



Homeless Individuals and Families Information System

**NHRC – Homelessness Working Group
2008 Fall Meeting**

Overview

- HIFIS
- Yellowknife Report on Shelter Use
- Community Report Cards
- HIFIS and Homeless Counts

HIFIS

- The **Homeless Individuals and Families Information System** (HIFIS) is a data development initiative of the Homelessness Partnering Secretariat (HPS) that is focused on the collection and analysis of data relating to shelter usage in Canada.
- Such base-line data is required in order to measure progress that communities are making in the reduction of homelessness.
- **Currently, over 454 of 1109 known shelters are using the system.**

Why Use HIFIS?

- **HPS is committed to the deployment and implementation of HIFIS in the majority of shelters in Canada, providing the software and associated training free-of-charge.**
- The minimal costs of implementation, coupled with the fact that the data from the system can provide point-in-time and period count results make this an attractive tool for both researchers and policy developers.
- With sufficient shelter participation and data sharing, the potential to use the data to accurately count the shelter population is significant.

Overview of the HIFIS National Data Export

- The HIFIS National Data Export is a feature of the HIFIS software that allows service providers to export a limited subset of HIFIS data in a format that supports client confidentiality.
- The data currently collected is limited to following general information on the shelter and on the clients using the facilities.

Shelter data		Client data	
1. HIFIS ID	3. Shelter Type	6. Unique Client Identifier	8. Gender
2. Shelter Name	4. Number of Regular Beds	7. Date of Birth	9. Book-In Date
	5. Number of Overflow Beds		10. Book-Out Date

HIFIS National Database Export Data Model

- There are the 4 tables of data available for analysis purposes in the National Database of export data model: the **client table**, the **shelter table**, the **stay table**, and **shelter type table**. Links between **client identification** and **shelter identification** across the **stay table** establish relationships amongst all four data tables.

Client table	Shelter table	Stay table	Shelter type table
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Client identification · Date of birth · Gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Shelter identification · Shelter name · # of Beds · # of Overflow beds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Shelter identification · Client identification · Date of entry · Date of departure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Shelter identification · Shelter purpose

Best Practice

The Yellowknife Report on Shelter Usage

- When the majority of shelters in a community use HIFIS and have collected data on their clients for one year or more, the community can:
 - provide an accurate number of shelters users
 - describe the profile of the users
 - identify patterns in shelter use.

Characteristics of Shelter Population

Demographic Characteristics of the Shelter Population Compared to the General Population (City, Territory) in 2006

Characteristic	Shelter Population	Municipal Population	Territorial Population
Total Population	826	18 700	41 464
Gender			
Male	59.1%	50.9%	51.2%
Female	40.9%	49.1%	48.8%
Age Group			
Children	5.7%	21.6%	23.9%
Youth	14.9%	15.9%	16.2%
Adults	77.3%	60.1%	55.1%
Seniors	2.1%	2.5%	4.8%

Shelter Use

Number of Shelter Bed-Days Used during the Study Period and Seasonally in 2006

	Total Number of Bed-Days Used	Average Number of People Using Homeless Shelters Each Day
For the whole study period	34 055	93
Winter (January – March)	9621	107
Spring (April – June)	9786	108
Summer (July – September)	8636	94
Fall (October – December)	6012	65

Length of Stay

Number of People in Each Stay Length Category by Population Group in 2006 (n)

Group	Length of Stay (Days)					Average Stay Length (Days)
	1 to 7	8 to 30	31 to 60	61 to 89	90 +	
Total Homeless Population	255	130	89	74	216	72
Male	169	87	51	33	104	98
Children	0	6	3	6	12	116
Youth	25	10	8	4	18	66
Adults	143	68	40	22	71	53
Seniors	1	3	0	1	3	91
Female	86	43	38	41	112	118
Children	0	3	6	11	16	98
Youth	14	4	6	9	18	75
Adults	69	35	26	20	77	90
Seniors	3	1	0	1	1	61

Patterns of Shelter Use

- To analyze patterns in the data, homeless individuals can be divided into three main groups depending on the amount of time spent in shelters; specifically the number of homeless episodes and the total length of stay.

- These three groups are:
 - **chronic**, involving many homeless episodes and a large amount of time spent in shelters;
 - **transient**, where clients only reside once or twice and do not stay very long; and
 - **episodically sheltered**, in which clients book-in a few times throughout the study period but never stay for a long time.

Shelter Use Clusters

Demographic Characteristics of Individuals in Different Shelter Use Clusters and the Percentage of the total Population 2000-2007

	Chronic	Transient	Episodic
Total Homeless Population	6.0%	73%	21%
Male	91%	69%	52%
Children	5%	8%	16%
Youth	10%	9%	5%
Adults	75%	52%	30%
Seniors	2%	1%	1%
Female	9%	31%	48%
Children	1%	8%	12%
Youth	1%	6%	9%
Adults	5%	16%	26%
Seniors	1%	0.2%	1%

Use of Shelter Bed-Days

Use of Shelter Bed-Days by Cluster Group Compared to the Percentage of the Homeless Population in Each Cluster Group (%), 2000-2007

	Total Population	Chronic	Transient	Episodic
Total Homeless Population	---	6%	73%	21%
Homeless Bed-Days Used	74%	21%	17%	36%
Emergency Shelter	115%*	40%	27%	48%
Transitional Shelter	49%	9%	11%	29%

HIFIS and Community Report Cards

- To go beyond a snapshot of who is homeless and how people use shelters, HIFIS funded and supported the production of a Model for a Community Report Card on Homelessness developed by the Alliance to End Homelessness (ATEH).
- The ATEH report card combines HIFIS data with other data sources to promote public understanding of *why* people are homeless.
- The Community Report Card on Homelessness gives a grade according to the progress made towards ending homelessness.
- Most importantly, the Community Report Card adds information on the missing pieces for a better understanding of homelessness in the community overall.

Homelessness Indicators (Ottawa Report Card)

	2004	2005	2006	2007
# of times shelter beds were used	323,612	310,299	323,625	342,165
# of individuals in an emergency shelter	8,664	8,853	9,010	8,915
Single men	4,845	4,905	5,007	5,029
Single women	1,221	1,267	1,451	1,337
Youth	509	543	607	515
Families	631	668	615	639
Children	1,092	1,035	1,163	1,237
Adults	997	1,103	782	797
Length of Shelter Stay				
Average length of stay (days)	37.5	36.1	33.7	38.4
Single men	39.8	39.1	38.4	39.1
Single women	30.7	31.9	28.1	32.6
Youth	23.0	17.4	16.2	25.0
Families	45.0	36.7	30.9	41.8

HIFIS and the Number of Homeless Individuals

- HIFIS can be used to provide the shelter portion of homeless counts. HPS recently analyzed point-in-time counts completed by fourteen cities of their respective homeless populations living on the street and in shelters.
- Establishing reliable statistics on the number of homeless individuals in Canada is necessary to measure progress.
- Changes in these numbers over time will assist in informing policy and program development.
- The development and accuracy of homeless counts are dependent on a national strategy that incorporates the implementation of data management systems throughout the housing continuum.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- The key to demonstrating concrete changes in the prevention and reduction of homelessness in Canada is a reliable baseline figure of the number of homeless individuals that consists of the targeted homeless population groups – those at-risk, living on the street, in shelters, hidden and supportive housed.
- The development and accuracy of this figure is dependent on a national strategy that incorporates the implementation of data management systems throughout the housing continuum.