

NHIP BRIEF REPORT:

**HMIS Bed Coverage in Balance of State Continuums
Time Period: 2015**

Overview:

Balance of State (BOS) Continuums serve rural, multi-county areas that typically have low densities of persons experiencing homelessness. Since HUD funding formulas allocate few resources to individual low density rural counties, it becomes prudent for clusters of rural counties to collaborate in the submission of one Continuum funding application serving a multi-county area.

There are currently 36 BOS Continuums among the 400+ HUD Continuums. While sparsely populated, mostly rural states like North Dakota and Wyoming have a single Continuum that represents the entire state, these single state Continuums are not considered BOS since the main urban areas of their state are captured in the Statewide Continuum.

BOS Continuums often face different challenges than single county, densely populated urban Continuums due to their expansive geographic area, often 80 percent or more of the State's square miles, and the need to address issues that span multiple counties, coalitions and governmental entities responsible for each county within the BOS. Implementation of the HUD HMIS protocols can also be more challenging due to the need for significant cooperation across county, non-profit and government jurisdictions.

Since increasing HMIS coverage of homeless and permanent housing beds by all Continuums is a critical prerequisite to improve data monitoring of homeless service utilization, assessing HMIS coverage in BOS Continuums is important due to increased challenges face by these Continuums. This brief report details the current 2015 bed coverage of the 36 BOS Continuums with comparison to non-BOS Continuums. A brief discussion of implications of these findings follows the empirical analysis.

Data and Limitations:

HMIS bed coverage data are taken from the 2015 Housing Inventory Chart (HUD) data reported by each Continuum of Care and submitted as part of the annual Exhibit 1 application. Public datasets compiled by HUD on HMIS coverage are found on the HUD Exchange Info website.

While Continuums submit their responses to HMIS bed coverage for each housing project listed on their Housing Inventory Charts (HIC), there is no verification of these data performed by either HUD or any outside evaluation effort. Both underestimation and overestimation of data likely occur especially at the individual project-level data. It is not believed that existing errors are greater than plus or minus ten (10) percent of the reported HMIS coverage.

The lack of verification of all HMIS bed coverage data should not impact the implication of the findings from this report, since the primary purpose of this report is to review general trends of HMIS implementation in BOS counties. The general findings of the report – shedding light on the HMIS rates – can work to identify BOS Continuums that may need verification if their rates appear as outliers to the general trend as well as shed a spotlight on Continuums that need general assist in increasing their coverage.

Analysis of HMIS bed coverage will exclude beds designated as domestic violence shelter beds since they are not subject to HUD participation mandates. Domestic violence beds total approximately 12 percent of all HUD homeless beds and 26 percent of homeless beds in BOS Continuums. The higher percentage in BOS is primarily due to the lower level of HUD-funded programs in their geographic areas.

Analysis and Findings:

Analysis of BOS HIC data revealed that a total of 31,207 of the 45,601 non-domestic violence, homeless beds (69.3 %) are currently reporting data to their designated Continuum HMIS. This rate is approximately 13 percentage points lower than the non-BOS HMIS rate of 82.1 percent (330,644 out of 365,010). Coverage rates ranged from a high of 100 percent by the Hawaii Balance of State CoC (HI-500) to a low of 3.7 percent by the Alabama Balance of State (AL-507). In addition to AL-507, four (4) additional BOS Continuums (VT-500, OR-505, LA-509, OK-503) reported HMIS participation below 50 percent. In addition to HI-500, three BOS Continuums (CT-505, NV-502, AZ-500) exceeded 90 percent in HMIS bed coverage.

Among the 13,854 total BOS beds not participating in the HMIS protocols, three Continuums representing the States of Texas, Indiana and Oregon each contributed over 1,000 non-reporting beds accounting for a total of 4,560 beds, or 33 percent, of all BOS non-participating beds. Eight small BOS Continuums (Oklahoma, Louisiana, Utah, Alaska, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Nevada, Arizona) reported fewer than 100 non-participating beds. Table 1 contains the complete listing of HMIS participation rates for all BOS Continuums.

BOS Continuums comprise 12 percent of all non-DV homeless beds but account for 19 percent of all non-DV, non-participating HMIS beds.

Discussion:

It is not surprising that BOS Continuums as a group fared poorly in achieving high rates of HMIS participation compared to their non-BOS peers. Counties that comprise these BOS Continuums generally receive much lower levels of HUD funding from related homeless funding sources like the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) in addition to lower McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance funding. The lack of HUD funding to support the HMIS mandate often hampers the ability to build infrastructure for homeless services. Lower HUD funding levels can also translate into fewer homeless housing projects being required to participate in the BOS HMIS. A more in-depth study of the structure of the HIC for each BOS and the type of projects that are not participating (faith-based, privately-funded, etc.) can offer additional guidance to close the HMIS participation gap.

