

HMIS Information and Discussion Session Meeting Minutes
Regions 8 & 9
December 1, 2011 – 11:15 AM
Held via GoToWebinar and Conference Call

Attendees

Michelle Jackson, Samaritan Outreach Center (Region 8)
Lori Holden, South Central MO Community Action Agency (Region 8)
Cindy Haley, Texas County Food Pantry (Region 8)
Melanie Self, Texas County Food Pantry (Region 8)
Jocelyn Fisher, Christian Associates of Table Rock Lake (Region 9)
Tami McKinney, Church Army Branson (Region 9)
Church Army Branson (Region 9)
Lindsey Dumas-Bell, OACAC (Region 9)
Nancy Masner, OACAC (Region 9)
Stephanie Svoboda, Salvation Army – Springfield (Region 9)
MASW Staff: Liz Gebhart, Krystal Searcy & Bob Sobule

HMIS User/Agency Survey Feedback: Liz Gebhart 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 by Lindsay Wallace. Liz let people know that if they did not receive the link already, they could email or call her. Everyone was encouraged to give their honest feedback and opinion on the survey.

Target Population Training: The HMIS team is developing the fifth target population training which is on substance abuse. The first live webinar will be Thursday, January 12 at 1:30 p.m. The second live webinar will be on Wednesday, January 18 at 10:00 a.m. Liz 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. The substance abuse training will be recorded and available on the website on or before January 23, giving HMIS users a month to complete the training. Liz was asked if non-HMIS users could take the training, and Liz responded that anyone could take the training and still receive a certificate of completion.

HPRP: Krystal Searcy updated agencies on the proper close-out procedure for HPRP clients. She also walked attendees through the self monitoring documents and data monitoring log available for agencies participating in HPRP.

Performance Improvement

Bed Utilization Report: Liz Gebhart reported that changes were being made to the bed utilization report based on feedback from agencies at the September RHTM. 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.

Liz also solicited feedback on two other comments received during the last regionals. Liz asked if it would be beneficial to include capacity or program restrictions (such as a shelter only housing individual males).

Attendees thought it would be helpful, citing S+C has an example with their program restrictions.

Additionally, the HMIS Project wanted to know 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. One agency didn't like the idea, as it wouldn't give agencies an opportunity to explain why their numbers might seem low or high. Liz said they would get feedback from other regions on this as well, and regardless of the outcome, agencies would have a chance to talk with her one-on-one about this report during the next round of Technical Assistance Assessments.

Length of Stay Report: Liz 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 communities 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).

Monthly Monitoring Document: Starting in 2012, the HMIS Project will be doing monthly data monitoring. Liz 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. While this is for housing programs and emergency shelters, Liz asked agencies to think about how the HMIS Project would also monitor for agencies who handle financial assistance. Agencies will receive information if any new monitoring tools are processes are developed.

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: Liz 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. Liz showed the attendees the data elements a county in Illinois uses to capture their turnaway information in HMIS. With that list in mind, Liz asked agencies on the call if that was too many elements and if so, what the most important elements were. A conversation was had about whether clients who aren't going to be served would feel comfortable giving personal information like their social security number, particularly if they're inquiring about services over the phone. Lori Holden suggested that perhaps just the last four digits of the SSN could be used as an identifier, and Jocelyn added that they would need a strong identifier to be able to see if a client is turned away by multiple agencies. Michelle Jackson said she viewed family size, composition and reason for emergency as the top three elements that would help in

tracking turnaways. Stephanie Svoboda thought it would be important to capture referrals provided, and Nancy Masner would like to see reason for turnaway. Liz 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: Liz 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: Lindsay Dumas-Bell said that they had a few HPRP issues but appreciated their help from Krystal in getting everything updated and closed out. Cindy Haley reported that Sister Claire is no longer with the Texas County Food Pantry. Michelle Jackson noted that the self monitoring plans has been helpful for the Samaritan Outreach Center and that they were 49% done with their new shelter, which will double their capacity. There was a change in leadership at Church Army Branson. Jocelyn reported that Christian Associates of Table Rock Lake were still struggling to pull a report to meet their needs in having 2 kinds of MHTF grants. Nancy Masner reported that the Department of Mental Health was taking over the data entry for their Shelter Plus Care program.