



city of AUSTIN



communications & technology management

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Enhancement Project

Update - July 2011 Recommendations

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Homeless Services in Austin

24 Agencies/Providers

Front Steps, Salvation Army, Caritas, LifeWorks, Any Baby Can, AIDS Services of Austin, ATCIC, Foundation Communities, Foundation for the Homeless, Casa Marianella, etc.

181 Programs

ARCH Shelter, Runaway Youth, Veteran Programs, etc.

164 Active Users of HMIS

Intake Workers, Case Managers, Program Managers, etc.

Background

- ❑ City Manager directed CTM to support this work.

- ❑ Use of an HMIS is a requirement for HUD funding
 - ECHO is the agency in Austin responsible to federal agency for homeless services.
 - The City's desire is for the HMIS to improve the data and to attract new service funding.

- ❑ A July 2011 city study validated the need to improve homeless client information across the community.
 - COA staff, ECHO staff, and Gartner identified model cities.
 - Staff conducted additional research via conference calls and site visits.

ECHO's HMIS Governance Philosophy & Structure

- ❑ The HMIS community reports to the ECHO Data Work Group.
- ❑ HMIS holds a monthly advisory council meeting
- ❑ This approach emphasizes consensus building among equal partner agencies.

Program Status

□ ECHO hired an HMIS Director

- HMIS Director hired 2/15/2012
- Budget authorized for FY 2012
- HMIS management transferred from ATCIC to ECHO
 - One of three HUD grants transferred
 - Remainder to be transferred ~ June 2012
 - ATCIC's HMIS staff have moved to ECHO
- City of Austin added requirements to homeless services contracts requiring data sharing and data quality among agencies
- HMIS Subcommittee is discussing requiring use of all Universal Data Elements and other fields of information
- Recreated “letter of authorization” to share client info
- Client information letter created to help clients understand information sharing

Technology Recommendations

Phase I

- Analyze and improve the websites
- Re-pilot Scan Cards
- System assessment and possible reconfiguration
- Explore integrated data solutions

Phase II

- Data warehouse
- Use of mobile devices

Supporting Activities

- Added requirements to agency contracts to require data sharing.
- HMIS Subcommittee initiated discussions on expanding to use all Universal Data Elements.
- Revised the client “letter of authorization.”
- Created client information letter.

IT Accomplishments

- ❑ **Analyze and improve the website**
 - Requirements for HMIS and ECHO website provided by ECHO to CTM.
 - CTM and ECHO have determined the hosting site.

- ❑ **Planning for scan cards**
 - Exploratory meetings held with Front Steps and Salvation Army – both are very interested and willing.

IT Accomplishments (cont.)

❑ **Bowman conducted a system assessment for ECHO**

Recommendation highlights (and ECHO response):

- Better policies and procedures (agree)
- Focused training on job functions (agree)
- Purchase dedicated hardware (don't agree)
- Purchase dedicated support (don't agree)
- No reconfiguration is necessary (agree)
- Bowman indicates our issues are “complicated”, but don't have recommendations to resolve

❑ **Explore data integration among agencies**

- Bowman conducted an exploratory meeting with LifeWorks.

On-Going Activities

Phase I

- ❑ Web Site
 - Web site anticipated to be up by July 31, 2012

- ❑ Re-piloting of Scan Cards and consolidating data
 - Waiting for a quote for client data de-duplication services
 - Exploring options to add incentives for card use
 - Waiting for a quote from Bowman for integrated data solution

Future

PHASE II

Data warehouse

- Integrate with Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (THDCA) statewide data warehouse.

Mobile devices

- Bowman conducted an exploratory mobile device meeting
- Quote for a mobile solution pending from Bowman
- There are security concerns for field outreach workers; exploring best practices to resolve

Challenges

- ❑ The community has a perception that the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) applies to any social services data, though it truly applies only to medical services and data.
- ❑ Difficulty of ascertaining exact and durable identity of clients

HMIS Enhancements – Next Steps

- Launch website
- Implement data sharing
- Launch scan card identification pilot with Front Steps and Salvation Army
- Continue improving accuracy of reporting across all agencies