



**Homeless Crisis Resolution System Briefs:
Guidance for Ongoing Performance Analysis
February 2017**

Focus Strategies helps communities use their local data to develop strategies that will reduce homelessness more quickly and effectively. Our work is focused on helping communities use local data to understand how intervention types and programs are performing and how to best make improvements to maximize the number of households experiencing homelessness housed with available resources. The purpose of this document is to assist communities in using local data as efficiently as possible and includes three sections: using HUD system performance measures, using Focus Strategies measures, and suggested performance targets and minimum standards.

Strategy 1: Run HUD System Performance Measures and Track Progress on a Quarterly Basis

We recommend running the HUD System Performance Measures report from HMIS on a quarterly basis and graphically displaying performance on each measure over time. This approach has several key benefits:

- a. Since HUD is beginning to use these performance measures as a basis for federal funding decisions, looking at these measures on a quarterly basis provides important information needed to develop strategies for system improvement.
- b. These measures are convenient to run because they are already programmed into all HMIS systems. They can be run for any time frame and for subsets of programs if needed.
- c. The HUD measures provide a look at the overall performance of the system from a person-perspective, rather than a program perspective. For example, the measure for length of time homeless adds together bed nights from all homeless programs during the reporting period, as well as the reported length of time each person was unsheltered prior to program entry.

A drawback to using HUD's system performance measures is that information is not readily available to review performance by project type (for example, to compare the effectiveness of Rapid Re-Housing versus Transitional Housing), or to compare the performance of individual programs to each other. The focus is at the system-level.

How to Use the HUD Measures:

The measures provide information about different aspects of system performance, each of which have important implications for system design and policy making. While each community should look at performance through the lens of their own specific strengths and challenges, there are some themes that will be common in most communities:

- **Measure 1: Length of Time Homeless** – In a high performing system, this result should go down over time. If length of time homeless is going up, it could be an indicator of several different issues, such as:
 - Programs not embracing a Housing First approach and requiring more extensive service participation and lengths of program stay than are required to move the household into housing.
 - Clients not receiving adequate housing search support/housing navigation to quickly exit from temporary interventions and into permanent housing.
 - Lack of strong linkages between shelters, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing programs to facilitate rapid exit from emergency beds.
 - Coordinated Entry may not be prioritizing people with longest histories of homelessness and making sure they secure housing.
- **Measure 2: Returns to Homelessness** – This measure can be more difficult to assess. It is important that the rate of return to homelessness following exit to permanent housing is not too high, since that would mean that clients are accessing housing situations that are unstable and not “sticking.” However, if the rate of return is too low, it could mean that programs are not serving the highest need households and indicates a need for deeper targeting.
- **Measure 3.1:** Each year, the number of people experiencing homelessness within a community, as indicated in the annual Point in Time (PIT) Count, should decrease. Communities where the number of individuals are experiencing homelessness has increased should examine other external factors, such as the local housing market conditions (i.e. vacancy rates and cost of rent), which may contribute to increases in homelessness and may point to needed improvements in housing search and placement, landlord liaison, and other initiatives. Communities should also consider increased rates of homelessness in relation to other HUD system performance measure results. For example, a community may want to look at whether they have seen a decrease in permanent housing exits or an increase in length of time homeless, at the same time as increases in homelessness. Considering the number of homeless persons within a community in relation to other related measures informs how a CoC may most effectively target efforts for system improvement.
- **Measure 5: First Time Homeless.** The rate of first time homelessness should go down over time in a highly effective homeless crisis response system. Shelter diversion

programs are key to identifying those households with lower barriers to housing and helping them secure a housing solution without entering shelter. If the rate of first time homelessness is increasing, it could be a sign that there are inadequate shelter diversion resources in the system or that diversion is not well targeted.

- Measure 7b1: Exits to Permanent Housing. This rate should go up over time. If it is going down, it likely indicates a need for more systematic attention to expanding housing exits, such as through landlord outreach and recruitment efforts, developing incentive programs, use of housing navigators and other strategies. As noted above under Length of Time Homeless, it could also mean that providers need to develop greater capacity in implementing a Housing First approach.
- Measure 7b2: Retention of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). The rate at which PSH tenants remain housed or exit to other permanent housing destinations should remain fairly steady over time in a high performing system. If this indicator suggests there are many long-term stayers in PSH, the community should consider implementing a Moving On program to help tenants who are stable and need relatively minimal services to transition to mainstream affordable housing. If this measure reveals that, on average, stays are relatively short and there is a high rate of exit to non-permanent destinations, it could indicate that the services provided in PSH are not adequate and/or PSH providers lack training and capacity.

