

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness and Housing

FROM: HomeBase

RE: Preparing for HEARTH: Community Performance Measurement  
Using Data to Improve Systems and Achieve Outcomes

DATE: June 17, 2011

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Since the enactment of the Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act in May 2009, the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness and Housing (RSC) has addressed a variety of HEARTH-related topics. We also regularly discuss issues related to HUD's Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Grants program (also known as "The NOFA") including, during our February 2011 meeting, community responses to requirements in the 2010 NOFA Exhibit 2 to establish performance measure goals related to permanent housing and income. In this memorandum, we will build upon our preliminary performance measurement dialogue and discuss strategies that communities can adopt today to become ready for the implementation of HEARTH-mandated community performance measures.

### **I. HEARTH's CoC Performance Indicators**

The HEARTH Act requires HUD to evaluate Continuums of Care (CoCs) in the annual NOFA competition based on the following performance indicators:

- 1) The length of time individuals and families remain homeless
- 2) The extent to which individuals and families who leave homelessness experience additional spells of homelessness
- 3) The thoroughness of grantees in the geographic area in reaching homeless individuals and families
- 4) Overall reduction in the number of individuals and families who become homeless
- 5) Jobs and income growth for homeless individuals and families
- 6) Success at reducing the number of individuals and families who become homeless
- 7) Other accomplishments related to reducing homelessness

Presumably, HUD will provide guidance about how it expects CoCs to measure performance in these areas when the relevant HEARTH regulations are released. However, despite the fact that many details are pending, HUD appeared to take a first step towards aligning the annual NOFA with the HEARTH Act's community performance measures by requiring *projects* to establish performance measures in their Exhibit 2s as part of the 2010

competition.<sup>1</sup> Anticipating that HUD may continue to place greater emphasis on outcomes and *community-* (not project-) level performance measurement, some local CoCs responded to the new performance measure questions by establishing community-wide goals and benchmarks. Others adopted internal guidelines or suggested possible goals for their projects to consider implementing.

Some CoCs that engaged in planning to adopt community-wide performance measures recognized barriers and limitations of their current data collection capacity. We can learn similar lessons from recent Point-in-Time (PIT) Data.

## II. An Overview of Performance Measurement Principles

In a nutshell, performance measurement is an organized process for: (1) gathering information to determine how well programs and activities are meeting established needs; and (2) adjusting efforts to improve results. Performance Measurement systems can range from simple to complex, depending upon what is being measured and system capacity. Successful performance measures are tailored to the specific goals and objectives of the system or program being measured.

Performance measurement can strengthen a system by:

- Helping to determine if current activities are working to achieve intended results
- Creating opportunities to develop nuanced understandings of the particular strengths and weaknesses of a program or system
- Fostering common understanding among all community members, partners, staff, and consumers of what can be achieved and your plan to achieve it
- Demonstrating system effectiveness to community members and, hopefully, increase their support
- Achieving goals by articulating strategies and action steps and documenting progress or failure
- Perhaps most importantly, performance measurement can help reduce the incidence of homelessness in a community

There are several key components to a successful performance management system:

**1) Need** is the problem affecting the target population that you are trying to address. Need should be compelling, such that there is a significant consequence of not addressing the problem or need.

**2) Inputs** include resources dedicated to or consumed by the program, such as money, staff and staff time, volunteers and volunteer time, facilities, equipment and

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<sup>1</sup> Specifically, Exhibit 2 required projects to establish goals on: (1) persons remaining in permanent housing as of the end of the operating year; (2) persons exiting to permanent housing (subsidized or unsubsidized) during the operating year; and either (3) persons age 18 and older who maintained or increased their total income (from all sources) as of the end of the operating year or program exit; or (4) persons age 18 through 61 who maintained or increased their earned income as of the end of the operating year or program exit.



### **III. Developing an Effective Performance Management System May Require Increasing Capacity**

Even before the regulations are released, CoCs can take concrete steps now to prepare to adopt HEARTH Performance measures by establishing a solid infrastructure for collecting data through HMIS, which can help ensure that you have the data you need to measure performance.

For example, CoC's could evaluate their current HMIS practices, and Policies and Procedures to determine if:

- Staff are collecting the required information at entry, exit and any applicable interim data collection points for each client in accordance with HUD's Data Standards
- Staff are recording this information into the HMIS in a timely fashion (e.g., 4th business day of every month for prior month)
- The target population is clearly defined
- Programs clearly define what constitutes a "program enrollment", there are clear policies/procedures, and staff consistently apply
- The program goals are clearly defined for the target population

In addition, CoCs can begin to determine if they have capacity to develop baseline data measures. For example, you can evaluate your system's capacity to measure the length of a persons' homelessness or track recidivism (rather than simply identifying it).

Communities can also begin to evaluate their capacity to learn lessons from their data beginning with a data set that all communities were recently required to collect – the biannual PIT Count.

### **IV. 2011 PIT Count Data: A Case Study in Data Collection Challenges**

In 2011, HUD required all CoCs to conduct a PIT Count at the end of January and submit basic results by May 31, 2011. We've included below a summary of selected local PIT data in a County-by-County format. We did not attempt to incorporate all of the data into a single, integrated table because communities use different count methodologies, which makes cross-county comparisons are difficult. Most of the data below was pulled from reports prepared for HUD. In some cases we used data prepared for other audiences.<sup>2</sup>

After reviewing the data below for your CoC, or a similar community if your CoC isn't included, consider the discussion questions on page 8.

