

Bed Utilization Report

This report explains what program utilization is, how program utilization is calculated, why we monitor program utilization in HMIS, how to interpret utilization rates, what we do about utilization rates that may be inaccurate, and presents the results of our data monitoring.

What are utilization rates?

Utilization rates represent the percentage of beds that are occupied on a given night or on an average night over a period of time. In this report, utilization rates are calculated for a given night each month and are referred to as monthly point-in-time (PIT) counts. The following formula is used to calculate bed and unit utilization rates:

Utilization Rate Formula

$(\# \text{ of clients served on a given night}) \div (\text{total } \# \text{ of beds}) = \text{bed utilization rate}$

What is the purpose of monitoring program utilization in HMIS?

Utilization rates are often the single strongest indicator of HMIS data quality. Utilization rates can be used to:

- Monitor HMIS data quality and increase the accuracy of HMIS information on the number of homeless persons served and their service patterns;
- Increase the accuracy of AHAR reports and other local reports generated from HMIS data;
- Increase the accuracy of bed inventory for local planning purposes and the CoC application; and
- Assist the CoC planning process by tracking program utilization over time to determine whether the Continuum has the appropriate capacity to handle fluctuations in the need for housing.

Interpreting Utilization Rates

The utilization rates calculated and presented in this report apply only to the specific night each month for which HMIS data exits for the number of persons and families served. Therefore, monthly utilization rates represent the percentage of beds occupied for a single monthly point-in-time (on the 21st of each month from June 2010 to May 2011) and should not be interpreted as the average bed utilization for that month.

Common Utilization Rate Problems

- **Under utilization:** In the worksheets embedded into this report, a red flag will appear if the agency's bed utilization rate is below 65%. If an agency has a bed utilization rate below 65%, it is often an indicator that program staff are not entering HMIS data on every client they serve. This causes an undercount of the number of homeless persons served and an underestimate of the need for homeless residential services.
- **Over utilization:** We have also red flagged utilization rates above 105%. If an agency has a bed utilization rate above 105%, it is often an indicator that program staff are not recording exit dates for clients who have left the program. This results in an over-count of the number of homeless persons served and an overestimate of the number of beds needed to serve homeless persons in the community.
- **Flat utilization:** Some HMIS data quality issues can only be observed from looking at several months worth of data. For instance, some agencies might have reasonable utilization rates but if

their utilization rate stays the same month after month, it could be an indicator that they are not entering or exiting any clients from HMIS.

- **Escalating utilization:** If an agency's utilization rate increases each month, this could be an indication that the agency is entering new clients into HMIS but they are not exiting clients who have left the program.

What do we do about utilization rates that may be inaccurate?

If an agency's utilization rates falls into one of the above categories, HMIS Project staff will:

- Confirm the bed inventory listed for the agency is accurate;
- Check to see if the agency has overflow/voucher beds, which may explain why utilization rates are over 100%;
- Contact program staff to determine if their utilization rates accurately reflect the number of beds occupied in their program on a given night; and
- Determine if the agency faces any barriers in entering quality HMIS data and how those barriers can be addressed.

HMIS Project Staff will be monitoring for program utilization on a monthly basis and submitting Balance of State Committee level reports bi-annually. An agency and/or region may request their data at any time for purposes of writing grants, completing needs assessments, etc.