Strategy 2: Run Focus Strategies Performance Measures on Monthly Basis for Each Program and Program-Type

While the HUD System Performance Measures provide a wealth of information for ongoing system assessment and planning, we also recommend running the SWAP performance measures monthly and graphically displaying performance on each measure over time. SWAP refers to the Focus Strategies Performance Measures, which are described [here](#). The recommendations in this document are intended for all communities, not just those who are using SWAP.

We recommend running SWAP measures monthly and displaying results for each program in the system, as well as by program type (ES, TH, RRH, PSH). This will likely require developing some customized HMIS reports in order for the measures to be generated for each program and each program type. This is worth the upfront work, as it will provide valuable ongoing information. This approach has several key benefits:

- a. It provides support and data needed for the community to adopt specific project-type performance targets based on current local data.
- b. The impact of any new programs or policy changes can be seen very quickly in these measures.

- c. Monitoring these metrics at the project level allows the CoC to provide a proactive intervention for specific programs that are underperforming and need technical assistance.
- d. Monitoring these metrics at both the project and project type levels allows the community to consider performance in the context of future funding decisions.

How to Use the Focus Strategies Measures:

We recommend charting results on each measure for each program type and each program. Program-type and program-specific results should be viewed in relation to established local performance targets. In addition, each program should be compared to other programs of the same type to identify high, medium, and low performers and to assess whether funds invested are yielding the best possible results.

Results on these measures at the program-type level can reveal system issues, in addition to what can be understood using the HUD performance measures:

- **Rate of Entry from Literal Homelessness:** This measure helps the community track whether specific programs or program types are targeting and serving people with the greatest need for assistance – those who are unsheltered or living in emergency shelter. This rate should increase over time until the community reaches the locally established target. If the rate is going down, it could indicate that the Coordinated Entry design and implementation needs to be re-visited and/or that providers are screening out those with higher barriers.
- **Utilization Rate:** This measure helps ensure that existing system capacity is maximized. If regular monitoring reveals any ongoing performance issues in this area, it could indicate that programs are establishing entry barriers or could be an indicator of data quality issues – inaccurate recording of entry and exit information will result in incorrect bed utilization data.
- **Length of Stay in Programs:** See above under “Length of Time Homeless.”
- **Exit Rate to Permanent Housing:** See above under “Exit to PH.”
- **Rate of Return to Homelessness:** Focus Strategies does not recommend setting local targets for rate of return, but we advise looking at this measure on a regular basis in relation to the rate of exit to permanent housing and length of stay measures. Programs that have short lengths of stay and high rates of exit may appear to be performing well, but if there is also a high rate of return, it suggests that the exits are not stable. If programs have a very low rate of return it could mean they are not serving the highest need clients. (See above under Rate of Return.)

Focus Strategies Performance Measures: Suggested Targets and Recommended Minimums

Most communities using SWAP are reaching some of the recommended minimum targets and one or two of the recommended targets in the set. It can be a significant process to determine how well the community is performing on each one, isolate the challenges, and work to make improvements. It can feel daunting when performance appears to be low in some areas. However, the purpose of these targets is to help communities to think about what level of performance is needed to achieve significant reductions in homelessness. These targets also interact with each other – length of stay must decrease in many communities, but exits to permanent housing must stay the same or increase at the same time. Carefully thinking about system design and needs is critical to achieve each goal while preserving performance in highly related areas.

	Utilization Rate			
	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Rapid Rehousing	Permanent Supportive Housing
Recommended Target*	95%	95%	N/A	95%
Recommended Minimum**	85%	85%	N/A	85%
	Length of Stay			
	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Rapid Rehousing	Permanent Supportive Housing
Recommended Target*	30 days	90 days	120 days	N/A
Recommended Minimum**	90 days	150 days	150 days	N/A
	Exit Rate to PH			
	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Rapid Rehousing	Permanent Supportive Housing
Recommended Target*	50%(S)/80%(F)	85% - 90%	85% - 90%	N/A
Recommended Minimum**	40%(S)/65%(F)	80%	80% - 95%	N/A
	Entries from Homelessness			
	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Rapid Rehousing	Permanent Supportive Housing
Recommended Target*	85%	95%	95%	95%
Recommended Minimum**	75%	75%	75%	75%

*"Recommended Target" refers to an attainable program ideal, or the ultimate goal programs should work towards. Targets in the table represent recommended targets only. Targets should be locally developed and adjusted over time.

** "Recommended Minimum" refers to the point below which local contracting consequences are initiated (e.g., loss of funding, performance improvement plans).