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Version 01

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HIFIS Death Notification Protocol

Policy Statement	This policy outlines best practices and expectations for documentation in HIFIS when staff within the homeless-serving sector become aware of the death of a client.
Purpose	To acknowledge and respect lives lost among those experiencing homelessness in Hamilton, Ontario and to ensure the privacy of a homeless individual and their families in the event of their death. This policy is also to ensure that staff at partner agencies do not receive notice of the death of a client through accessing HIFIS as that could be emotionally harmful.
Applicability	This policy applies to all agencies onboarded to HIFIS and is to be followed in the event of any known death of a client with a profile in HIFIS.
Indigenous Agencies	For Indigenous community agency partners, who are not required to use HIFIS, notice of a client death could be sent to hifis@hamilton.ca and staff would verify if that person has a client profile in HIFIS to then archive their HIFIS record and notify agencies as needed.
Protocol for Communicating the Death of an Individual	<p>Employees at partner agencies using HIFIS are responsible for notifying the City of Hamilton HIFIS administrator at hifis@hamilton.ca when they receive notice of the death of a homeless individual.</p> <p>Information emailed to the City of Hamilton HIFIS administrator should include the name and HIFIS client ID of the deceased individual, the source of information through which the agency received notification of the death (e.g. died in shelter, notified by hospital, next of kin, or coroner, etc.) and if the death has been confirmed by a reputable agency or whether it was learned second-hand.</p> <p>“Confirmation” could be from:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Hospitalb. Hamilton Police Servicec. Coroner’s Office

	<p>d. Director or designate of agency</p> <p>e. Other – including Next of Kin</p> <p>The HIFIS Administrator will then be responsible for manually marking the client as deceased archiving the client’s profile. The client’s profile will no longer be accessible to anyone besides the City of Hamilton HIFIS Administrator. This ensures that staff do not learn of someone’s death by accessing the database and prevents the client’s record from being accessed post-mortem.</p> <p>The HIFIS Administrator will make note of any staff or agencies who have had contact with the individual in the last 90 days and will notify a member of the City of Hamilton Homelessness Policy and Programs staff of their findings. The policy staff person will then notify management of agencies who have had contact with the individual detailing whether the death has been confirmed by a reputable agency and that their client profile has been hidden.</p> <p>The City of Hamilton Homelessness Policy and Programs staff is not required to confirm deaths of homeless individuals with the Coroner’s office, as that falls under the purview of Public Health.</p> <p>In the event that information of a client’s death turns out to be false the agency employee should email the City of Hamilton HIFIS Administrator at hifis@hamilton.ca to unlock the client’s profile.</p>
<p>Tracking</p>	<p>Routine audits will be performed on a quarterly basis by the City of Hamilton HIFIS Administrator of deceased clients for the duplication of files.</p> <p>The federal government, through their Reaching Home program, requires that municipalities report on the number of unique individuals known or believed to be deceased in the last 12 months (Infrastructure Canada, Reaching Home Annual Results Requirements Guide for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 Fiscal Reporting Periods).</p>
<p>Responsibilities</p>	<p><u>Community Entity (CE)</u></p> <p>The CE is required to archive the client file in HIFIS to prevent future access. The CE will also communicate with agencies who have recently served the client, as has been documented in HIFIS, to inform them of the client’s death.</p>

	<p><u>Agency</u></p> <p>It is the agency’s responsibility, where possible, to provide any details confirming verification of the death (e.g. that the death took place onsite or that staff directly connected with hospital or coroner) or if notice of the death was learned second-hand.</p> <p>Directors may delegate the actual communication of a client’s death to an associate within their agency.</p> <p>The agency designate will ensure all efforts are made to inform additional contacts of the client that the individual has passed. This may include other service providers known to have a relationship with the client or personal contacts of the individual, where known.</p>
<p>Definitions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency: Non-profit community organizations funded by the City of Hamilton and covered under City of Hamilton Service Agreements and HIFIS Data Sharing Protocol. • Community Entity (CE): lead decision-making body that coordinates efforts to achieve federal, provincial, and local housing outcomes. The City, as Designated Community Entity, prioritizes collaborative work with the Indigenous CE in all areas of Coordinated Access planning, strategy, and service delivery to develop connections to housing and supports that are culturally appropriate and rooted in the spirit and actions of reconciliation that recognize the values of autonomy and self-determination. • Community Entity (Indigenous Funding Stream): The Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership (CHIL) is the lead decision-making body for the Indigenous funding stream that coordinates efforts to achieve Indigenous self-determined housing outcomes locally. • HIFIS: Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) is a web-enabled Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) that allows multiple service providers to implement coordinated access using real-time information about people experiencing homelessness and the resources they need to find and keep a home. • Homeless Serving Sector: comprises a range of local or regional service delivery components serving those who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.

Related Documents

- *Hamilton's Homeless-Serving System Consent for the Collection and Sharing of Personal Information*
- *Hamilton's HIFIS Data Sharing Protocol*
- *Hamilton's Coordinated Access Guidelines*
- *Hamilton's Systems Planning Framework*
- *Coordinated Access Policies*
- *Revisioning Coordinated Access: Fostering Indigenous Best Practices Towards a Wholistic Systems Approach to Homelessness*
- *Urban Indigenous Strategy*
- *Hamilton's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan*