?" And so being able to really keep an active list of who's in need in your community.

32:48 Stephanie: Opening doors, that is a federal plan for ending homelessness published by the USICH, Interagency Council on Homelessness in 2010 and so if you haven't seen that, please look it up and that's really gonna give you a good overview of where we're going, nationally, and what the goals are, it's all in line with these practices. Mainstream systems is how we talk about all of the other systems that the people we serve in our homeless system are interacting with. A lot of times, the systems that are there to serve people in poverty as well as systems like the criminal justice system, education, health care, behavioral health, and so it's really important to coordinate with these systems and make sure that you're holding them accountable for their job as well, since the homeless crisis response system tends to be sort of the bottom of the barrel in serving people that have gone through the cracks of a lot of other systems. So we really wanna maximize those, make sure people are getting benefits that they're eligible for 'cause that's gonna help them in their housing stability.

33:49 Stephanie: And data and reporting, we're gonna get into that a little bit more in this presentation. So who's working to end homelessness? We've touched on this a little bit, this is not a complete list of federal partners, obviously, our Department of Housing and Urban Development HUD is a big key partner, Department of Justice, Health and Human Services, Veterans Administration and US Interagency Council on Homelessness which I already mentioned. And so this coordination is happening at a federal level.

34:21 Stephanie: It's also important that coordination happen at a local level. So you need to identify who are the key stakeholders in your community? Do you have a homeless coalition or a community of care body that meets regularly? Does it have the right people at the table, are there people missing? And so that's gonna include all these stakeholders, funders, providers. It also needs to include people with lived experience of homelessness. If you're really gonna respond effectively, they're the real experts, so they need to do part of the table as well.

34:56 Stephanie: We're gonna jump into system performance measures right now. Again, this is another topic that there are a lot of resources for online, there's a series of videos, there's other presentations. So I'm gonna do a quick overview because these are really important. There are seven system performance measures and they're really meant to work in combination with each other. If you just focus on one or two of them, you're not gonna have an effective system and you might actually have some unintended negative consequences if you don't focus on all of them, together.

35:32 Stephanie: They are measured in the system performance report, which is a year-to-year report, comparing system performance, it's used as kind of a benchmark to see how communities are performing and improving over time. So it's really tempting to start with this number three, but I am gonna go through them in order, but they all kind of, this graphic is, it's not an accident. They're seven measures but really they all are about the overall goal of eliminating homelessness.

36:02 Stephanie: So, I will go through each one briefly. Number one is reduce length of time homeless. And so this is the reduction in the average and medium length of time persons remain homeless. And it's measured by how long people are from the start of their homeless to their end of homeless. And to reduce this performance measure, focusing on the chronic homeless population or people that have been homeless for a really long time, a year or more is a great way to reduce this time homeless.

36:39 Stephanie: Measure two is reduce returns to the homeless. So this is after people exit the homeless system or exit homelessness, what portion of them return later? And this can be measured 6 to 12 months and 24 months after they exit from the system, usually measured by after their exit to permanent housing. So after people are really housed, then when are they performing, when are they returning to the homeless system, what portion of them are returning?

37:08 Stephanie: If you see a lot of returns here, then you know that people aren't really stabilizing. So maybe you're kind of pushing people out of your homeless system sooner than they need to be or without enough support, if you're seeing a lot of people return to homelessness. So another way you can improve returns is by using your diversion and prevention and problem-solving strategies targeted to people that have histories of homelessness, 'cause you know that they're most likely to become homeless again, compared to people that have never had homelessness.

37:44 Stephanie: Performance measure three, of course, is to eliminate homelessness. This is, we really look at the point in time count, the annual census of homelessness year to year to see how this is working. It's the most important measure and you're really gonna get there by doing all of these other things and by being really strategic in who you're helping with homelessness and getting the people the right type of help that they need based on doing that coordinated entry, doing a good assessment and prioritization and matching to the right type of service.

38:22 Stephanie: Performance measure number four, jobs and income growth. So really, the idea here is that people are gonna have housing stability if they are able to increase their income over time. This one isn't focused on as much in a homeless crisis response system, really, it's a little bit beyond the scope of our system. This has to do with our mainstream partners in the extent that the Homeless Crisis Response System can have effective partnership to help people access employment and income growth, and connect with benefits that they might be eligible for. But it really does have a long-term impact on the other performance measures.

39:04 Stephanie: Performance measure five is reduce the first-time homelessness. So when we talk about prevention and diversion, this is what we're trying to do, is we're trying to prevent people from coming into homelessness at the first time. This is another one that really is, it's on the edge of the homeless system, and so that means it's really important to maximize how we're accessing mainstream services as well, in using those partnerships to address housing instability and economic instability, before people are coming into homelessness.

39:41 Stephanie: And we know, too, that thinking about those structures that people's risk of homelessness, you can't only look at the crisis to guess if they're gonna be homeless or not. So we've got a whole context, safety net and social connections and historical wealth, and all these other things that affect what happens when someone experiences a housing crisis. It's really looking at the big picture, and a lot of it is unfortunately beyond the scope of our limited homeless system.

40:17 Stephanie: And performance measure six, this is stabilizing people in category three, as Nastacia mentioned, this is the category... It includes certain populations of families and unaccompanied youth and it's really... It's once we get these other measures under control, we're gonna be able to focus on this a little bit more, because it does, it broadens the population of who we can serve much broader by looking at people that are in more unstable situations that might not meet the other definitions of homelessness. And so, these people are often not gonna be prioritized and you're looking at the most vulnerable in your community, but it's something that we wanna keep there 'cause we know eventually that we'll have this scope once we address other homelessness.

