

HOMELESS SERVICE TRACKING SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

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The Center for Social Policy is one of four centers housed within the John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs. The primary mission of the McCormack Institute is public service. Through its public policy research, educational programs, and publications, the Institute seeks to contribute, to inform public discourse, and to play a constructive role in public policy formulation and problem solving on issues of concern to Boston, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the New England region.

The Center for Social Policy (CSP) focuses on social policies at the state and local level that affect the most vulnerable populations in the Commonwealth. The Center's social policy interests and expertise lie in applied research designed to assist in the formulation of public policy, primarily in the areas of public welfare, homelessness, housing, disabilities, and human service delivery systems.

The mission of the Center for Social Policy is to engage in activities that have a potential impact on social policy at the State or Local level and will ultimately have a positive effect on the lives of people who depend on the delivery of human services. This will be accomplished through research, education, and dissemination of information and by engaging policy makers and communities in the debate.

The John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs is a multi-purpose public policy research institute, established in 1983 at the University of Massachusetts Boston and named in honor of the late John W. McCormack, former speaker of the US House of Representatives.

The institute's components include four centers, each with its own area of focus: the Center for State and Local Policy, the Center for Social Policy Research, the Center for Women in Politics, and the Center for Democracy and Development. The institute also administers UMass Boston's M.S. Program in Public Affairs and publishes the *New England Journal of Public Policy*.

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This Homeless Service Tracking System Implementation Guide, funded by the Massachusetts Office of Community Planning of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, is designed to assist communities in developing homeless services tracking systems. The aim of this guide is to advance regional efforts to better understand and document the extent of homelessness in the United States.

The material in this guide is based on the experience of the Center for Social Policy, McCormack Institute, University of Massachusetts Boston in implementing the ANCHoR Homeless Services Recording and Coordination System across the state of Massachusetts over the past three years. The system is overseen by an active Steering Committee and supported by Massachusetts' Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the City of Boston. The Steering Committee is composed of people who have experienced homelessness, service providers, government officials, and advocates.

In addition, the Massachusetts team actively participates in a National Homeless Services Data and Analysis Group convened by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This national network of homeless service data users is comprised of jurisdictions that currently employ system-wide administrative databases. The collaboration with colleagues across the country engendered by this group has also informed Massachusetts' knowledge of tracking system implementation and planning.

The guide discusses the benefits of implementing a tracking system, the types of information such a project can produce, and elements to consider in designing a system. The guide also provides four potential models for homeless tracking system design, and concludes with a list of resources for further information. Appendices offer sample forms and procedures from some of the model programs.

The manual is organized with user-friendliness in mind. Information is provided primarily in easy-to-read bullet points. Supplementary text is offered in highlighted boxes, and appendices are referenced in the text.

I. BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING A HOMELESS SERVICE DATA TRACKING SYSTEM

Homeless services tracking and reporting systems can improve client services, homeless service program management, and policymaking. Some of the potential benefits to each constituency are discussed on the following pages.

Benefits for Men, Women, and Children who Experience Homelessness, and their Case Managers:

- Decrease duplicative intakes and assessments.
- Streamline referrals.
- Coordinate case management.
- Determine benefit eligibility.

Client services can be streamlined by the efficiency improvements resulting from homeless tracking systems. Homeless individuals and families are often required to provide the same personal information multiple times in order to participate in service programs. In many cases, clients are asked to provide the same information to several different staff and agencies, and are at the mercy of particular program staff member's knowledge of available services and benefits. Often, clients arrive at specific programs by chance, rather than because the agency is best able to meet their needs.

Centralized collection and storing of information can reduce this duplication as well as increase appropriate and purposeful access to services and benefits. Data systems can also enable information sharing across programs so that client service provision can be coordinated, improving efficacy for both program participants and staff. In addition, tracking systems offer the potential for centralized intake, referral, and benefit eligibility screening processes, ensuring that homeless individuals and families participate in the programs and services best able to meet their needs.

Benefits for Agency Directors and Program Managers:

- Track client outcomes.
- Coordinate services, internally among agency programs, and externally with other providers.
- Prepare financial and programmatic reports for funders, boards, and other stakeholders.
- Inform program design decisions.

