

Rethinking Coordinated Entry

The need to re-evaluate how community providers come together to help people in need is articulated within Simtech's [Rethinking the Homelessness Response Framework](#) white paper. Key components of the framework include existing Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS), the [Show The Way](#) and [Counting Us](#) mobile apps, as well as the [HomelessData.com data warehouse](#).

The [By-Name List \(BNL\) feature](#) within HomelessData.com provides communities with knowledge of who is experiencing homelessness at any point in time. In doing so, providers can come together to "work the list" and implement housing-focused solutions. The impact of these collective efforts is monitored on an ongoing basis via [Performance Monitoring Dashboards](#) and [Performance Evaluation Scorecards](#).



Outcomes of the Pilot Project

Thanks to the support of Community Solutions, and the willingness of the Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness (GKCCEH) to participate in a pilot project, we have overcome the following limitations that commonly exist within traditional Coordinated Entry systems:

- To know [who is actively homeless at any point in time](#).
- To accurately measure the flows into and out of a community's homelessness system.
- To be able to take proximity, eligibility, and availability into consideration when guiding people to housing, shelter, and other resources.
- To improve upon [the strategies used to prioritize people for limited housing resources](#).
- To have [a simpler way to evaluate both system and provider performance](#).
- To avoid the dual data entry required when a separate Coordinated Entry project is set up.
- To apply automated data scrubbing rules to address common data quality issues such as inactive records and overlapping enrollments.
- To eliminate the need for VI-SPDATs or other vulnerability assessments.

Potential Future Projects

The pilot process highlighted the need for additional development. Projects being considered include:

- A closed-loop referral API to support referrals between providers and better support discharges from institutions of care.
- Integration with healthcare systems to layer in additional data to inform prioritization.
- A user role for people experiencing homelessness (PEH) to have access to their data, find help, define their needs, manage documentation, and coordinate with case managers.

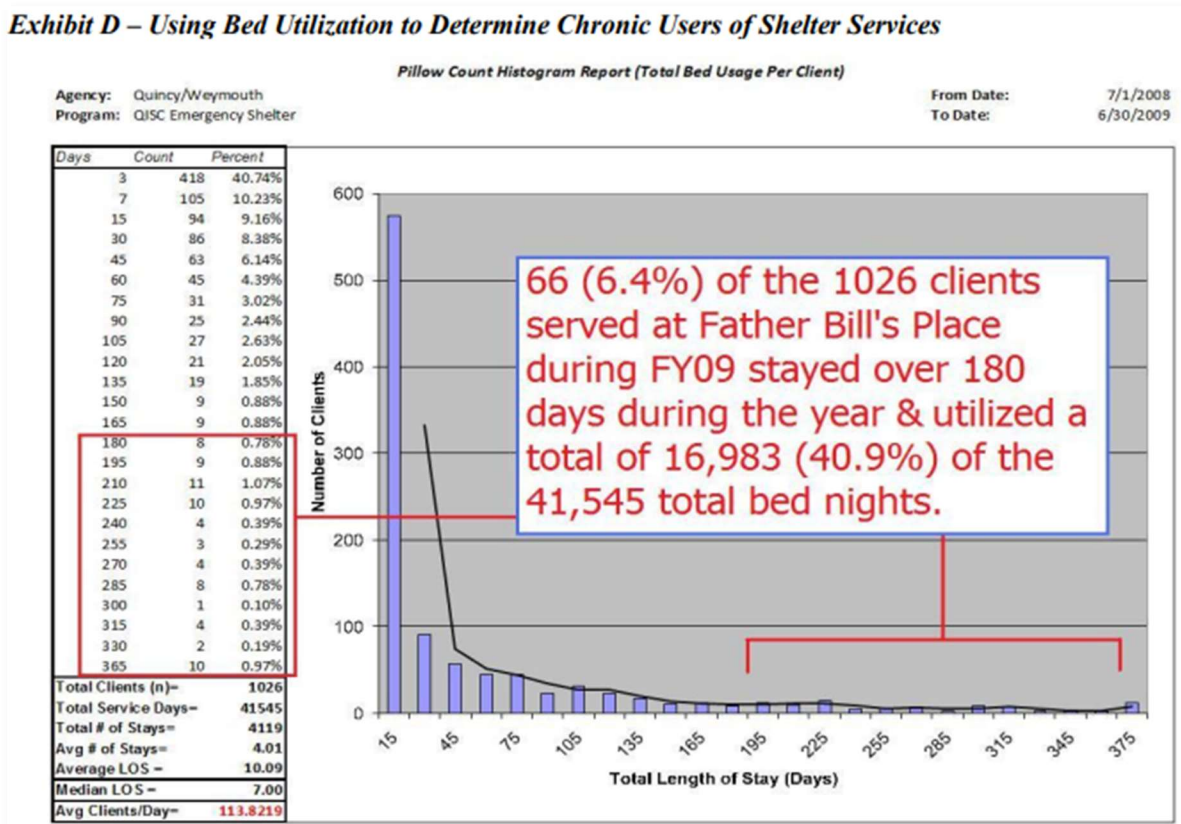
A Simple Alternative to the VI-SPDAT

Given that permanent supportive housing is proven to have a large impact on reducing chronic homelessness and associated public costs, there is a strong argument for using more accurate screening tools to identify individuals who should have priority for access to permanently affordable housing.¹

In 2015, Simtech [evaluated the VI-SPDAT as a tool to use for housing prioritization](#) and found several deficiencies. As a result, we reiterated our recommendation to focus on the overall length of homelessness as the primary factor for prioritization. Despite our efforts to curtail its use, the VI-SPDAT was broadly adopted, and after several years of implementation, it has since been [found to have both racial and gender bias](#). [OrgCode no longer supports the VI-SPDAT](#) yet, with the void of suitable alternatives, it continues to be used.

Simtech's approach to prioritization aligns with Housing First and is based on the economic principle of supply and demand. By decreasing demand from the highest utilizers of community resources, resources are subsequently freed up to help serve all populations. In 2007, Simtech Solutions conducted a study with [Father Bill's Place in Quincy, MA](#) to identify and subsequently house their "high demand" clients. By creating subgroups based on shelter utilization, it was found that **6.6% of the shelter population was utilizing over 40% of the bed nights**.

Exhibit D – Using Bed Utilization to Determine Chronic Users of Shelter Services

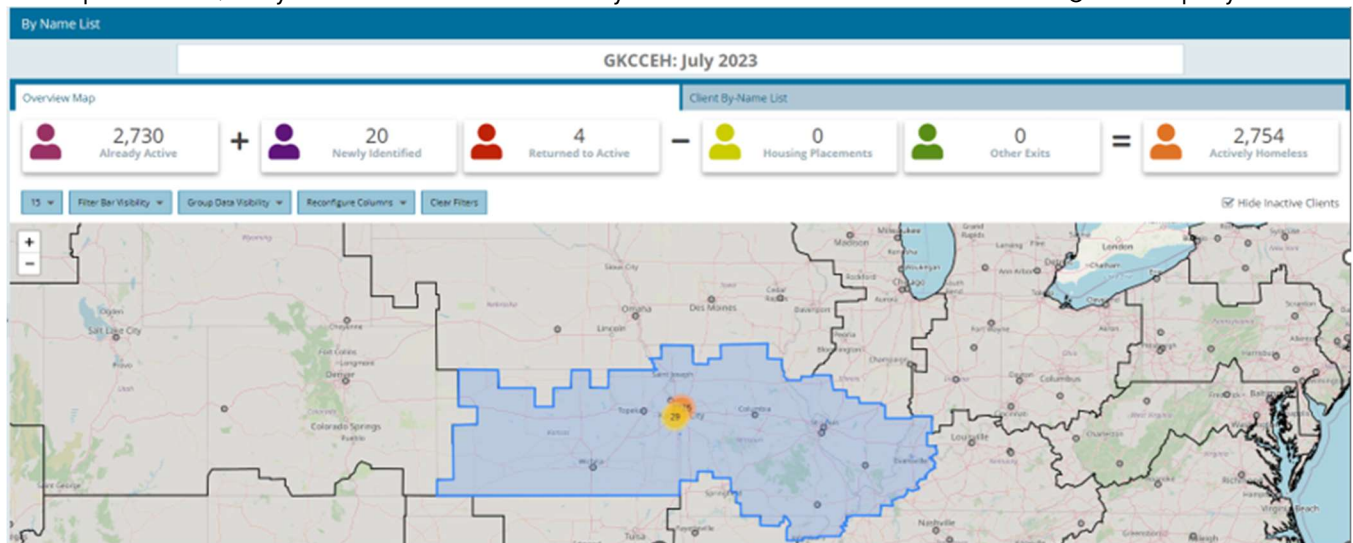


The community focused on placing members of that cohort into housing, used the estimated \$8405 saved per client to invest in more housing, and was able to close an emergency shelter because there was no longer a need for the beds. This research was [featured by HUD as a national best practice](#) and led to Quincy, MA being awarded the HUD Advanced HMIS Data Users Award.

Regional By-Name Lists (BNLs)

The [By-Name List within HomelessData.com](#) supports the same approach to prioritization as was used in the earlier research with Father Bill's Place. The logic also aligns with [the HUD Prioritization Notice](#) which stipulates "persons with the longest histories residing in places not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelters, and in safe havens and with the most severe service needs are given first priority."

