This document will provide a system overview for outreach projects integrating HMIS and present some common solutions for ensuring data timeliness, accuracy, and completeness for ESG, PATH, and other locally funded outreach projects.

HMIS Integration Manual for Outreach Projects

City of Spokane, April 2016

Introduction

It's understood that the nature of collecting data in a street outreach environment is complicated. This document will provide a system overview for outreach projects integrating the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and present some common solutions for ensuring data timeliness, accuracy, and completeness. Provided is a list of required and common data elements that need to be collected by outreach workers. Following that are key concepts that pertain to the street outreach data collection process, client record building protocols, data quality policies, HMIS system administrator roles, and using data from HMIS. This document is to help clarify and compliment HUDs already existing data standards and program funding guidance already in existence and is not intended to replace or supersede it.

HMIS Universal Data Elements

- Name
- Date of birth
- Social security number
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Veteran status
- Disabling condition

- Residence prior to project entry
- Project entry date
- Project exit date
- Destination
- Relationship to head of household
- Length of time on street, in an emergency shelter, or safe haven

Outreach Project Specific Data Elements
(Not all required)

- Housing Status
- Income and Sources
- Non Cash Benefits
- Health Insurance
- Physical Disability
- Developmental Disability
- Chronic Health Condition
- HIV/AIDS

- Mental Health Problems
- Substance Abuse
- Domestic Violence
- **Contact***
- **Date of Engagement****
- Residential Move-in Date
- PATH Services/Referrals/Status/SOAR

"Collecting data during the outreach period, understanding definitions, finding time to record data, knowing your confidentiality policies, and how to use the data, all contribute to outreach effectiveness."

Outreach Project & HMIS Challenges

Mission

Your mission is to provide outreach in our community. You are a portal to mainstream mental health resources, housing assistance and other types of aid. Outreach often involves prioritizing the most vulnerable for coordinated entry. Collecting and reporting data in your HMIS meets local, state and federal requirements as well as tells the story of your efforts.
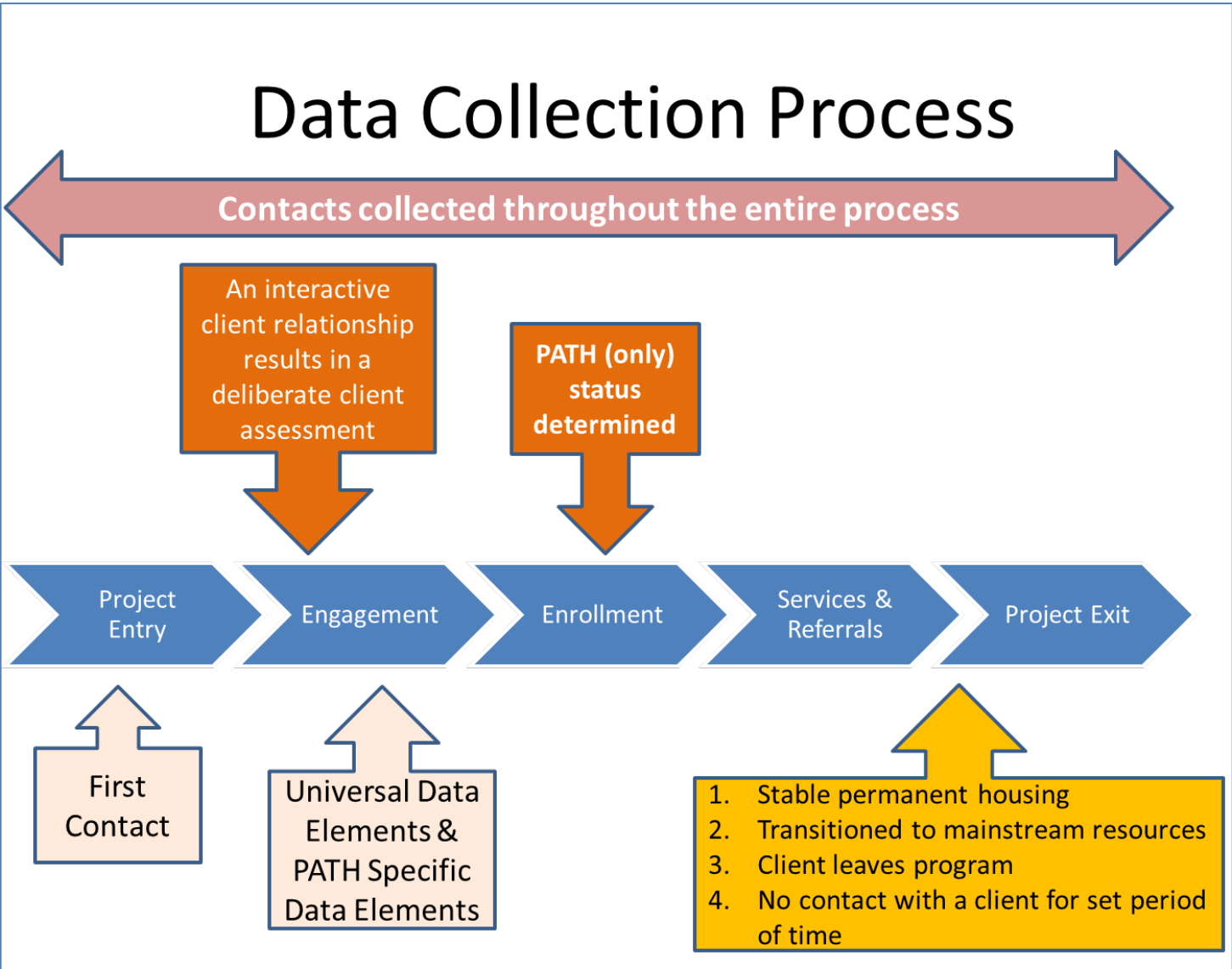
Challenges