41:04 Stephanie: And then, this is number seven, but it really, it's one of the most important ones, placement in retention into PH, Permanent Housing, right? And again, when we talked about, you can't just focus on one of the measures in isolation, you have to look at them all together. So, if you just try to reduce the length of time homelessness, maybe you're kicking people out of shelter at 30 days just to keep your... To get your length of time homelessness down, but if they're not getting into permanent housing when they leave, you're not really ending homelessness, you're not gonna see... You're not gonna eliminate homelessness. You're gonna see a lot of returns. And so you need to be thinking about all of these things in together, getting people housed quickly, into permanent places, and places that they're gonna have a chance of long-term stability.

41:52 Stephanie: So how do we measure our progress in all of these things. So talking about the systems performance report. Really, it's all about collecting data to know how we're doing? We want our data to be accurate. We want it to be timely and we want it to be a real reflection of what's happening in the community. And that's how we know what we're doing. If you don't have enough data, you're really not gonna understand what's happening in your community and we can't wait for perfect data to move forward.

42:24 Stephanie: So it's a bit of a balance. We wanna have better data quality, so we understand our systems and we know what's working and what's not working and we can make, improve our performance and we can improve our best practices and we can make good funding decisions. But we also can't wait for perfect data to start doing all those things. So it needs to be an integral process where we keep getting better data quality and using that data to improve our system performance. I could talk a lot about that, but [laughter] look out for other resources on that as well.

42:56 Stephanie: And of course, we mentioned this a couple of times, it's, HMIS or Homeless Management Information System is our system that we use to collect client-level data of people that are served in projects for housing in homeless services. And so that's where a lot of these reports are coming at us, is, that's where the client data goes in and that's where we're getting our system performance measures reports and a lot of other measures, as well. It's how we collect our point in time data, as well. And so, there's a lot more information on that, on HMIS, and it's used really across a lot of funding streams as well, more and more over time.

43:36 Stephanie: Obviously, the Continuum of Care, CoC, that's their main HUD-funded projects, Emergency Solutions Grant, and this is where a lot of the Cares Act funding is going into the EST grant, and so that's all data needs to be collected on that too, that's really gonna see how we're doing with that as well. Housing opportunities for persons suffering with AIDS, bash funding and several other veterans administration funding sources, some youth projects, outreach projects, a lot of different partners are using these. And locally, other projects are involved as well in HMIS. So it's a

tool that is available and the more people are using it in your system, the more of a complete picture you're gonna have of understanding homelessness. And if you don't understand you're missing data, you're gonna have trouble drawing conclusions as well. So no data system is gonna be perfect, so you really wanna understand what you have and what part of the story is not being told. I think I'm handing it back to you, Nastacia.

44:52 Nastacia: Thank you so much, Stephanie. Okay, let's talk about comparable data systems or comparable databases right there. Why do they exist? Who uses them and what statutes prohibit the use of HMIS? Let's take domestic service providers, for examples. DV service providers use a comparable database designed to capture client-level information. So no PPI personal identifying, PII rather, personally identifying information is shared in these systems. So this database is also subject to additional privacy in security protocols to [45:43] _____ victims of domestic violence.

45:47 Nastacia: Comparable databases don't contribute to overall system performance. This is really important. However, it does serve as a mechanism for seeing what's happening on a project level through aggregate data reporting to the CoC. There are also projects that do not contribute to HMIS, that leave holes or gaps in the data. This is important to try to engage these entities and encourage HMIS participation so that communities can have a fuller picture, a more accurate snapshot of what their homelessness looks like locally in their community, and then progress that's made towards ending homelessness.

46:34 Nastacia: We also wanted to have a conversation about available HMIS and CoC performance reports. There's a lot of functionality that HMIS can do or achieve, and there's a lot of reporting that is associated with understanding our projects and understanding our systems. And so HUD uses the APR, for example, the Annual Performance Report, and so this report is required for all CoCs through another system called SAGE. Other reports, the CAPER Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report. This is a report that's done annually, and it's required for Emergency Solutions Grant, ESG programs.

47:29 Nastacia: Let's talk about the HIC, Housing Inventory Count. So these reports provide a snapshot of your CoCs having inventory. The HIC reports, they measure or count the number of bits in units available on the night of the pit count. And then you have the year point in time, which provides account of sheltered and un-sheltered folks on a single night during the last 10 days in January. SPM, you'll hear a lot about System Performance Measures and why System Performance Measures are so important. Probably out of anything, you'll hear more about this report than most. So, the Systems Performance Report is a summary and year-to-year comparison, a system where it counts averages, mediums related to seven areas of performance.

48:32 Nastacia: And then lastly you have your LSA, and this is an overall systems that looks at how households are moving through your Continuum of Care, where system performance focuses on all persons served in a system. And so, what's really helpful here are the links to all of these reports are attached and are accessible for further exploration and knowledge to gauge understanding of the use of these reports, and how to apply these reports to your programs.

49:21 Nastacia: Resources and more resources. And so one of our learning objectives earlier that I mentioned today, was we were going to try to grasp all resources available and all resources that may be appropriate. For additional guidance on understanding the homelessness definitions and the reports and other things associated with our conversation for today, go to the HUD Exchange, and

you will find everything you need to know.

49:58 Nastacia: Stephanie and I have enjoyed talking with you all today and presenting material with you all today. We hope that this was helpful. Again, we apologize, we can't be there in person, but until next time, thank you so much.