

# TCHSC

Treasure Coast Homeless Services Council

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## TCHSC HMIS Privacy Policy

This notice describes the privacy policy of the Treasure Coast Homeless Services Council Homeless Management Information System (TCHSC HMIS). TCHSC HMIS is administered by the HMIS Lead Agency, Treasure Coast Homeless Services Council (TCHSC). TCHSC administers TCHSC HMIS on behalf of the regional homeless services planning body (referred to as "Continuum of Care" or "CoC"). TCHSC may amend this TCHSC HMIS Privacy Policy at any time, and will maintain a record of any changes made, as well as post new versions on the TCHSC HMIS website located at [www.tchelpspot.org](http://www.tchelpspot.org).

This notice applies to the personal information of individuals whose personal data is collected in written form, verbally, and/or maintained in hard copy or in electronic formats in the TCHSC HMIS.

In relation to this personal information, users entering data in the TCHSC HMIS:

- Collect personal client information only when appropriate or required by entities providing funding for homeless services ("the Funder or Funders");
- May use or disclose information in order to facilitate service delivery;
- May also use or disclose information to comply with legal requirements or other obligations as described in the notice;
- Will only disclose personal information as allowed as stated within the notice; and
- Assume that, unless stated otherwise, persons applying for or receiving services from one of the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies agree to allow users of the TCHSC HMIS to collect, use, or disclose information as described in this notice.

Each person providing personal information may:

- Inspect his/her personal information that is maintained in the TCHSC HMIS, with the exception of case notes;
- Ask the agency entering data for the TCHSC HMIS to correct inaccurate or incomplete information within the record;
- Ask about the TCHSC HMIS' privacy policy or practices;
- File a grievance regarding TCHSC HMIS' privacy policies and practices. TCHSC will respond to questions and complaints;
- Request a copy of this full notice for more details.

### A. What this notice covers

1. This notice describes the privacy policy and practices of the TCHSC HMIS, administered by TCHSC, which is the lead agency for the TCHSC HMIS. TCHSC main office is located at 2525 St. Lucie Ave., Vero Beach, FL. TCHSC's phone number for purposes of TCHSC HMIS is (772) 213-9040. Information about TCHSC HMIS is on TCHSC's web site, which is located at [www.tchelpspot.org](http://www.tchelpspot.org).
2. The policy and practices in this notice cover the processing of protected personal client information by users of the TCHSC HMIS within The Collaborative. This notice covers all personal information policies set forth by TCHSC in its role as a program administrator of the TCHSC HMIS. TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies may have additional privacy policies on information entered and accessed by users.

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3. Protected Personal information (PPI) is any information TCHSC HMIS maintains about a client that:
  - Allows identification of an individual directly or indirectly; **and**
  - Can be manipulated by a reasonably foreseeable method to identify a specific individual; **Or**
  - Can be linked with other available information to identify a specific client.

When this notice refers to personal information, it means PPI.

4. TCHSC and each HMIS Participating Agency have adopted this policy in accordance with the Homeless Management Information Systems Data and Technical Standards and subsequent HMIS notices issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and their federal partners through the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). DCA's policies and practices are consistent with those standards and with industry standard best practices. DCA's policies are also consistent with requirements outlined in other applicable state and local laws.
5. This notice informs clients, staff, contractors, TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency users, Funders and others how personal information is processed by the TCHSC HMIS.
6. TCHSC may amend this notice and change the policy or practices at any time. Amendments may affect personal information that TCHSC or the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies obtained before the effective date of the amendment. Any changes to this privacy policy will be posted as a notice at [www.tchelpspot.org](http://www.tchelpspot.org).
7. TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies will provide a written copy of this notice to any individual or organization that requests one. TCHSC also maintains a copy of this notice on its website located at [www.tchelpspot.org](http://www.tchelpspot.org).

## **B. How and Why We Collect Personal Information**

1. TCHSC (including TCHSC's contractors) and the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies may collect and/or maintain personal information for some or all the following purposes:
  - To provide or coordinate services to clients;
  - To locate other programs that may be able to assist clients;
  - For functions related to payment or reimbursement from others for services provided by TCHSC, TCHSC's contractors or TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies;
  - To carry out administrative functions, including legal, audit, personnel, oversight, contract monitoring, program evaluation, and other management functions;
  - To comply with government and Funder reporting obligations;
  - For research, data analysis, and community reporting purposes, including reporting to the TCHSC HMIS Advisory Committee to inform policy decisions; and
  - When required by law.

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2. TCHSC (including TCHSC's contractors) and the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies use only lawful and fair means to collect and/or maintain personal information.
3. By seeking assistance at one of the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies and providing personal information, it is assumed that a person consents to the collection of information as described in this notice and that the collected information may be entered into the TCHSC HMIS.
4. TCHSC (including TCHSC's contractors) and the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies may also obtain information about those seeking services from:
  - Other individuals who are accompanying the person seeking services, such as a guardian, caretaker, or advocate;
  - Referring organizations and/or service providers;
  - TCHSC's contractors and/or TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency users that are providing services.
5. TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies are required to post a sign at their intake desks or offices explaining the reasons personal information is requested. TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies may have additional policies not required by TCHSC that they must follow, but at a minimum, they must adhere to this Notice. While TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies are required to adopt their own privacy policies and postings for data collection unrelated to TCHSC HMIS, TCHSC provides a posting template to TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies which reads:

## **TCHSC - HMIS Privacy Notice**

*The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other federal and state partners require that each jurisdiction that receives homeless funding have a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in place. Therefore, this Agency is required to participate in the Treasure Coast Homeless Services Council - Homeless Management Information System (TCHSC HMIS), a computerized system that collects and stores basic information about the persons who receive services from this Agency. The goal of the TCHSC HMIS is to assist us in determining your needs and to provide a record for evaluating the services we are providing to you.*

*We only collect information that is needed to provide you services, or that we consider relevant to helping us understand the scope and dimensions of homelessness to design effective service delivery. Information may be disclosed as required by funders or by law, or for specific administrative or research purposes outlined in our privacy policy. By requesting and accepting services from this project, you are giving consent for us to enter and share your personal information into the TCHSC HMIS.*

*The collection and use of all personal information is guided by strict standards of confidentiality as outlined in our privacy policy. A copy of our agency's Privacy Policy and a copy of the TCHSC HMIS Privacy Policy is available upon request for your review.*

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## C. Usage and Disclosure of Personal Information

1. **TCHSC and the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies** may use or disclose personal information for the following purposes:
  - a) To provide or coordinate services for individuals to help them end their homelessness. TCHSC HMIS users may share portions of client records with TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies that, at a minimum, must adhere to this notice and may have additional privacy policies and that may allow different uses and disclosures of the information;
  - b) For functions related to payment or reimbursement for services;
  - c) To carry out administrative functions, such as legal, audit, personnel, oversight, contract monitoring, program evaluation, and other management functions;
  - d) When required by law to the extent that use, or disclosure complies with and is limited to the requirements of the law.
  - e) To avert a serious threat to health or safety if:
    - It is believed in good faith that the use or disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of an individual or the public, and
    - The use or disclosure is made to a person reasonably able to prevent or lessen the threat, including the target of the threat.
  - f) To report about an individual that TCHSC or a TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency reasonably believes to be a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence to a governmental authority (including a social service or protective services agency) authorized by law to receive reports of abuse, neglect or domestic violence under any of the following circumstances:
    - where the disclosure is required by law and the disclosure complies with and is limited to the requirements of the law;
    - if the individual agrees to the disclosure; or
    - to the extent that the disclosure is expressly authorized by statute or regulation; and
    - TCHSC or a TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency believes the disclosure is necessary to prevent serious harm to the individual or other potential victims; or
    - if the individual is unable to agree because of incapacity, then a law enforcement or other public official authorized to receive the report must represent that the PPI for which disclosure is sought is not intended to be used against the individual, and must represent that an immediate enforcement activity that depends upon the disclosure would be materially and adversely affected by waiting until the individual is able to agree to the disclosure; and
    - when TCHSC or a TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency makes a permitted disclosure about a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence, TCHSC or the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency will promptly inform the individual who is the victim that a disclosure has been or will be made, except if:
      - i. in the exercise of professional judgment TCHSC or the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency believes informing the individual would place the individual at risk of serious harm, or

