

HMIS Information and Discussion Session Meeting Minutes
Regions 3 & 4
December 8, 2011 – 11:15 AM
Held via GoToWebinar and Conference Call

Attendees

Patti Preston, Kirksville Housing Authority (Region 3)
William Smith, High Hope Employment Services (Region 3)
Martha Buckman, Good Samaritan Center (Region 4)
Amanda Hunter, Phoenix Family Housing Corporation (Region 4)
Laura Moore, Catholic Charities (Region 4)
Jason Benson, SALT (Region 4)
Edwin Cooper, Department of Mental Health (Region 5)
Melissa Rivers, Department of Mental Health (Region 5)
MASW Staff: Lindsay Wallace

HMIS User/Agency Survey Feedback: Lindsay Wallace explained that the HMIS Project would be changing the frequency that the user/agency survey is sent out to allow time for more comments and follow-up discussions to address any common issues or concerns. The survey is available now and was sent out on November 22. Everyone was encouraged to participate in the survey and give their honest feedback and opinion. The link to take the survey is: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/5FGHM9K>.

Target Population Training: The HMIS team is developing the fifth target population training which is on substance abuse. Lindsay Wallace reported that the first live webinar is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, January 12 at 1:30 p.m. The second live webinar will be on Wednesday, January 18 at 10:00 a.m. Lindsay reminded attendees that target population trainings are required for all Shelter Plus Care and Supportive Housing Program HMIS Users. Those HMIS Users have six weeks after the first live training to take the training to be in compliance, so for substance abuse, the training needs to be viewed before February 23.

HPRP: Lindsay Wallace reminded HPRP agencies that even if they are no longer administering HPRP funds, they are still responsible for the data quality. HPRP agencies will remain enrolled in HMIS until the contract between DSS and HMIS comes to an end. All HPRP agencies will be closed out of HMIS at the same time.

Performance Improvement

Bed Utilization Report: Lindsay Wallace reported that changes were being made to the bed utilization report based on feedback from agencies at the September Regional Housing Team Meetings. Two changes will be made to the report, which will be submitted again to the Balance of State Committee in January. The first change is that the report will also take unit utilization into consideration, as some agencies permanent and transitional housing programs felt the bed utilization wasn't as reflective of the full capacity of their program. Additionally, separate regional averages will be calculated for emergency shelters and the transitional and permanent housing programs. Because they often operate differently, agencies thought separating that data out would give a better picture of the needs in a particular region.

Lindsay also solicited feedback on two other comments received during the last regionals. One topic is if it would facilitate better conversation about this data if the data were blinded. The report would instead have "Agency A, B, C" instead of naming the specific agency. Some agencies felt "called out" when the

agency name was listed and it would also provide an opportunity for agencies to look at the overall data more objectively. Most agencies thought it would be helpful to have agency names listed so they could explain why their numbers were high or low. Martha Buckman pointed out that the updated bed utilization report should not include Good Samaritan Center's Transitional Housing program as it would be closing. Edwin Cooper stated he would like the naming of the Shelter plus Care processing centers to include the Department of Mental Health. Clarification was also provided by Lindsay as to what the bed utilization report shows and where the capacity is pulled from. Feedback was also solicited as to whether it would be beneficial to include capacity or program restrictions (such as a shelter only housing individual males). Attendees thought it could be beneficial and Edwin Cooper would like to see the requirement of disability added to that type of program information as well.

Length of Stay Report: Lindsay Wallace gave attendees an overview of the average length of stay at emergency shelters report. This is a report that will be submitted annually to the Balance of State committee. This first report, which will be submitted in January 2012, offers a baseline of how emergency shelters are currently performing. A high performing community is identified as one where the average length of stay is less than 20 days. Many continuums start at 30 days as a goal, which is what the HMIS Project is using as the initial target. Results are presented in the Length of Stay report handout. The HMIS Project Coordinator will work with agencies included on this report to ensure that the data is reflective of the clients in their programs(s). Jason Benson reported his shelter had seen the opposite; rather, they have seen an increase in family units and a decline in single households. Martha Buckman stated she felt the average length of stay for single households in her transitional program declined because they weren't meeting the goals and requirements of staying in the program – she felt the decline the average length of stay was due to more programmatic circumstances than economic ones.

Monthly Monitoring Document: Starting in 2012, the HMIS Project will be doing monthly data monitoring. Lindsay walked attendees through the monitoring document they have set up for the housing programs and emergency shelters, noting that agencies would be notified if any issues were highlighted. Data for this monitoring document will be pulled on the third business day of the new month, since the Partner Agency Agreement states agencies will enter data within three business days. Any agency can request their data on a monthly basis if they wish.

Identifying Best Practices: Monitoring data on a monthly basis helps the HMIS Project identify agencies who consistently have no errors or who consistently improve their data entry skills over time. Just this past month, we recognized Pettis County Community Partnership as an Outstanding HMIS Performer. They have a self-monitoring plan set in place that ensures the accuracy and quality of the data they enter into HMIS and have been able to use their data to assist in addressing community needs through the development of additional shelters and housing programs in the area. We hope this tool will help us to identify other top performers in the Continuum as well.

Identifying Low Performers: Lindsay explained that the monthly data monitoring document enables the HMIS Project to recognize low performers in the Continuum. For HMIS, that would be agencies that consistently have data entry errors month after month and need additional technical assistance from HMIS staff. This information also enables us to collaborate with funders to address possible programmatic issues that are contributing to data quality issues.

Tracking Turn-Aways: During the last round of regionals, many agencies expressed interested in being able to track information about the clients that they have to turn away. The HMIS Project contacted

MISI to see what other continuums are doing. Lindsay showed the attendees the data elements a county in Illinois uses to capture their runaway information in HMIS. With that list in mind, Lindsay asked agencies on the call if that was too many elements and if so, what the most important elements were. Edwin Cooper stated he didn't like the wording of current residence and would prefer that be changed to just say living situation. It seemed to be unanimous that any intake would need to be a simple box and not a full application. Lindsay reported that the HMIS Project would compile a list of the most important data elements identified in each region and give a list to agencies again during the HMIS portion of the March Regional Housing Team Meeting.

HMIS Resource Sheet: Lindsay encouraged agencies to take a look at the resource sheet for additional HMIS information and updates. She also showed attendees the Monitoring and Utilizing HMIS Data, which outlines the reports you can run in HMIS, what type of data you can pull from them, as well as how the information can be used at your agency. Agencies should contact their HMIS Project coordinator if they are interested in creating a target population training resource binder.

Agency Updates: Edwin Cooper reported that the Department of Mental Health (DMH) took over data entry for all of their processing centers a week ago and is getting acclimated to the system. Patti Preston reported that her agency is in the process of transitioning out of HMIS as DMH has taken over the data entry. Bill Smith reported he had an error found in October's monthly monitoring document, but was able to clarify the confusion between his transitional housing and permanent housing program requirements and the error was fixed.