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<sup>2</sup> All the communities listed below reported subpopulation data and some, but not all, of them also compiled more comprehensive census reports that contain analysis of survey and HMIS data, among other sources.

*Alameda County*

[Data not yet publicly available]

*Contra Costa County*

**2011 Only**

	<b>Sheltered</b>			<b>Unsheltered</b>	<b>Total</b>
Total persons in households with children	<i>ES</i>		<i>TH</i>	3	467
	193		271		
Total persons in households without children	<i>ES</i>	<i>TH</i>	<i>Safe Haven</i>	1,487	1,947
	364	96	0		
Total persons in children only households	<i>ES</i>	<i>TH</i>	<i>Safe Haven</i>	0	1
	1	0	0		
Total households	<i>ES</i>	<i>TH</i>	<i>Safe Haven</i>	<b>1,490</b>	<b>2,415</b>
	<b>558</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>0</b>		

*Marin County*

**2011 compared to 2009**

	<b>2011</b>	<b>2009</b>
Unsheltered and other Homeless Populations	687	1,044
Sheltered	533	726
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,220</b>	<b>1,770</b>
Precariously Housed	4,103	3,095

*Monterey/San Benito Counties*

**2011**

	<b>Sheltered</b>			<b>Unsheltered</b>	<b>Total</b>
Total persons in households with children	<i>ES</i>		<i>TH</i>	154	584
	36		374		
Total persons in households without children	<i>ES</i>	<i>TH</i>	<i>Safe Haven</i>	1,660	2,008
	148	200	0		
Total persons in children only households	<i>ES</i>	<i>TH</i>	<i>Safe Haven</i>	97	107
	0	10	0		
<b>Total households</b>	<i>ES</i>	<i>TH</i>	<i>Safe Haven</i>	<b>1,911</b>	<b>2,699</b>
	<b>204</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>0</b>		

*Napa County*  
**2011**

	<b>Sheltered</b>			<b>Unsheltered</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<i>ES</i>	<i>TH</i>			
Total persons in households with children	33	17		9	59
Total persons in households without children	<i>ES</i>	<i>TH</i>	<i>Safe Haven</i>	83	171
	62	26	0		
Total persons in children only households	<i>ES</i>	<i>TH</i>	<i>Safe Haven</i>	0	0
	0	0	0		
<b>Total households</b>	<i>ES</i>	<i>TH</i>	<i>Safe Haven</i>	<b>92</b>	<b>230</b>
	<b>95</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>0</b>		

*San Francisco County*  
**2011 Compared to 2009**

	Single Individuals		Families		Family Status Unknown		Total		Total Net Change 09-11
	2009	2011	2009	2011	2009	2011	2009	2011	
Street	1,269	1,882	25	95	1,415	1,129	2,709	3,106	397
Emergency Shelter	1,206	1,194	310	285	0	0	1,516	1,479	-37
Transitional Housing	785	541	179	255	0	0	964	796	-168
Treatment Centers	262	241	31	0	0	0	293	241	-52
Resource Centers	233	145	0	0	0	0	233	145	-88
Stabilization Rooms	307	202	0	0	0	0	307	202	-105
Jails	394	317	0	0	0	0	394	317	-77
Hospitals	94	169	4	0	0	0	98	169	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,550</b>	<b>4,691</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>635</b>	<b>1,415</b>	<b>1,129</b>	<b>6,514</b>	<b>6,455</b>	<b>-59</b>

*Santa Clara County*  
**2011**

	<b>Sheltered</b>			<b>Unsheltered</b>	<b>Total</b>
Total persons in households with children	<i>ES</i>		<i>TH</i>	56	617
	142		419		
Total persons in households without children	<i>ES</i>	<i>TH</i>	<i>Safe Haven</i>	4,968	6,240
	790	472	10		
Total persons in children only households	<i>ES</i>		<i>TH</i>	145	210
	30		35		
<b>Total households</b>	<i>ES</i>		<i>TH</i>	<b>5,169</b>	<b>7,607</b>
	<b>962</b>		<b>926</b>		

*Solano County*  
**2011**

	<b>Sheltered</b>			<b>Unsheltered</b>	<b>Total</b>
Total persons in households with children	<i>ES</i>		<i>TH</i>	49	193
	98		46		
Total persons in households without children	<i>ES</i>	<i>TH</i>	<i>Safe Haven</i>	186	368
	60	122	0		
Total persons in children only households	<i>ES</i>		<i>TH</i>	0	8
	0		8		
<b>Total households</b>	<i>ES</i>		<i>TH</i>	<b>235</b>	<b>569</b>
	<b>158</b>		<b>176</b>		

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What do the PIT Count numbers say about homelessness in your community?
- How do you use data, like the PIT Count, to evaluate the mix of housing and services in your community?
- What impact, if any, does the rate of homelessness among individuals vs. families have on resource allocation decisions?
- Can your PIT Data be used as a baseline to measure progress towards reducing homelessness or to evaluate program efficacy?
- After reviewing your PIT Count data, what performance targets could you set for your CoC?
- If the PIT Count serves as a baseline, what additional information would you want to know in order to measure your success in reducing homelessness in your community? How often would you want to collect it? What steps can be taken to use HMIS data to evaluate progress?
- If you have concerns about using PIT Count data to inform policy decisions, what additional data would you need? What would it take to collect it? Who would you engage to make it happen?
- What additional data do you collect in your community, beyond the required PIT Count data, and how do you use it to make policy decisions?

**POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS:** Small group convening with representatives from each CoC to discuss performance measures, HEARTH legislation, strategies and methods, challenges and barriers, and help needed for implementation.

Other ideas?

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