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- ii. TCHSC or the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency would be informing a personal representative (such as a family member or friend) and reasonably believe the personal representative is responsible for the abuse, neglect or other injury; such that informing the personal representative would not be in the best interests of the individual as TCHSC determines in the exercise of professional judgment.
- g) To a law enforcement official for a law enforcement purpose (if consistent with applicable law and standards of ethical conduct) under the following circumstances:
- In response to a lawful court order, court-ordered warrant, subpoena or summons issued by a judicial officer, or a grand jury subpoena;
  - If the law enforcement official makes a written request for PPI that:
    - i. is signed by a supervisory official of the law enforcement agency seeking the PPI;
    - ii. states that the information is relevant and material to a legitimate law enforcement investigation;
    - iii. identifies the PPI sought;
    - iv. is specific and limited in scope to the extent reasonably practicable in light of the purpose for which the information is sought; and
    - v. states that de-identified information could not be used to accomplish the purpose of the disclosure.
  - If it is believed in good faith that the PPI constitutes evidence of criminal conduct that occurred on the premises of TCHSC or the premises of a TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency;
  - In response to a written request as described above for the purpose of identifying or locating a suspect, fugitive, material witness or missing person and the PPI disclosed consists only of name, address, date of birth, place of birth, Social Security Number, and distinguishing physical characteristics; or
  - If the official is an authorized federal official seeking PPI for the provision of protective services to the President or other persons authorized by 18 U.S.C. 3056, or to foreign heads of state or other persons authorized by 22 U.S.C. 2709(a)(3), or for the conduct of investigations authorized by 18 U.S.C. 871 and 879 (threats against the President and others); and if the information requested is specific and limited in scope to the extent reasonably practicable in light of the purpose for which it is sought.
- h) To comply with government reporting obligations for homeless management information systems and for oversight of compliance with homeless management information system requirements.

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2. **TCHSC** may use or disclose personal information for activities set forth below and for activities; TCHSC determines to be compatible with such activities. TCHSC assumes that you consent to the use or disclosure of your personal information for such purposes.
  - a) To carry out maintenance and operation of TCHSC HMIS.
  - b) To create de-identified (anonymous) information that can be used for research and statistical purposes without identifying clients.
  - c) For academic research purposes, release of PPI will be allowed if research is:
    - Conducted by an individual or institution that has or enters into a formal relationship with TCHSC, if the research is conducted by either:
      - i. an individual employed by or affiliated with the organization for use in a research project conducted under a written research agreement approved in writing by TCHSC, (other than the individual conducting the research); or
      - ii. an institution for use in a research project conducted under a written research agreement approved in writing by TCHSC; and
    - The formal relationship is contained in a written research agreement that must:
      - i. establish rules and limitations for the processing and security of PPI in the course of the research;
      - ii. provide for the return or proper disposal of all PPI at the conclusion of the research;
      - iii. restrict additional use or disclosure of PPI, except where required by law;
      - iv. require that the recipient of data formally agree to comply with all terms and conditions of the agreement;
    - The written research agreement is not a substitute for approval (if appropriate) of a research project by an Institutional Review Board, Privacy Board, or other applicable human subjects protection institution
3. Before TCHSC or the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies make any use or disclosure of your personal information that is not described herein and above, we will seek your consent.

