Office of Housing Counseling

Tips and Tricks for Using Your CMS and HCS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

February 15, 2023

Questions?

- Participants are in listen only mode

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Materials

- The PowerPoint has been posted for this session. We will provide the link in the Chat box.
- Webinar materials are posted on the HUD Exchange in the [Webinar Archive](#) 7-14 days after the live webinar
  - Find by date or by topic

Housing Counseling Webinar Archives

Page Description

This page contains links to the archived versions of previously recorded webinars presented by the Office of Housing Counseling. In order to listen to the archived webinar, you will need call the 800 # listed and enter the access code. Any course materials, including the PowerPoint Presentations are also posted. You should have the presentations available when you listen to the webinar. If you have any questions regarding the webinars archived on this site, please contact Virginia Holman.

Training Archive – Audio Replay and Transcript:

- Audio replay numbers are only available for 12 months after the date of the webinar
- Transcripts are available for webinars from February 2016 going forward

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Webinar Title and Link	Description	Date
Fringe Benefit Costs	This webinar discussed the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) cost principles related to fringe benefits and how to properly document and calculate fringe benefits.	February 15, 2022
Training NOFO Grant Execution	This webinar was recommended for all grantees awarded funding under the 2021 Housing Counseling Training NOFO (TNOFO).	February 8, 2022

Webinar Certificate

- Webinar attendance will be marked following the live webinar.
- Once attendance is marked you can print a Webinar Certificate by logging into your account and going to your [Learning Transcript](#).
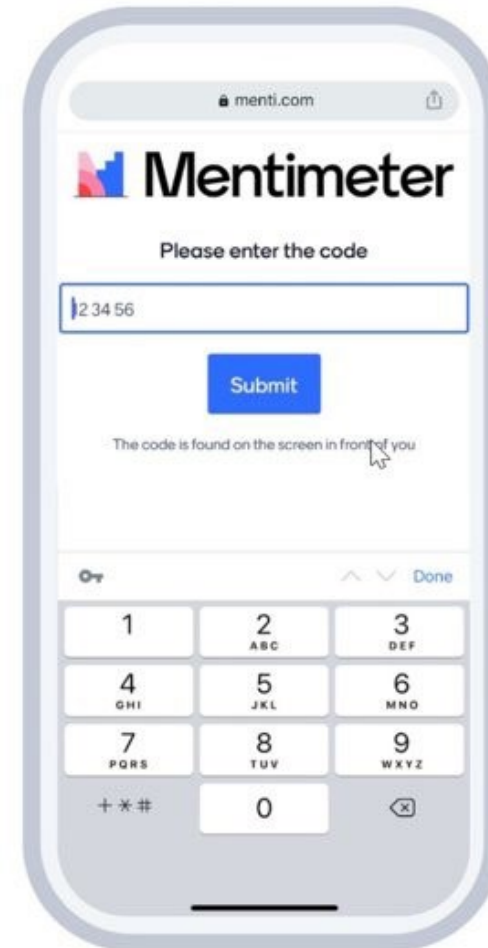- Select the Course Name and click "Print Certificate". *Not all HUD Exchange training offer Webinar Certificates.*

Feedback and Polling

- There will be questions provided in Mentimeter throughout this presentation.

- When prompted by the icon to the right, please respond to questions at www.menti.com using your computer or smart phone.

Time for Mentimeter!

Presenters

- **William Moore and Clair Weatherby**, ICF, Technical Assistance Providers

- **Jason Zavala**, MitiGate, Inc., subcontractor to ICF

- **Connie Barton**, Office of Policy and Grant Administration, HUD's Office of Housing Counseling

Agenda

- HUD Welcome

- Client Management System (CMS) Overview, Troubleshooting, and Tips for Success

- Housing Counseling System (HCS) Overview

- FHA Connection (FHAC) Overview

- Tools and Resources

- Q&A

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HUD's Office of Housing Counseling

OHC Basics Series Introduction

Housing Counseling
Basics Webinar Series

January 18, February 1, and February 15, 2023

1:00 PM EST

HUD's Office of
Housing Counseling

- Provides training for newer staff of housing counseling agencies (HCAs)

- Highlights best practices for HUD Housing Counseling Program compliance, as well as common missteps

- Equips attendees with tools and resources to implement the information and advice shared in the series

Check Out All the Sessions

Financial Management and HUD Grant Administration (recording available)

- Key grant agreement terms
- Eligible expenses and budgeting for the HUD Grant
- Grant reporting and use of eLOCCS

Recordkeeping and File Maintenance (recording available)

- Key elements of a compliant client file
- Record retention guidance
- Best practices and common mistakes in recordkeeping and file maintenance

