



Rural Homelessness Data Collection and Utilization 101

Southern Conference on Homelessness and Housing

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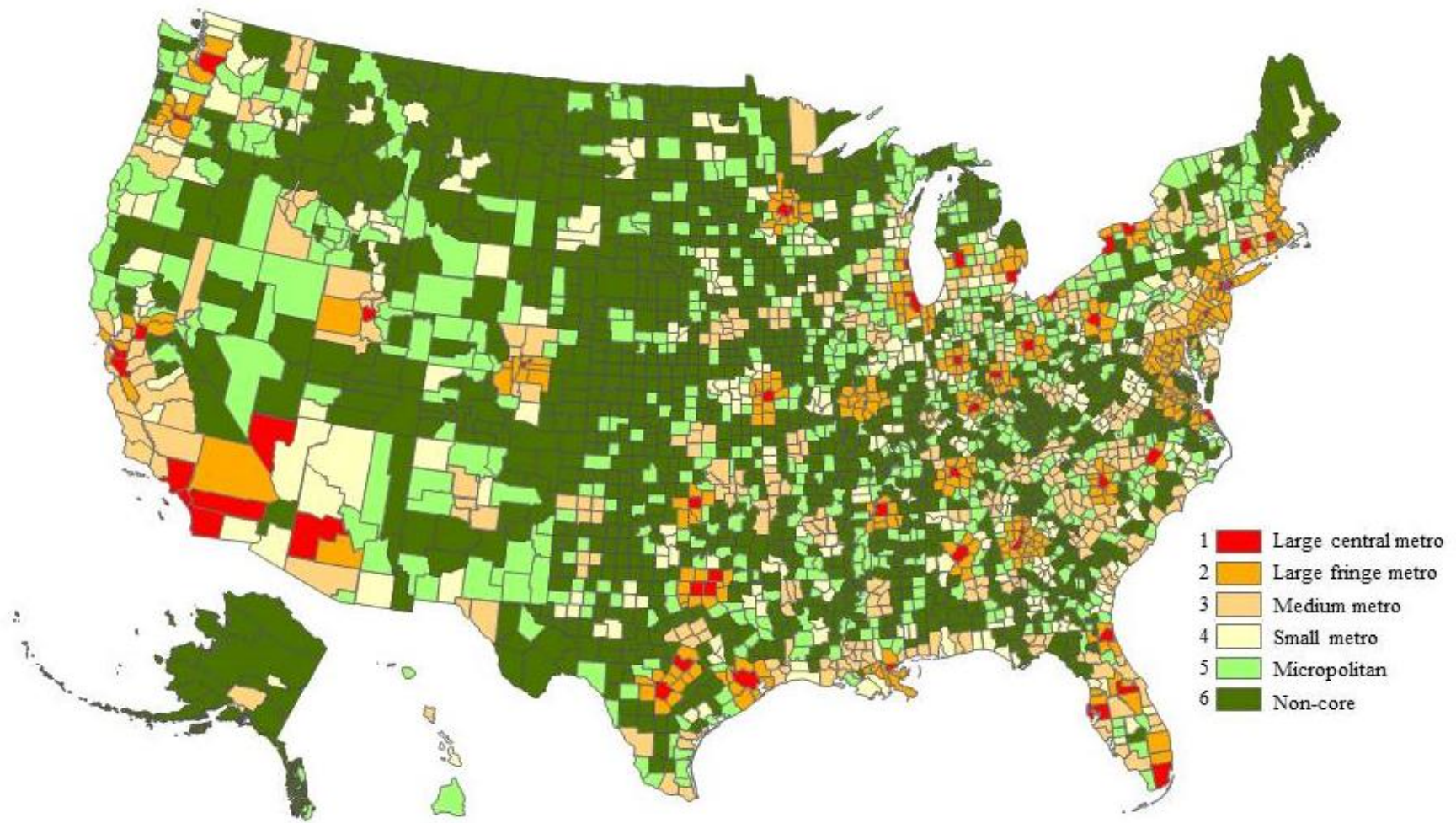
Learning Objectives

- Identify the data collection challenges and solutions found in rural CoC and HMIS implementations.
- Understand the importance of development and enforcement of Data Quality practices.
- Detail the different program- and project-level analysis that can improve CoC and HMIS performance.