Homeless services program management systems can be improved by tracking system participation through access to reports for monitoring service utilization, client outcomes, financial information, and program efficiency. Client tracking can assist agencies in coordinating activities across multiple programs, working with other service providers to share information, and developing network-level policies and programs. Outcome measurement can assist programs to determine the efficacy of specific interventions and modify programming accordingly.

Data gathered through tracking systems can inform program planning and evaluation. For example, trend analysis can identify common characteristics of chronic shelter users. Interventions can then be targeted to these needs, and shelter usage by these populations can subsequently be decreased.

Benefits for Public Policy Makers and Advocates:

- Understand the extent and scope of homelessness.
- Identify service gaps.
- Inform systems design and policy decisions.
- Develop a forum for addressing community-wide issues.

Advocates, government officials, and researchers can analyze aggregated homeless services data to understand the extent and dynamics of the problem of homelessness in an attempt to end this tragic social condition. Data gathered can measure the types and number of services provided, an unduplicated count of persons served, population characteristics and service needs, and trends over time. See Appendix A for an example of the types of advocacy tools that can be produced by tracking systems.

As with individual programs, data gathered through tracking systems can inform planning on systems and community levels. Projections based on tracking data can be used to allocate resources according to the actual demand for and utilization of services.

The process of implementing a data system can also lead to creation of platforms and forums for addressing community-wide issues. Tracking systems have the potential overall benefit of developing a sense of community between homeless consumers, service providers, and policy makers.

Each of these three constituencies together can sustain the overall system. Homeless clients who derive direct benefits from participation in the system are more likely to share truthful information, thus increasing the validity of the data. Shelter staff who derive management-level benefits from the system are more likely to view it as a helpful tool rather than an obstacle, thus leading them to utilize the tracking system more effectively. When clients and staff utilize the system to its full potential, the aggregate data is more reliable and comprehensive, thus helping policymakers to design effective programs and ensure adequate resources to meet the needs of homeless people.

II. THE TYPES OF INFORMATION A TRACKING SYSTEM CAN OFFER

Prior to the implementation of homeless tracking systems, most communities utilize point-in-time census counts to estimate the size of the local homeless population. While this approach is useful for gathering a one-time unduplicated count of homeless individuals and families, it is limited by vulnerability to seasonal fluctuations. Snapshot counts also tend to over-represent those with the most chronic problems while under-representing those facing time-limited situational crises¹. The ongoing gathering of data on homeless persons who utilize service programs offers cumulative, longitudinal information over time, thus enabling the tracking of service and demand trends.

These data are critical to accurately calculate the size and needs of the homeless population, as well as the outcomes of specific interventions and programs. Policy makers, agency directors, homeless program consumers, and advocates require this information for service and systems planning and advocacy. In addition to the value of aggregate data for policy making, individual information can be utilized as a case management tool. Some of the specific data elements tracking systems can collect are listed below. See Appendix B for a sampling of the types of data systems can gather.

- Unduplicated count of homeless program users. An unduplicated enumeration does not double count persons who utilize program(s) more than one time during the time period.

It should be noted that homeless individuals and families who do not access service programs will not be counted by tracking systems. These populations include those who live 'doubled- or tripled-up' with family or friends, and persons who stay on the streets and do not come into contact with service programs. As data systems can only count those who utilize service programs, calculations are also susceptible to service capacity changes.

Additionally, data represent only that proportion of the homeless system covered by the tracking program. When all programs in a locality do not participate in the system, it is important to assess the extent to which generalized information can be extrapolated from these specific data.

¹ White, A. (1996). Perception vs. Reality. City Limits, January 1996, 10-12. Article cites work of D. Culhane and R. Kuhn.

- Demographic characteristics of homeless program users, and their family members:
 - Race/ethnicity;
 - Age;
 - Gender;
 - Veteran status; and
 - Household composition, including information on family separations.
- Income sources and levels, benefit use and loss, educational status, employment status, and residential history and situations of program users prior to service entry, as well as during and after service receipt. Benefit loss data help to understand the impacts of cuts in public resources on homeless families and individuals.
- Geographic mapping of last permanent residence. By plotting these addresses on maps, this information can identify areas in which homelessness rates are atypical.
- Health status information encompassing data on any physical and/or mental health conditions, including substance abuse prior to service entry, as well as during and after service receipt. These data can be utilized in the development of client service plans.
- Referral sources and eligibility assessment. Data entered in the system can be utilized to assess client eligibility for services. This information can streamline case management, and provide data on any disparities between referrals and services received.
- Service needs of and usage by homeless individuals and families, including information on consumers who access and/or move between more than one program. These data can be analyzed to understand which programs homeless persons access, and the characteristics and service needs of multiple site users.
- Duration of homelessness. Demographics and other characteristics and service needs information can be examined for individuals and families who remain in shelters for short, episodic, and long periods of time. Service options can then be developed that specifically address the differential needs of these sub-populations.
- Housing, income, employment, and other outcomes, including client satisfaction measures, for homeless program participants. These data can be used for tracking the effectiveness of specific interventions for particular populations, as well as in meeting funders' demands for outcome reports.

- Some terms commonly used in enumerating the homeless population are defined below. These rates can be calculated for homeless individuals, families, and/or persons in families.

Definitions²:

Daily Census – total number of people served in a day. Patterns of service use over time can be determined by calculating the average daily census for particular periods. Daily census figures are useful for understanding the level of demand on a program or system, and for analyzing trends in that demand over time.

Prevalence – number of all unduplicated persons using services during a particular time period, such as a year. Unique client identifiers can be developed to maintain anonymity while ensuring unduplicated counts across programs. This figure can be utilized to determine a rate of homelessness for a particular locality.

Incidence – number of first-time service users. Incidence is helpful for differentiating between first-time and repeat episodes of homelessness.

Length of Stay – duration of time for which persons utilize a service program.

Turnover – number of persons who inhabit a particular shelter “slot” over a specific period of time. The annual turnover rate can be calculated as the annual prevalence rate for the program or system divided by its average daily census for the year.

Homeless Episode³ – One or more shelter stays (with discrete beginning and end dates) that can be grouped together into one distinct time period of shelter use. Grouping stays into episodes controls for consecutive visits and for the different methods by which shelters record stays. Researchers define episodes differently, but the method promoted by Dennis Culhane of the University of Pennsylvania involves a 30-day exit criterion. That is, any stay within the 30 days following shelter exit is considered part of the same episode.

² Culhane, D., and Metraux, S. (1998). Using Homeless Administrative Data to Gauge Service Use Dynamics: Methods for Determining Incidence, Prevalence and Census Measures. Paper prepared for the Homeless Services Data Users Meeting, December 7-8, 1998. Washington, D.C.: Author.

³ Metraux, S., and Culhane, D. (1999). Analyzing Shelter Stays and Shelter Stay Patterns Using Administrative Data: An Overview of Practical Methods. Paper prepared for the Homeless Services Data Users Meeting, September 13-14, 1999. Washington, D.C.: Author.

III. ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER IN DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A TRACKING SYSTEM

Implementing a data tracking system has an extreme technical component; but to be successful, management of the project must not be technically biased. Communities can make the mistake of assigning responsibility for implementation to technical staff. These staff will probably address the technical infrastructure requirements of the project. However, this same group or individual may lack the interest, knowledge, or access required to develop a community process. To be successful, the project must first de-emphasize the technology. The technology is neither the problem nor the solution. The following section presents some of the non-technical elements that will influence the design and subsequent outcomes of the system.

Planning, Decision-Making, and Evaluation Processes:

➤ Political Culture:

- Minimize political divides by developing a shared vision that builds on common values and goals.
- Involve stakeholders in the planning process.
- Develop features to meet some needs of each constituency.

Every community has its own political subtext. In the world of homeless services there are often divides between service providers, advocates, researchers, and consumers; between programs serving individuals and those serving families; and between government officials and service providers, advocates, and consumers, not to mention all of the potential conflicts and tensions within each of these groups.

In developing a tracking system, it is important to consider the varying interests of each of these groups and how they affect design of the project. Ideally, as many stakeholder groups as possible should be represented in the planning process. Political divides can be neutralized by developing elements that meet the individual goals of each stakeholder group, as well as shared objectives for the system as a whole.

- Select a neutral facilitator.
- Determine the constituencies the system should benefit, and develop the mission and design accordingly.

An organized, inclusive, and externally facilitated strategic planning process will help to minimize the political divides. The system design will be predicated upon decisions made during this process. For example, it may be determined that the system should be focused on addressing public policy and agency planning needs, but that client service delivery concerns can best be met in some other way. In such a case, the system could be designed with extensive reporting capabilities but without data sharing across programs.

