

HMIS Advisory Group
Meeting Minutes May 12, 2004
CSCNH Conference Room approx 9:00-11:00 am.
Concord NH

Present: Russ Bloch(RB), Steve Eckberg(SE), Pam English(PE), Tony Epaphras(TE), Marianne Feliciano(MF), Joie Finley Morris(JFM), JoAnn Maynard(JM), Klaas Nijhuis(KN), Miles Pendry(MP), Henry Vincent(HV).

Meeting convened 9:10 am

SE opened with comments about Advisory Group structure - perhaps a recap perhaps new. The Advisory Group is not intended to be empowered with full blown decision making power including binding votes on issues that arise. It is important that the HMIS implementers have: input on issues from various perspectives; advice as we work to establish standard practices in data collection; input to steer the design of implementation process; benefit of using Advisory Group to convey info in from, and out to respective CoC's. HMIS team must be aware of project timeline and not get stuck in time consuming processes that can be reasonably avoided.

RB stated he wasn't really an elected representative from BoSCoC - keep this in mind. SE acknowledges this is true. The Adv. Group was formed by "invitation" based on past participation in HMIS related activities - invitation process not meant to be exclusionary to others but rather a means to rapid start-up of Group.

Discussion about data elements as presented in 7 page summary of HUD Draft Data & Technical Standards (DTS). Suggestion by RB - maybe easiest thing would be for SE/HV to have a proposed template/format document to discuss and see what everyone thinks about data elements included on that. Action item for SE - produce this in advance of next meeting for review by all. There may be desire/need for other data element to be included for other funding source reporting needs.

For purposes of intake some common definitions will be useful as well - to be part of training for users - e.g. "homeless", "chronically homeless", etc.

KN raised issue of NAMES - what is real purpose of recording them in ServicePoint (SP) - is it needed or could it be left out - on paper intake only? SP does use name to generate its unique ID for client. First initial of first name, first and third initial of last name AND actual name are used. HV explained SP uses First & Last name in what's called "soundex algorithm" to generate numeric code corresponding to name as part of Unique ID. (NOTE: more info available at <http://www.geocities.com/heartland/hills/3916/soundex.html> if interested). So name is necessary from perspective of getting best data possible - for improved deduplication ability. Name NOT strictly necessary for entering a client into SP - you can do anonymous entry but at a "cost".

SE identified inconsistency on RACE/ETHNICITY data and reporting in DTS, HUD APR and SP. RB states that while inconsistency may be real, for practical purposes all that's needed is a decision on how HUD or OHHS wants it done and it'll be easy to do it that way. No need to deal with this political question - we can reasonably do however it's decided it should be done.

KN states that required data element 2.11 - Exit Date is okay but he wants more than just this - need details from an "exit interview". SE says there is

more data that will be collected - the HUD 40118 Assessment in SP does have these "exit interview" type questions also: Income at Exit (to compare with income at entry); Destination (list of at least 18 choices in SP); change in household composition from that at entry.

PE identified an Agenda item for next meeting: Discuss issues relating to data element 3.9 - Domestic Violence. Specifically, who, when, & how should this question be asked.

Similarly data elements 3.3 - 3.8 about Physical and behavioral health, disabilities, & HIV/AIDS, are of concern.

SE raises issue of Turn-Away data. OHHS currently collects this but this doesn't seem practical in SP. All agreed that HMIS doesn't need to address this - easier to do this pencil & paper as done currently. Turn Away data, though not deduplicated, is a valuable demonstration of need and will continue to be collected.

Discussion - different definitions of Homelessness for different programs - even within the McKinney-Vento Act. For example, M-V Education definition specifically refers to those "doubled-up" whereas as standard "M-V" definition is not this inclusive", other programs may include those "at imminent risk of becoming homeless." Suggestion for HMIS - after the "Are you Homeless" question, perhaps a drop down list of "Which Definition of Homeless" with possible responses including: "M-V Education", "M-V Regular", "PATH", etc. This idea and list to be discussed further.

RB states that we do need to be conscious of the REQUIRED data for reports to funders (HUD & others) and the tendency to ADD additional data collection for our perceived benefit. Discussion. KN says HUD reporting AND collecting data that helps to document our success are both important goals.

Discussion about creating outcome measures by program type. JM reports that the NH Housing Finance Authority (NHHFA) is evaluating the COSCDA outcome measures framework for use in their producing the annual CAPER progress report for HUD. The CAPER applies to several HUD funding streams the smallest of which is Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG). So the COSCDA framework must include something about performance measures for ESG. See the COSCDA document at: <http://www.nhhfa.org/conplan04/caper2003.htm> at bottom of page see link to Appendix IV of the report.

RB asks who will be responsible for data entry at small agencies? HV states this is an issue that may best be decided by those small agencies and CoC. HV & SE realize it may not be necessary for a transitional housing project with low turnover to do their own data entry. Could be "parent" agency that deals with this for several of their programs. Could be a CoC representative that does it for several small shelters. SE says that the HMIS administrators do not want to be responsible for all reporting. This should be done as per "contracted obligations" - if funding source A says agency XYZ has to submit HUD APR, then it should be XYZ that is responsible for the report - this also provides motivation and buy-in for quality of data entered into HMIS. RB says he didn't envision anything other than this - each agency should continue to be responsible for their data and reporting.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:00am