Client Management System (CMS) Overview, Troubleshooting, and Tips for Success

CMS Overview

- The [HUD Housing Counseling Handbook 7610.1 REV-5](#) (the "Handbook") says:
  - *All participating agencies are required to use a CMS that interfaces with HUD's databases for the collection and reporting of agency and client-level data*

- Approved CMSs integrate with HUD's Housing Counseling System (HCS)

- All 9902 data must be entered into the CMS, which gets transmitted to HCS

What is a CMS?
A CMS is an online housing counseling application that automates much of the counseling process, including:
- client intake
- file maintenance
- financial and credit analysis
- outreach
- client notification, and
- reporting

CMS Selection and Integration

Client Management System Guidance

This page contains information on the Housing Counseling Client Management System (CMS). Select a topic to find relevant guidance and resources.

Learn more about how Housing Counseling Agencies can leverage technology in their counseling delivery.

All CMS issues regarding performance and reporting data to HCS should be directed to the CMS Help Desk.

Find by Topic

Overview

CMS Benefits

Reporting Requirements

Choosing a CMS

Overview

All Housing Counseling Agencies (HCAs) participating in HUD's Housing Counseling Program are required to use a Client Management System (CMS) that interfaces with HUD's Housing Counseling System (HCS). A CMS is a commercial or self-developed online housing counseling application that automates much of the housing counseling process, including client intake, file maintenance, financial and credit analysis, outreach, client notification, and reporting. Automated data transfer from each agency's CMS to HUD's HCS, replacing the manual input process.

HCAs have the option to either acquire an existing commercial CMS listed on HUD's website that is already compliant and connected to HCS, or to develop their own CMS. A CMS must be compliant—meeting the requirement that data transfers to HCS—before an agency is allowed to participate in HUD's Housing Counseling program. It is the HCAs' responsibility to utilize an accepted CMS that is in compliance with HUD's

- Each agency must have a CMS that is approved by HUD
- Info about CMS requirements, choosing a system, and more available on HUD Exchange
- HUD does not have direct relationships with CMS vendors. HUD does not monitor, negotiate or engage with CMS vendors on behalf of housing counseling agencies

Benefits of Using Your CMS

✓Automates complete client intake and financial analysis

✓Saves time and file space

✓Automates reports and supports transfer of data

✓Increases likelihood of submitting quality data to HUD

✓Enable **effective** program evaluation and performance measurement, including by subgroup and demographics

CMS Troubleshooting

- All CMS issues should first be directed to the CMS vendor (contact information listed on the [HUD Exchange](#))

- [HCS, CMS, and 9902 Submission Errors Codes](#) provides guidance on specific CMS-HCS errors

- Notify your HUD POC if CMS issues are preventing you from completing quarterly reporting on time

HCS, CMS, and 9902 Submission Errors Codes
Updated September 7, 2022

This error code document should be shared with team members who work in HUD's Housing Counseling System (HCS), manage report uploads in Client Management Systems (CMS), and others who work in 9902 reporting in HCS/CMSs.

Table of Contents

Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

- PII is information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, either alone or when combined with other personal or identifying information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual

- To protect PII and comply with the confidentiality requirements of the Handbook:

  - ✓ Ensure CMS access is limited to staff who need client level information

  - ✓ Lock or log off of computers when not in use, including when working remotely

  - ✓ Use privacy screen protectors

  - ✓ Evaluate PII safeguarding quarterly with the same rigor as counseling and client file quality

Tips for Success – Data Entry

Simplify Process

- Duplication is old school – you are not required to capture client information in both paper and electronic format
- Fill out required fields and don't fill out fields just because they exist

Timeliness

- To ensure accurate, complete entry of client data and activity log information, update the CMS during, right after, and/or within one day of the activity

Uniform Language

- Using standard document titles, abbreviations, and acronyms in notes allows other counselors and staff to easily understand client file information

Focus on File/Recordkeeping Requirements

- Identify funding source early and ensure activity logs show analysis and pre-action plan notations

Tips for Success – Data Entry (contd)

Regular Quality Control

- After entering information, **save** and **review** your entries
- Part of your supervisory monitoring plan should include a check for complete data in CMS client files

Use a variety of training tools

- Step-by-step instructions with screenshots or screen recording to demonstrate key functions
- "Office hours" with your experienced CMS users
- Cross-training in pulling reports and reviewing data

Mindset – Think of your CMS as your "system of record"

- Making your CMS your go-to place for notes and case information reduces duplicate note taking, saves time, and allows for maximum transparency within an agency
- Take advantage of client communications functions

Tips for Success – Using Reporting

Practice reporting

- Do simulated reporting using your CMS, to assess accuracy before reporting due dates

Use your CMS for program management

- Use your CMS management reports at least annually to inform your workplan narrative and procedures

Time for Mentimeter!

Housing Counseling System (HCS) Overview

What is HCS?

- HCS is a real-time web application that manages the HUD Housing Counseling program's data

- It maintains the list of agencies, collects client data, processes grant applications, and provides performance reports

- Every agency has a single HCS user ID (not individual staff users)

- The HUD Exchange has information about HCS, including password reset and technical assistance

Overview of 9902 Reporting

- HUD collects data on housing counseling services delivered through HCS

- 9902 data represents cumulative fiscal year-to-date Housing Counseling Program data

- Required regardless of whether receiving a HUD grant

- HCAs that do not submit may jeopardize status as a HUD-Approved HCA

For HUD Housing Counseling Grantees and Applicants, failure to report may also

- Affect timely processing of grant vouchers

- Negatively affect agency's scores in HUD housing counseling grant competitions

Quarterly Verification

- Agencies must make updates to data in agency CMS, and log in to HCS to verify each quarter
- Each quarter, provide cumulative data from beginning of fiscal year

HUD Housing Counseling Grantees must also:
- Indicate which activities attributed to HUD Housing Counseling Grant Funds (9902 Toolkit FAQ)
- Annually, enter annual projected activities into HCS and obtain HUD approval
- Above does not apply to subgrantees

Updating Agency Information

- Enter all changes in the CMS, to be transmitted to the HCS:
    - Agency contact information
    - Available services
- Validate agency profile in HCS at least every 90 days
    - Account must be reset if agency does not log in every 90 days
- Contact HUD POC for help adding or removing counseling services from HUD-approved work plan and HCS profile
- Password resets may be requested by the agency manager or HUD contact

9902 Tips for Success – Demographics

- **Demographics (Sections 3-7)**: Track percentage of clients reported as "Chose Not to Respond" and take action to increase demographic information reporting

			TOTAL	
Update	PDF Version	Close	**All Activities**	**All HUD Funded Activities**
3. Ethnicity				
a.	Hispanic		1	0
b.	Not Hispanic		9	0
c.	Chose not to respond		0	0
		Section 3 Total	10	0

9902 Tips for Success – Group Education

8. Households Receiving Education Services (Including Online Education), by Purpose		
a. Completed financial literacy workshop, including home affordability, budgeting and understanding use of credit	0	15
b. Completed predatory lending, loan scam or other fraud prevention workshop	0	0
c. Completed fair housing workshop	0	0
d. Completed homelessness prevention workshop	0	0

- **Households Receiving Education, by Purpose (Section 8)**: Only count each client once even if an education/group workshop is divided into two sessions

  - For example, if a homeowner attends a homebuyer education course, this counts as one workshop even if it occurs across multiple days

9902 Tips for Success – Outcomes

- **Outcome of One-on-One Counseling (Section 10)**:

  - Be sure to include all outcomes for one-on-one counseling, including budgets developed. Almost all one-on-one counseling should have this outcome

  - Check that outcomes reported align with Households Receiving One-on-One Counseling by Purpose (Section 9)

  - For example, if you have reported that 2 households received one-on-one counseling for *Rental Topics* in Section 9, then *Households that received rental counseling and avoided eviction* in Section 10 should not be more than 2

9. Households Receiving One-on-One Counseling by Purpose

b.	Rental Topics	2

10. Outcome of One-on-One Counseling Services

k.	Household that received rental counseling and avoided eviction after receiving Housing Counseling Services.	2

9902 Tips for Success – Data Quality

- **Review HCS Data Quality Alerts:** Identify and resolve errors using information contained in alerts

9902 Tips for Success – Best Practices

- **Double check overall submission**:

  - Submit data under the correct HUD fiscal year/quarter
  - Verify that data is cumulative for the fiscal year
  - Only clients who receive services listed on the agency's work plan should be reported

- **Report on time**:

  - Create an earlier internal deadline to review and recurring calendar reminder
  - Keep your CMS up-to-date as you work your cases

Time for Mentimeter!

FHA Connection (FHAC)

FHAC Overview

- All agencies and HUD Certified Counselors must maintain counselor status in FHAC
  - Counselors who have passed the HUD Housing Counselor Certification Exam apply for certification in FHA Connection
  - Agency Application Coordinators validate the start and end of employment for HUD Certified Housing Counselors

- FHAC is also used in HECM counseling:
  - HECM Roster Counselors apply for certification and submit proof of continuing education units
  - HECM Roster Coordinators certify counselor employment
  - HECM Counseling Certificates are issued

HUD's Office of Housing Counseling

#HUD Certified Proud

Use #HUDCertifiedProud once you are HUD Certified!