The high coverage rates (exceeding 90 percent) of four BOS Continuums offers a starting point to examine how improvements can be achieved. Both the Hawaii BOS and the Connecticut BOS are known to have strong leadership at the State level for requiring participation and supporting necessary infrastructure needed by agencies and their programs to fully participate. HMIS participation still lags at many Continuums, not just the 36 BOS Continuums. Supporting efforts to improve performance can be best done by stratifying Continuums (BOS, single urban county, multi-county urban/rural mix) by their characteristics as well as types of housing contributors (HUD-funded, State-funded, faith-based, privately-funded).

Table 1
HMIS Coverage: 2015 Balance of State Continuums

CoC Number	CoC Name	Total Year-Round Beds	Total Non-DV Year-Round Beds	Total HMIS Year-Round Beds	Total HMIS Participation Rate	Non-DV HMIS Participation Rate	Non-DV, Non-Participating HMIS Beds
HI-500	Hawaii Balance of State CoC	876	799	799	91.2%	100.0%	0
CT-505	Connecticut Balance of State CoC	1919	1663	1568	81.7%	94.3%	95
NV-502	Nevada Balance of State CoC	236	149	139	58.9%	93.3%	10
AZ-500	Arizona Balance of State CoC	1182	806	728	61.6%	90.3%	78
ME-500	Maine Balance of State CoC	1955	1608	1439	73.6%	89.5%	169
MA-516	Massachusetts Balance of State	1418	1265	1118	78.8%	88.4%	147
NH-500	New Hampshire Balance of State CoC	671	554	487	72.6%	87.9%	67
WI-500	Wisconsin Balance of State CoC	4143	2948	2551	61.6%	86.5%	397
AK-501	Alaska Balance of State CoC	841	482	400	47.6%	83.0%	82
MI-500	Michigan Balance of State CoC	2039	1304	1077	52.8%	82.6%	227
UT-503	Utah Balance of State CoC	761	326	262	34.4%	80.4%	64
OH-507	Ohio Balance of State CoC	3594	2887	2304	64.1%	79.8%	583
GA-501	Georgia Balance of State CoC	2858	1676	1333	46.6%	79.5%	343
MS-501	Mississippi Balance of State CoC	849	590	444	52.3%	75.3%	146
IA-501	Iowa Balance of State CoC	2427	1919	1397	57.6%	72.8%	522
ID-501	Idaho Balance of State	1079	902	655	60.7%	72.6%	247
WA-501	Washington Balance of State CoC	4207	3585	2600	61.8%	72.5%	985
WV-508	West Virginia Balance of State CoC	1016	805	577	56.8%	71.7%	228
KY-500	Kentucky Balance of State CoC	1775	1299	869	49.0%	66.9%	430
NC-503	North Carolina Balance of State CoC	3425	2474	1633	47.7%	66.0%	841
AR-503	Arkansas Balance of State CoC	600	450	295	49.2%	65.6%	155
IN-502	Indiana Balance of State CoC	4264	3268	2095	49.1%	64.1%	1173
KS-507	Kansas Balance of State CoC	1636	1267	776	47.4%	61.2%	491
NE-500	Nebraska Balance of State CoC	762	621	368	48.3%	59.3%	253
NM-501	New Mexico Balance of State CoC	1379	757	440	31.9%	58.1%	317
TX-607	Texas Balance of State (BoS) CoC	6092	3728	2125	34.9%	57.0%	1603
CO-500	Colorado Balance of State CoC	2180	1671	895	41.1%	53.6%	776
VA-521	Virginia Balance of State (BoS) CoC	861	540	273	31.7%	50.6%	267
MO-606	Missouri Balance of State CoC	1989	995	500	25.1%	50.3%	495
VT-500	Vermont Balance of State CoC	498	432	186	37.3%	43.1%	246
OR-505	Oregon Balance of State CoC	2811	2587	803	28.6%	31.0%	1784
LA-509	Louisiana Balance of State	191	130	40	20.9%	30.8%	90
OK-503	Oklahoma Balance of State CoC	154	93	13	8.4%	14.0%	80
AL-507	Alabama Balance of State CoC	569	481	18	3.2%	3.7%	463
All Balance of State Continuums		61,257	45,061	31,207	50.9%	69.3%	13,854
All Non-Balance of State Continuums		365,010	330,644	271,611	74.4%	82.1%	59,033
All Continuums		426,267	375,705	302,818	71.0%	80.6%	72,887