To produce the list, the warehouse ingests shelter data sourced from a traditional Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) along with the GPS-enabled data gathered from [the Show The Way app](#). The map-based interface for the By-Name List enables the user to select a region (i.e. HUD Continuum of Care (COC), County, City, Census Tract) and see the inflows, outflows, and count of actively homeless people who were interacted with within that region. In the example below, only those who were actively homeless within the VA's VISN 15 are displayed.



The By-Name List also provides details of the flow patterns into and out of homelessness within a specific region. Inactive clients can easily be hidden from this list.



The By-Name list can then be filtered to show only those who are eligible for a particular housing opportunity. In the example below, only actively homeless veterans are being displayed.

HMIS Client ID	Age	Gender	Project 1	Project Type	Total Days Homeless	Disabling Condition	Veteran	Chronic	Youth	Last Activity	Actively Homeless	Total Days Homeless	Identification Date
733596	62	Male	604-HF-HAC (SSO)	Emergenc...	91-180	Yes	Yes	No	No	04/30/2023	Yes	91-180	04/30/2023
733603	75	Male	604-HF-HAC (SSO)	Emergenc...	91-180	No	Yes	No	No	04/30/2023	Yes	91-180	04/30/2023
535614	66	Male	604-HF-HAC (SSO)	Emergenc...	91-180	Yes	Yes	No	No	04/30/2023	Yes	91-180	04/30/2023
725950	47	Male	604-HF-HAC (SSO)	Emergenc...	91-180	No	Yes	No	No	04/30/2023	Yes	91-180	04/30/2023

Geospatial Reporting

The slide image is from a HUD HMIS Vendor call and highlights how the lack of geospatial reporting capabilities is hindering the ability to integrate data between HMIS and the VA.

Simtech's reporting and analysis tools use our proprietary *Region Designation Web Service* to filter the results to only include those who are served within a particular geographic area. This allows for HUD reports, dashboards, and the By-Name List to be run over selected region(s) including VA Medical Center, HUD Continuum of Care, County, City/Town, and census tract.

Open Discussion

- ▶ VA Medical Center/SSVF grantee data need
- ▶ Data Standards currently missing VAMC (VA Medical Center) Code for SSVF projects
- ▶ Need this to accurately export data from HMIS to HOMES
- ▶ Need to determine how to do this (if possible) without major change to data standards at this time.

Data Integrations

Data integrations with systems known to contain accurate information about a client, such as the VA's SQUARES system, alleviate the need for asking clients to answer additional questions and potentially to provide incorrect information.

For example, to alleviate the need for DD-214s and the reliance on self-reported information, Simtech conducted a pilot project with the US Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) and San Antonio that demonstrated how Veteran status could automatically be verified. Out of a total of 198 potential veterans, 177 (90.7%) were able to be verified by leveraging a script that filled out the required questions within the VA SQUARES form, captured the results, and wrote these results back to HomelessData.com. Additional information on the process can be found [here](#).

Record Matches

Total Client Records Processed:	195	
Total Confirmed as Veterans:	177	(90.7%)
Total Not Confirmed (no match):	18	(9.3%)

Performance / Run Time

Estimated Processing Time if Completed Manually at 60 seconds per record:	3 hours and 15 minutes
Actual Run Time with Automated Script:	3 minutes 58 seconds

In Kansas City, Simtech compiled HMIS, PIT, and Show The Way data within HomelessData.com to produce a comprehensive By-Name List of People Experiencing Homelessness. This data was subsequently matched with the [State of Missouri's Unclaimed Property Division and](#) resulted in 351 matches. Every client who was matched had an alert added to their profile within Show The Way to let outreach and shelter staff know to share the news with the client the next time they are interacted with.

A similar match was conducted with the [Missouri State Highway Patrol's Missing Persons database](#) which resulted in finding four people. An alert was placed on each person's Show The Way profile to let the person know that there is someone out there who is looking for them.

Take Proximity into Consideration

People experiencing homelessness tend to lack viable transportation and may need to either safeguard their possessions or bring them with them wherever they need to go. People tend to become homeless after they run out of both financial capital as well as the social capital of family and friends. Community matters.

The usage of GPS-enabled mobile tech enables staff to record the exact location of each interaction. Show The Way and Counting Us also go beyond the HUD HMIS Data Standard and capture the location of a person's last permanent address.

As an example of why proximity matters, Simtech conducted [a review of the shelter placements of homeless families](#) made by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The No Child Left Behind Act dictates that communities split the costs involved with transporting homeless children back to the school they attended when they were last housed. The findings below demonstrate how the placement decisions of DHCD, which neglected to take proximity into account, contributed significantly to the \$11.3 million spent transporting homeless children.