Rural Homeless: *Data Collection and Utilization*



The Rural Context





The Rural Context

- Homelessness in rural areas presents many unique challenges
 - Structure and types of services, access to services, and how services are used are different in rural areas than urban areas
 - Service coverage, transportation, resource availability and type
- Rural population accounts for 17% of U.S. population spread over 80% of U.S. territory
 - Approximately 22% of homeless households live in rural or mostly rural areas
- 95% of all “persistent poverty” counties are rural



The Rural Context

- **Rural homelessness is distinctive**
 - Many households remain in doubled-up situations or in substandard housing due to a lack of services
 - Lack of available services and transportation
 - Unfamiliarity with identifying and accessing services
 - Many homeless households are families experiencing homelessness for the first time
 - Rural areas may be more susceptible to single economic factors (base realignment, natural resource development, etc.)



The Rural Context

- Homeless services in rural areas are resourced at 20% - 50% per capita as those in urban areas
- **Access to and delivery of services:**
 - Lack of available and accessible legal services for households being evicted
 - Lack of shelter and emergency services
 - Lack of housing options and diversity of services
 - Resources are typically allocated based on population rather than assessed need



Multi-jurisdictional Issues

- A single Balance of State or rural CoC may cover multiple:
 - Municipalities
 - Counties
 - VAMCs and VISNs
 - Tribal areas
- Households may often travel across these boundaries, and even state lines, to access services
- Coordination among many agencies at many levels of the public and nonprofit sectors is key



Improving Data Collection Coverage & Methods

- Comparing/matching HMIS data to administrative data sets and/or increasing HMIS participation
 - Schools/McKinney Vento Liaisons
 - County assistance offices and TANF agencies
 - Public Housing Authorities
 - Veterans Administration
 - Faith-based Providers
 - Community Action Agencies
 - Mental Health & Substance Use Providers
 - Health Providers
 - USDA/Food Banks



Street Outreach

- Comprehensive street outreach efforts are vital to engage homeless households in rural areas
- Street outreach and engagement helps to compensate for:
 - Lack of access to services
 - Reluctance to engage in services
 - Lack of homeless assistance options
 - Few options may be available to meet the household's needs
 - Stigma associated with homelessness
 - Lack of anonymity in small towns and rural areas



Data Collection Approaches

- Local strategies
 - Leveraging stakeholders to support data collection and inform service delivery
 - Police, emergency services, public works and sanitation, parks department and forest rangers
 - Informal service hubs
 - Usage data from schools, libraries, food/emergency assistance agencies, health clinics, etc.
 - Reliance on few providers for many needs can streamline data collection process



Data Collection Approaches

- Front line strategies
 - Often the HMIS users do not understand why we collect this information and collect information poorly
 - Gender & LGBTQ considerations
 - Race & Ethnicity
 - SSN
 - Disability & Sub-population(s)
 - Veteran Status



Leveraging Rural Services

- Leverage rural health efforts to serve homeless households
- VA has developed innovative approaches to delivery of health services in rural areas
 - Community Resources and Referral Centers (CRRCs)
 - Strategically located one-stop-shops co-located with an existing community partner
 - Telephone Continuing Care and Recovery Support (TCCRS)
 - Delivery of tele case management services to support Veterans receiving HUD-VASH
 - Veteran Service Officers (VSOs)
 - Often state or county employees who assist veterans with accessing resources or obtaining documentation

Rural Homeless: *Data Quality Analysis*





What is Data Quality?

- **Data quality refers to the reliability and comprehensiveness of the data in your CoC's HMIS**
- **Components of data quality include**
 1. Completeness
 2. Timeliness
 3. Accuracy
 4. Consistency



Why does Data Quality matter?

- Central to HUD and federal partners' work to end homelessness, is the ability to demonstrate progress towards the key indicators in the federal strategic plan to end homelessness (Opening Doors)
- Quality data allows HUD and communities to identify what strategies to end homelessness are working effectively, and to anticipate and identify trends in the effort to end homelessness



HUD's Vision for Data Quality

- **It is essential for CoCs to talk openly and regularly about data quality and its impact in understanding homelessness in a community.**
- **How can HUD help support your data quality planning efforts?**
 - Sage
 - CSV requirements (fix source data not report data)
- **CoCs should:**
 - Connect their data quality efforts to reporting via the *HMIS Data Quality Framework, System Performance Measures (SPMs) and Annual Performance Report (APR)*; and
 - Design and implement a sustainable and transparent *Data Quality Management Program*.



Data Quality Management Program

- In anticipation of the HMIS Final Rule, and in response to NOFA scoring criteria for the CoC Program, many CoCs have created data quality plans
- There are not yet HUD requirements for these data quality plans, but more guidance is anticipated
- Generally, Data Quality Plans should include guidance on:
 - Baseline expectations for ***accuracy***, ***completeness***, and ***timeliness***
 - Protocols for reviewing and monitoring for ***accuracy***, ***completeness***, and ***timeliness***



Components of a DQ Management Program

- 1. Identify Your Baseline**
- 2. Secure CoC Buy-In**
- 3. Develop a Data Quality Plan**
- 4. Execute enforceable agreements**
- 5. Ongoing monitoring and reporting**
- 6. Create incentives and enforce expectations**



Identify Your Baseline

- Important to take stock of where you are now
 - Do you know how many of the homeless assistance and homelessness prevention projects in your CoC, are actively participating in HMIS? **Baseline for bed coverage**
 - Have you recently run data completeness reports for your full HMIS implementation? **Baseline data completeness**
 - When CoC leaders, project staff and HMIS Lead staff review reports, does the data seem accurate? **Baseline for accuracy**



Ensure CoC Leadership Buy-In

- Important to clarify up front what the expectations are for the data quality program
 - CoC will need to review and approve the DQ Plan
 - CoC should also be heavily involved in determining expectations for monitoring and compliance
- **This work cannot and should not fall just on the shoulders of the HMIS Lead Agency**



Develop Your Data Quality Plan

- **Data Quality Plan should be informed by your understanding of your baseline, and should reflect where your CoC wants to move the system**
- **Plan should be clear and concrete, and should set standards across all four elements of data quality**
- **Plan should also outline what the impact will be if an agency does not meet the standards**
- **Development and approval of the Plan must go through your CoC's governance structure, as identified in your CoC Governance Charter**



Execute Enforceable Agreements

- **Enforceable agreements are critical**
- **Need to be completed by all agencies participating in HMIS**
- **Should provide guidance on what the consequences are for failure to meet the standards in the DQ Plan, as well as the incentives**
- **Identify the process for notification of failure to meet a standard**
- **Lay out the responsibilities of BOTH the HMIS participating agency and the HMIS Lead and CoC**



Ongoing Monitoring and Reporting

- **Once the HMIS Data Quality Plan has been reviewed and approved by the CoC and agreements are in place, it's time to get out there and implement**
- **Will need to train/communicate to agencies and users first, to ensure that all users understand the expectations**
- **Encourage the CoC to allow for a grace period**
- **Transparency with results is key**



Ongoing Monitoring and Reporting

- Set of procedures that outlines a regular, ongoing process for analyzing and reporting on the reliability and validity of data
 - Program and aggregate systems levels
- Primary tool for tracking and generating information necessary to identify areas for data quality improvement
- Includes procedures and frequency for data review
- Highlights expected data quality goals, steps to measure progress and the roles and responsibilities for ensuring data is reliable and valid



Create incentives and enforce agreements

- Important to celebrate successes and to allow room for growth
- Make the connection between the HMIS DQ efforts and other CoC lead efforts
 - Impact of improved data quality on the accuracy of System Performance Measures and other local data analysis
 - Impact of improved data quality on the ability to generate a By-Name or Prioritization List, to use HMIS for coordinated entry, etc.



Key Considerations

- **Ensure all stakeholders are clear on roles and responsibilities**
 - Establish tasks and timing of tasks
- **Make data quality a standing CoC meeting agenda topic**
- **Ensure data quality monitoring and compliance procedures conclude **BEFORE** project level/system level data is published or reported**
- **Compare data element completion rates for every project**
- **Use quality data to measure system/program performance**

Rural Homeless: *Project- and Program-Level Analysis*





Annual Performance Report (APR)

- **Allows for individual agencies to identify potential data quality issues**
- **APR includes data quality framework tables**
- **Encourage CoCs and projects to regularly review and utilize APR data to understand how the project's performance and/or data quality issues are potentially impact system work, including SPM**
- **CoC should review APR's annually to help evaluate and assure programs are meeting the CoC strategies to prevent and end homelessness**



Annual Performance Report (APR)

- **Data is powerful and the CoC should state:**
 - If its not is HMIS it didn't happen
- APR data can detail struggling programs, programs that are not consistent with CoC strategies, programs that are not consistent with HUD grant terms
- Onondaga County, NY Monitoring Committee strategy
- New Hampshire Employment strategy

Other Analysis Tools

- **Program dashboards**
- **Data Quality report cards**
- **Leverage CoC Rating and Ranking to enforce data collection and data quality (stick)**
- **Create HMIS Awards and Incentives to create healthy competition (carrot)**



Questions, Comments and Discussion





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