Challenges are inevitable with outreach work. Below is a list of those challenges and following this section are key concepts to overcome them.

- **Collecting Data during the outreach period**

- **Understanding definitions**

- **Finding time to record data**

- **Entering data into more than one system**

- **Protecting client confidentiality and understanding privacy policies**

- **Understanding how to use data**

Street Outreach Data Collection

The project entry date starts at first contact. When an interactive client relationship results in an assessment or case plan this should be recorded as the date the client becomes engaged. During the duration of the project, outreach workers should record all contacts until project exit. For PATH outreach, enrollment is different than project entry and begins the moment a client is deemed eligible.

Data Collection Process

Contacts collected throughout the entire process

An interactive client relationship results in a deliberate client assessment

PATH (only) status determined

Project Entry → Engagement → Enrollment → Services & Referrals → Project Exit

First Contact

Universal Data Elements & PATH Specific Data Elements

1. Stable permanent housing
2. Transitioned to mainstream resources
3. Client leaves program
4. No contact with a client for set period of time

Record Building Protocols

Our local HMIS allows outreach workers to enter data on clients as the relationship evolves. This is important because outreach is not necessarily conducive to timely, accurate and complete data collection. The following are important key concepts for record building:

- You may need to collect client-level data over time

- You may initially enter records that are non-identifiable but shall continue to engage the client to obtain client-identifiable data

- The first contact service is always at project entry

- Contacts services are collected throughout the entire project whenever a meaningful interaction occurs

- All client records should be accurate and complete, meaning that they are expected to contain all Universal Data Elements

- Street Outreach data is not held to a data quality standard until the Date of Engagement.

- An "engagement" date should be recorded when an interactive client relationship results in a deliberate client assessment or case plan.

- All referrals should be recorded and followed up with whether they were "Attained", "Not Attained", or "Unknown"

- Clients should be exited from the project if they leave, achieve stable permanent housing, enroll in another appropriate housing project, and/or mainstream services that no longer require the continued provision of outreach.

"The need to manage your client relationship with data collection is a balancing act. Without the client relationship there is no data and without the data the program may not be funded."

Data Quality

Data quality is an essential characteristic that determines the reliability of data for making decisions. The City of Spokane requires that outreach projects send confirmation that their data has been reviewed and meets all the data quality standards by the 5th of every month.

- Though data quality does not count until the Date of Engagement, it is still critical

- When your outreach project certifies that you have reviewed that data, this includes that all your contact services have been entered for all your clients and a date of engagement has been added for clients who are *engaged*.

- Should clients be exited during the month, the exit date should equal the date of the last encounter

- Outreach projects must be consistent with how long the client remains in a project without any contacts, is it 30, 60, or 90 days?

- You are required to keep track of anonymous clients so that duplication does not occur in the HMIS

- Keep in mind that if a partial or street name is used for client in the HMIS you may be the only one who knows who that person is and try to use naming system that others can understand.

"To end homelessness, a community must know the scope of the problem, characteristics of those who find themselves homeless, and understand what is working in their community and what is not. Solid data enables a community to work confidently towards their goals as they measure outputs, outcomes and impacts."

HMIS System Administration Roles

HMIS Administrator Role includes:

- **Assure outreach workers have access to HMIS**

- **Assures data quality polices**

- **Assure the HMIS is compliant with the 2014 Data Standards**

- **Outreach projects are set-up properly in the HMIS**

- **Training is provided to outreach workers**

- **Available to assist with technical support**

- **Supports the record building protocols**

- **Generate reports to use for project evaluation, improvement and report on system wide performance**

HMIS Administrator Contact Information:

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Additional Resources

- https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HMIS-Data-Standards-Manual.pdf
- https://my.spokanecity.org/chhs/