Exhibit A: Families from Outside of Brockton that were placed in Brockton⁷

Community Of Origin	Community of Placemen	# Family Membe	Total # of Childre	# school aged children (5-18)	# non-school aged childre	EA System Entrance Date	Distance Each W	Round Trip	Total LOS	Estimated Total Cost To Date @ 1/2 LOS and \$3.20/Mile
Fall River	Brockton	3	2	1	1	3/7/11	31.3	62.6	254	\$25,440.64
Norton	Brockton	2	1		1	5/4/11				
Weymouth	Brockton	3	1		1	4/19/11				

Exhibit B: Families from Brockton that were placed Outside of Brockton

Community Of Origin	Community of Placement	# Family Membe	Total # of Childre	# school aged children (5-18)	# non-school aged childre	EA System Entrance Date	Distance Each Way	Round Trip	Total LOS	Estimated Total Cost To Date @ 1/2 LOS and \$3.20/Mile
Brockton	Fall River	4	3	1	2	4/29/11	31.3	62.6	201	\$20,132.16
Brockton	Fall River	2	1		1	3/4/11		NA		
Brockton	Fall River	2	1		1	1/10/11		NA		
Brockton	Norton	3	2	1	1	6/29/11	21.4	42.8	140	\$9,587.20
Brockton	Norton	4	3	3		5/3/11	21.4	42.8	197	\$13,490.56
Brockton	Norton	2	1		1	8/5/11		NA		
Brockton	Weymouth	2	1		1	4/26/11		NA		

[Families have since filed a class action lawsuit against the state](#) and the resulting settlement would require the state to “create a more transparent and robust system to transfer families to shelters closer to areas where they work and attend school”.

Evaluate Upstream Factors Contributing to Homelessness

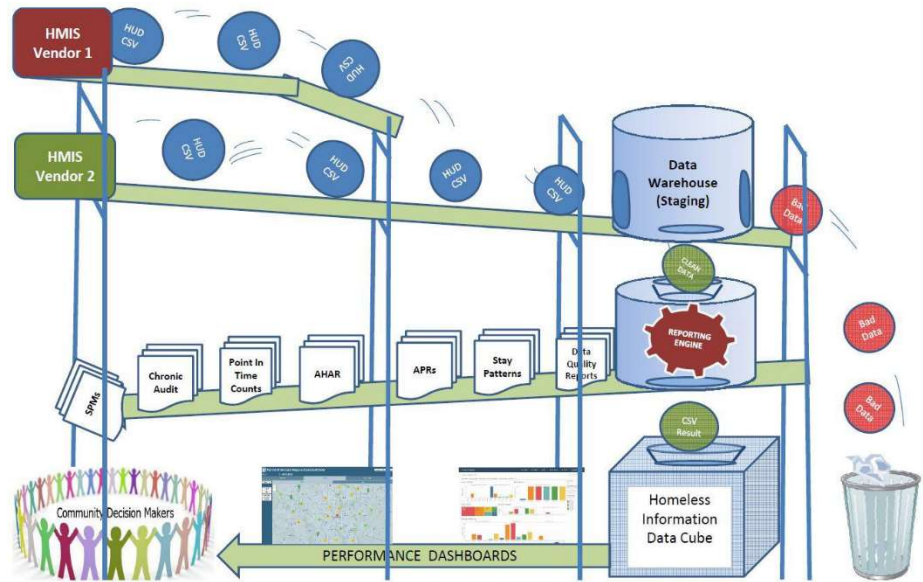
The last permanent address information gathered within Show The Way and Counting Us is a critical data asset as it allows for more comprehensive research to be conducted on upstream factors that may be contributing to homelessness. For example, [this Zillow-funded research study](#) found homelessness rises faster in areas where rent exceeds 32% of Area Median Income. This information is crucial for conducting racial disparity analysis as the demographics of the homeless population can be compared to the demographics of each person's community of origin.

Democratize Access to Actionable Intelligence

Access to data is often encumbered due to privacy and security concerns related to the sharing of personally identifiable information (PII). The HomelessData.com warehouse overcomes these concerns by serving as a secure sandbox to host PII from which de-identified aggregate results are produced. The results are derived from vetted programming specifications provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

These specifications include detailed business rules for how each value is to be calculated.

The diagram illustrates how data derived from HMIS and Show The Way is integrated into the warehouse, run through the reporting engine, and how the results from Annual Performance Reports (APRs) are fed into public-facing dashboards created using Tableau.



Unlike other dashboards that require an administrator rekey results into a Google Form, the Simtech approach is totally automated. APRs are run for every project in the COC, by year, target population, race, gender, and age range. No PII is exposed yet anyone who is interested can readily evaluate performance. The Project Performance Dashboards for Houston, found [here](#), are a visual display of the results from over 120,000 APR reports!