## D. How to Inspect and Correct Personal Information

1. Clients may inspect and have a copy of their PPI that is maintained in TCHSC HMIS, with the exception of case notes. TCHSC and/or the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency, will respond to any such request made by a client within a reasonable time frame, usually 2-3 business days. TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency staff will offer to explain any information in the file. For data that is maintained by TCHSC as the administrator of TCHSC HMIS but was not entered by the TCHSC staff, TCHSC may require that the request for inspection be managed through the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency that entered the information.
2. TCHSC and/or the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency will consider requests for correction of inaccurate or incomplete personal information from clients. If TCHSC and/or the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency agrees that the information is inaccurate or incomplete, the personal information may be deleted or supplemented with additional information.

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3. To inspect, get a copy of, or ask for correction of personal information, a client can contact any TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency staff member at the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency at which he or she received services. The appropriate TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency staff member will be located to assist with the review and/or correction of the file within a reasonable time period, usually 2-3 business days.
4. TCHSC and/or a TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency may deny a direct request for inspection or copying of personal information if:
  - the information was compiled in reasonable anticipation of litigation or comparable proceedings;
  - the information is about another individual;
  - the information was obtained under a promise of confidentiality and if the disclosure would reveal the source of the information; or
  - disclosure of the information would be reasonably likely to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual.
5. If a request for access or correction is denied, the organization that denies the request (TCHSC and/or the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency) will explain the reason for the denial. TCHSC and/or the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency will also include, as part of the personal information that is maintained, documentation of the request and the reason for the denial.
6. TCHSC and/or a TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency may reject repeated or harassing requests for access or correction.

## **E. Data Quality**

1. The CoC collects only personal information that is relevant to the purposes for which it plans to use it or as required for reporting to our Funders. To the extent necessary for those purposes, The CoC seeks to maintain only personal information that is accurate, complete, and timely.
2. TCHSC may implement a plan to dispose of personal information not in current use seven years after the information was created or last changed. As an alternative to disposal, TCHSC may choose to remove identifiers from the information so that the data can be maintained for analysis purposes.
3. TCHSC may keep information for a longer period if it chooses or if it is required to do so by statute, regulation, contract, or other requirement.

## **F. Complaints and Accountability**

1. TCHSC, on behalf of The CoC, accepts and considers questions or complaints about TCHSC HMIS' privacy and security policies and practices. To file a complaint or question, a person should do the following:
  - If the complaint is about one of the TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies using TCHSC HMIS, the client should first follow the questions and/or grievance procedure of that organization. If the grievance cannot be resolved at the TCHSC HMIS

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Participating Agency level, the question/complaint should be addressed to TCHSC in writing or in person for resolution. TCHSC's main office is located at 2525 St. Lucie Ave., Vero Beach, FL 32960. TCHSC's phone number for purposes of TCHSC HMIS is (772)213-9040;

- If the complaint is received by TCHSC, in writing or in person, about a TCHSC HMIS Participating Agency or about an internal program, it will be reviewed by the staff responsible for administering TCHSC HMIS first. If the question or complaint cannot be resolved at that level it will be brought to the attention of the TCHSC HMIS Advisory Committee and/or TCHSC's Director, whichever is most appropriate for the particular situation.
2. All members of TCHSC (including employees, volunteers, affiliates, contractors and associates) and TCHSC HMIS Participating Agencies are required to comply with this notice. Each individual with access to TCHSC HMIS must receive and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this notice and pledge to comply with this notice in writing.

## **G. Privacy Policy Change History**

Each copy of this notice will have a history of changes made to the document. This document's change history is as follows:

- Version 1 – 2005 - Initial Policy
- Version 2 – Updated to Reflect New Changes to the Privacy Policy – July 1, 2023
- Version 3 – Updated to Reflect Corrections to Spelling – May 30, 2024

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772-213-9040 | [office@tchelpspot.org](mailto:office@tchelpspot.org) | [www.tchelpspot.org](http://www.tchelpspot.org)  
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