

assess the effectiveness of the homeless assistance system. The Committee directs HUD to take the lead in working with communities toward this end, and to analyze jurisdictional data within one year. The Committee directs HUD to report on the progress of this data collection and analysis effort by no later than May 12, 2003. The Conference Report (H.R. Report 106–988) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 HUD.

Appropriations Act (Pub. L. 106–377, approved October 27, 2000), stated:

The conferees reiterate and endorse language included in the Senate report regarding the need for data and analysis on the extent of homelessness and the effectiveness of McKinney Act programs * * *. The conferees concur with the importance of developing unduplicated counts of the homeless at the local level, as well as taking whatever steps are possible to draw inferences from this data about the extent and nature of homelessness in the nation as a whole.

Likewise, the conferees agree that local jurisdictions should be collecting an array of data on homelessness in order to prevent duplicate counting of homeless persons, and to analyze their patterns of use of assistance, including how they enter and exit the homeless assistance system and the effectiveness of the systems. HUD is directed to take the lead in working with communities toward this end, and to analyze jurisdictional data within three years. Implementation and operation of Management Information Systems (MIS), and collection and analysis of MIS data, have been made eligible uses of Supportive Housing Program funds. The conferees direct HUD to report to the Committees within six months after the date of enactment of this Act on its strategy for achieving this goal, including details on financing, implementation, and maintaining the effort.

Congress directed HUD to take the lead in requiring every jurisdiction to have unduplicated client-level data within three years. The reasons for the emphasis and the specific directives on encouraging these systems were articulated in FY 2001 Senate Report 106–410:

The Committee believes that HUD must collect data on the extent of homelessness in America as well as the effectiveness of the McKinney homeless assistance programs in addressing this condition. These programs have been in existence for some 15 years and there has never been an overall review or comprehensive analysis on the extent of homelessness or how to address it. The Committee believes that it is essential to develop an unduplicated count of homeless people, and an analysis of their patterns of use of assistance (HUD McKinney homeless assistance as well as other assistance both targeted and not targeted to homeless people), including how they enter and exit the homeless assistance system and the effectiveness of assistance.

Previously, in the FY 1999 HUD Appropriations Act, Congress had

directed HUD to collect data from a representative sample of existing local HMIS. Specifically, House Report 105–610 states that HUD should:

* * * collect, at a minimum, the following data: The unduplicated count of clients served; client characteristics such as age, race, disability status, units [days] and type of housing received (shelter, transitional, permanent); and services rendered. Outcome information such as housing stability, income, and health status should be collected as well.

In the FY 2001 HUD appropriations process, Senate Report 106–410 directed HUD to build on its earlier preliminary work with communities with an advanced HMIS and continue assessing data from these communities:

* * * to continue on an annual basis to provide a report on a nationally representative sample of jurisdictions whose local MIS data can be aggregated yearly to document the change in demographics of homelessness, demand for homeless assistance, to identify patterns in utilization of assistance, and to demonstrate the effectiveness of assistance.

* * * The Committee instructs HUD to use these funds to contract with experienced academic institutions to analyze data and report to the agency, jurisdictions, providers, and the Committee on findings.

1.2. Statutory Direction to HUD and Other Federal Agencies on Homeless Data Collection

Section 1.1 outlined Congressional direction relating to Homeless Management Information Systems—a subset of the more general Congressional mandates for homeless data collection. HUD, other federal agencies, and the Interagency Council on the Homeless are required under various statutory authorities and Congressional direction to collect extensive information about the nature and extent of homelessness. In addition, individual programs authorized under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11301 *et seq.*) require the assessment of homeless needs, the provision of services to address those needs, and reporting on the outcomes of federal assistance in helping homeless people to become more independent. The major Congressional imperatives in HUD's McKinney-Vento Act programs are:

- Assessing the service needs of homeless persons;
- Ensuring that services are directed to meeting those needs;
- Assessing the outcomes of the services in nurturing efforts by homeless

persons to become more self-sufficient; and

- Reporting to Congress on the characteristics and effectiveness of federal efforts to address homelessness.

Both individually and as a whole, these provisions provide statutory imperatives for collecting data on homeless individuals and their needs. This section progresses from the most general of the statutory authorities to the most specific programmatic authorities.

Interagency Council on the Homeless

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act directs the Interagency Council on the Homeless (ICH) to undertake a number of tasks on interagency coordination, evaluation, and reporting that mandate the collection and dissemination of information on homeless individuals and their needs:

(a) Duties.

The Council shall—

(1) Review all federal activities and programs to assist homeless individuals;

(2) Take such actions as may be necessary to reduce duplication among programs and activities by federal agencies to assist homeless individuals;

(3) Monitor, evaluate, and recommend improvements in programs and activities to assist homeless individuals conducted by federal agencies, state and local governments, and private voluntary organizations;

* * * * *

(5) Collect and disseminate information relating to homeless individuals;

(6) Prepare the annual reports required in subsection (c)(2) of this section; (Section 203(a), McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act).

Each federal agency is required to report to the Council a description of each program to assist homeless individuals and the number of homeless individuals served by the program, impediments to the use of the program by homeless individuals and to obtain services and benefits and efforts by the agency to increase homeless assistance services. The Council, in turn, is required to submit an annual report to the President and Congress that:

(A) Assesses the nature and extent of the problems relating to homelessness and the needs of homeless individuals;

(B) Provides a comprehensive and detailed description of the activities and accomplishments of the Federal Government in resolving the problems and meeting the needs assessed pursuant to subparagraph (A); (Section 203(a), McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act)