

RECORDING NON-CASH BENEFITS IN EFFORTS TO OUTCOMES (ETO)

SONOMA COUNTY HOMELESS COALITION PROGRAMS

BACKGROUND

Projects of the Sonoma County Homeless Coalition are required to record non-cash benefits in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to determine whether households are accessing the mainstream program benefits for which they are eligible, and to analyze any changes in non-cash benefits between project start, follow-up, annual, and/or exit.

The HUD HMIS Data Standards Manual defines non-cash benefits as ***“intended to identify regular, recurrent benefits. Services and/or gifts such as phone cards and vouchers that are provided by a project to clients during enrollment are fundamentally different and are not considered benefits.”***

Within HMIS, several types of non-cash benefits may be selected, including:

- (CalFresh) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (previously known as Food Stamps)
- (WIC) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
- (CalWORKS) TANF Child Care services
- (CalWORKS) TANF transportation services
- (CalWORKS) Other TANF-funded services
- Benefits from any other source

Programs may enter additional non-cash benefits into an “other source” category. Through a community feedback and survey process with Homeless Coalition service providers, Members of the Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP Board), and invested Community Members; the HMIS Data Committee has approved and defined a list of mainstream program benefits that have been determined to fit into the “other source” on non-cash benefit category for this local jurisdiction; the Sonoma County Continuum of Care.

As a reminder, “to collect benefit information, projects are expected to ask clients whether they receive benefits from each of the sources listed in HMIS (either on paper or through a client interview) rather than asking them to state the sources of non-cash benefits they receive. Clients are not required to provide documentation of benefits.”

Interviewing clients about additional sources of income is a crucial step—not just for the specific project collecting the data, but for the Homeless Coalition as a whole. A client only needs to receive one non-cash benefit for it to be documented in HMIS. Therefore, if a client answers “no” to all the prepopulated non-cash benefits listed in the assessment, staff should

follow up with an additional question related to the other options. Remember, as quoted from HUD above, the other non-cash benefit cannot be provided by the actual project.

The performance of Homeless Coalition projects is evaluated based on several factors, including access to mainstream resources and non-cash benefits. Ensuring this step is completed not only improves project performance ratings but also plays a vital role in maintaining current Homeless Coalition funding and securing new funding opportunities.

“OTHER” NON-CASH BENEFITS

Below is a list of non-cash benefits case managers may enter in the “other non-cash benefit source” field in HMIS. Please note that the client should be receiving the benefits on a regular and recurrent basis.

- **Food**
 - Food Bank or Pantry Service
 - Free Dining Room
 - Hot-to-Go Meal Service
 - Meal Delivery Service
- **Health & Hygiene**
 - Public Health Clinic
 - Out-Patient Mental Health or Substance Abuse Services
 - Shower Trailer
 - Diaper Distribution
- **Housing**
 - Section 8: Project-Based Rental Assistance (City or County)
 - Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)
- **Services**
 - In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)
- **Technology**
 - Cell Phone Service
 - Internet Service
 - Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- **Transportation**
 - Paratransit
 - Free or reduce price Transit Pass
 - Free or reduce price Ride Sharing Service

Example: a client regularly receives Meals on Wheels deliveries and expects to receive them again next month. Record the response as “receiving benefits from any other source” of non-cash benefits.

Example: a client received Meals on Wheels but is not eligible to receive them next month. Do not record the response as “receiving benefits from any other source” of non-cash benefits.

INCOME AND OTHER BENEFITS

The below should *not* be entered as non-cash benefits in HMIS:

Income and Cash Benefits should instead be recorded in HMIS as separate source and is *“intended to identify regular, recurrent earned income and cash benefits.”*

Health insurance is a separate data element intended to identify actual health insurance sources.

Case Management should be made available by all housing programs and will result in outcomes connecting clients to income and other non-cash benefits. Case management itself should not be considered a non-cash benefit.

Housing Costs, including move-in and security deposits are one-time assistance and should not be entered as non-cash benefits. Payments of rental assistance; short or medium terms, arrears, or any combination thereof, are also not considered non-cash benefits as they are central components of housing programs.