Selecting Application Coordinators (ACs)

- Each agency designates 1-4 Application Coordinators (ACs) to validate counselors' employment at the agency
- Intermediary coordinators may perform AC functions for their affiliates, subgrantees, and branches

- AC cannot validate their own employment
- AC cannot be the same person currently registered in the electronic Line of Credit Control System (eLOCCS) or the Web Access Security Subsystem (WASS, Secure System), and cannot be the FHA lender coordinator for the agency

Tips for Success

- Users must log in every 90 days to maintain access

- Although only 1 is required, it is recommended to have at least 2 ACs

- Both ACs and HUD Certified Counselors can print certificates from FHAC

- Certified Counselors may need to follow instructions for requesting validation for More Than One Employer or Branch if they work for more than one branch, affiliate, or subgrantee of an intermediary

Time for Mentimeter!

Tools and Resources

Tools and Resources

- Client Management System Guidance - HUD Exchange

- Housing Counseling System - HUD Exchange

- Housing Counseling 9902 Online Toolkit - HUD Exchange

- Housing Counseling Technology - HUD Exchange

- FHA Connection Resources:

  - HUD Certified Housing Counselor Application Process in FHA Connection - HUD Exchange

  - ID Administration Page for Application Coordinators - HUD Exchange

  - FHAC Quick Start Guide | hud.gov

  - FHA Connection Facts and Tips - HUD Exchange

Questions and Answers

Housing Counseling Training Digest

- [Visit the Training Digest on the HUD Exchange](#)
- Upcoming trainings:

| Combating Appraisal Bias Series	
What Housing Counselors Need to Know	February 22, 2023
Housing Counseling and FHEO Agencies Combining Forces to Combat Appraisal Bias	March 15, 2023

Housing Services for Persons Impacted by Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Series	
How to Identify Persons Impacted by Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault	February 23, 2023
Housing Protections for Persons Impacted by Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault	March 9, 2023
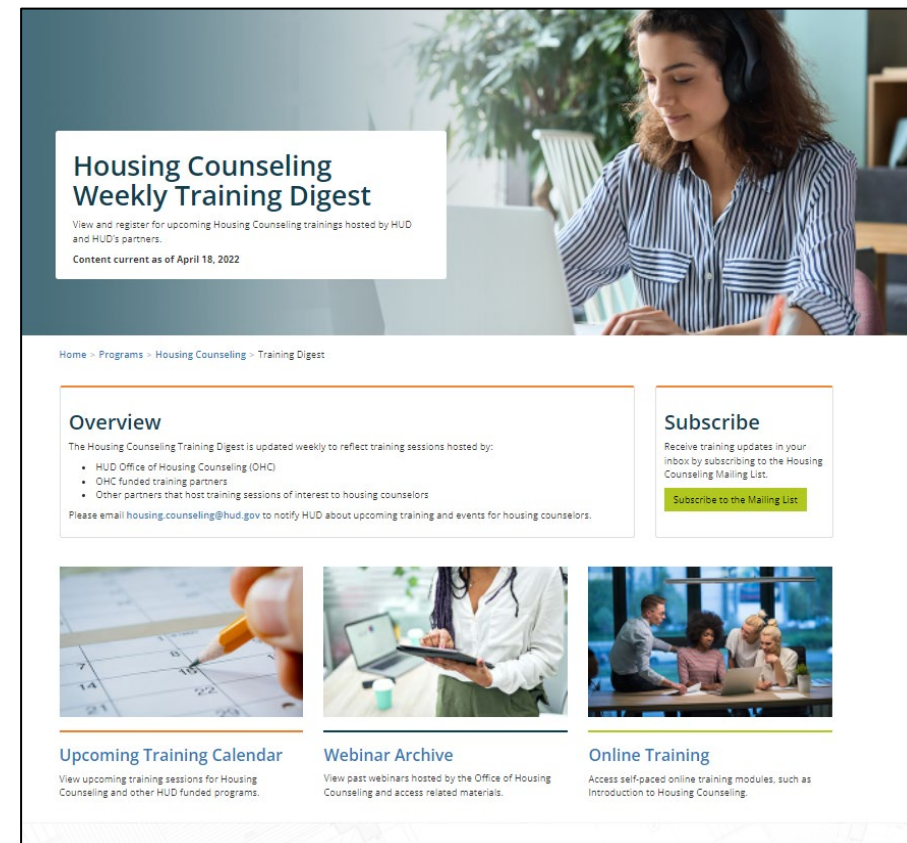
Office of Housing Counseling

- Find us on the HUD Exchange Housing Counseling Page

- Email us at: Housing.counseling@hud.gov

- Search for HUD Approved Housing Counseling Agencies

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Thank You For Attending

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT