



Berks County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Privacy Policy Statement

This agency collects information about people who use our homeless services and puts the information you give us into a computer program called ServicePoint or HMIS. HMIS data are all stored in one computer system maintained by the Berks Coalition to End Homelessness (BCEH). This Privacy Policy Statement describes the practices connected with the HMIS computer program. A copy of this Privacy Policy Statement, the Privacy Notice and the client ROI are available upon request.

Scope

This Privacy Policy only applies to the information entered into the HMIS computer program and does not apply to any other website or computer program. We only collect information that we think is appropriate. The collection and use of all personal information is guided by strict standards of confidentiality as outlined in this Privacy Policy Statement.

This document is not a legal contract. We are required to provide and follow the practices described in this Privacy Policy. This Privacy Policy takes effect immediately and will remain in effect until we replace it. The Privacy Policy can be amended. Any changes may affect the uses of information collected before the policy change.

Purpose of Data Collection

When agencies that use the HMIS computer program meet with you, they may ask you for information about you and possibly your family. We may be required to collect some personal information by law or by organizations that give us money to operate this program. Additional personal information that we collect is important to run our programs, to improve the services for homeless persons, and to better understand the needs of homeless persons.

You have the right to refuse to answer any question at any time and will not be denied help, unless we need that information to know if you are eligible for a service.

What information is collected about you?

- Personal Identifying Information (such as name, social security number, and date of birth)
- Demographic information (such as race, ethnicity, and gender)
- Who is in your household
- Your income and income sources
- Job history

- Services you request or receive
- Military history
- If you are homeless or not
- Living situation and housing history
- Reasons for seeking services
- Educational background
- Self-reported health needs

What happens to your information?

- When you request services from agencies that use the HMIS computer program, the agency will review the client Release of Information (ROI) that describes the data sharing rules within and outside of the computer system.
- After you acknowledge that you understand the Berks County data sharing rules, your information will be entered into the HMIS computer program, which is operated over the internet. The HMIS uses many security protections, as listed in the Security and Confidentiality section of this Privacy Policy, to ensure confidentiality.
- Your current and historical information will be shared with all agencies that use the HMIS system to help you get services more quickly and easily. We also share your information to help you get better services from our agencies.
- If you provide verbal or written permission on the client ROI or an agency's ROI for the additional sharing of your data outside of HMIS, then you and your family's current and historical information in the HMIS system may be shared directly outside of the computer system or with outside agencies for research, reporting, and coordinating services.

Uses and Disclosures of your Personal Information

Once you acknowledge that you understand the HMIS data sharing rules, your current and historical data may be used or shared to:

- provide and coordinate services to you and your family;
- carry out functions related to payment or reimbursement of services;
- carry out administrative functions, such as legal, audit, and management functions;
- provide different summary reports about homelessness as required by law or by the organizations that provide money for these programs;
- create de-identified personal information for additional analysis;

- meet the requirements of the law;
- prevent a serious threat to health or safety;
- report abuse, neglect or domestic violence to a government authority authorized by law to receive these types of reports when required by law, or when the individual agrees to the disclosure, or when the disclosure is allowable by regulations and we feel it is necessary to prevent serious harm to the individual or other potential victims;
- comply with law enforcement requests such as in response to a lawful court order, court-ordered warrant, subpoena or summons issued by a judicial officer, or a grand jury subpoena; a limited and specific inquiry approved by a supervisory official of the law that is necessary for a law enforcement investigation.
- learn about how well we are serving our clients and to find ways to improve those services;
- understand the scope of need for our services in Berks County and to use that information when making decisions about ways to address and end homelessness.

Security and Confidentiality Guidelines

- HMIS operates over the internet. The site is encrypted with a security certificate that keeps the site secure and the information in it protected. Only agencies that use HMIS in Berks County can view and enter information into the HMIS program. HMIS users have a password-protected login to the HMIS computer program. Also, HMIS users receive training on the privacy and security standards outlined in this Privacy Policy Statement and must sign an agreement where they agree to comply with this Privacy Policy.
- Agencies using the HMIS will uphold Federal and State Confidentiality regulations to protect client records and privacy. In addition, they will only release client records outside of the HMIS computer system with written consent by the client, unless otherwise provided for in the regulations.

What are your rights under the Privacy Policy?

- You can refuse to answer any question at any time. You will never be denied help because you didn't answer a question, unless we need that answer to know if you are eligible for a service.
- Your permission to share your current and historical information will last for three years from the date you sign the client ROI. However, the information remains in the system indefinitely. You can cancel this permission to discuss and share information between

agencies at any time by sending a written letter to the agency where you filled out this form or by emailing BCEH at info@bceh.org.

- You have the right to view and get a copy of your information that is entered into the HMIS system, except in circumstances such as in advance of legal proceedings, if there is information about another individual, if information was provided under a promise of confidentiality, if the sharing of the information would threaten the life or physical safety of an individual. You have the right to receive an explanation about any of your information that you do not understand.
- You have the right to request for a correction when your information in the HMIS system is incorrect or incomplete.
- You have the right to get a copy of this Privacy Policy Statement, the ROI and the Privacy Notice.

COMPLAINT PROCESS:

If you have a complaint about the HMIS privacy and security policies and practices, please contact the Berks Coalition to End Homelessness.

Berks Coalition to End Homelessness
600 Penn Street, Reading, PA 19602
610-372-7222
info@bceh.org