- Plan for future evaluation by setting measurable benchmarks for monitoring progress and devising reporting mechanisms. The phase structure below is an example of a mechanism for indicating implementation progress at the site level, while acknowledging the ongoing nature and inherent learning curves involved in the process.

Development of a staged workplan with clear priorities and regular deliverables will smooth the implementation process and ensure that progress is assessed on an ongoing basis. The workplan can include benchmarks for system-wide development, as well as processes for integration of program sites.

Sample Site Implementation Phase Structure⁴:

Pre-Phase 1	Commitment to process made; site planning begins.
Phase 1	Initial training; hardware assessment and purchase.
Phase 2	Software installed; data entry begins.
Phase 3	Data entered regularly.
Phase 4	Site fully operational. System integrated with program operations.

⁴ ANCHoR Team, McCormack Institute of Public Affairs, University of Massachusetts Boston (1999). ANCHoR Homeless Services Recording and Coordination System. Strategic Plan. Boston, MA: Author.

System Structure:

Questions to consider in designing a system are listed below. These questions can be answered only after clear goals have been agreed upon.

- How will the universe be defined? What area will be covered, and which types of programs will be included?

First, the geographic area to be covered needs to be selected. The region can be a city, county, state, or any other jurisdiction. The area should be large enough for the information produced by the system to be meaningful, and small enough for managing the potential program sites.

Second, planners must decide which types of service programs will collect data. For example, some systems focus exclusively on shelter providers; others include homeless service programs as well; and others also incorporate street outreach and homeless prevention services. Some systems encompass emergency service providers that do not exclusively serve homeless clients as well.

- Will program sites participate on a voluntary or mandatory basis? Government-run systems (see next page) usually mandate participation for all publicly-funded programs in the universe, while involvement in independently-run systems is often voluntary.
- Will there be any incentives or resources available to assist programs with participation?

Potential resources to help program sites join the system could include: funding to cover hardware, software, or data entry costs; training and technical assistance; and/or pre-programmed funder reports. Incentives to encourage front-line staff participation could include pre-formatted benefit applications and program operational reports.

- How will the system be administered and data aggregated? Will there be a central server function? What type of entity will maintain this responsibility?

Most systems involve electronic transmittal of data to a central server where the information is aggregated and the system is administered. Some projects entail direct, real-time data entry. In other systems, paper or web-based forms are submitted regularly to a data repository locus.

This function is often held by a governmental department; however there are benefits to a neutral third party, such as a university, administering the system and maintaining the data. When participation is tied to government funding, program sites may be less invested in data quality, and more concerned about privacy protections. Potential applications of the data may be broader if research and advocacy are goals of the project. An independent party may also be better able to bridge the diverse interests of the various stakeholders.

- What type of entity will set policies and procedures for the system? Will there be a board or steering or oversight committee that represents the interests of all stakeholder groups? How will that group be established and selected?
- Will all sites use the same software application? What common data elements will be collected? At what intervals will data be gathered?

In systems with electronic data transmittal to a central server, program sites usually use a common software program. However, if the capacity for electronic linkage exists, there is no reason that all programs need to use the same data collection mechanisms.

Nonetheless, it is critical that there be agreement around collection of common data elements. In order for data to be meaningful across program sites, they must be consistently defined, and some basic information must be gathered at each site. It is also important that sites agree to collect data at common intervals, such as program intake, exit, and/or six- or twelve-month follow up.

- Will there be a community-wide centralized intake process? Some communities utilize tracking systems to develop a coordinated and standardized intake, assessment, and referral process. If that type of programming is a goal, mechanisms for data sharing need to be developed.
- Will database linkages be possible? If coordinated case management across programs is a goal, programs will need to utilize the same software program
- If software selection is involved, what criteria will be used for making these decisions? After clear goals have been selected for the system, software applications can be chosen by their ability to meet these needs. The following lists presents some factors to consider in selecting software.

Sample Homeless Management Information System Selection

Criteria⁵:

Scope of demographic data gathering.

Extent of client tracking and service planning mechanisms.

Reliability of confidentiality screening mechanism.

Information security features, including: audit trail, selectivity for electronic sharing of portions of records or flexibility in data sharing options, and user rights.

Nature of system interface with providers.

Range of agency involvement possible.

Reporting capabilities.

Shelter bed and supportive service availability tracking.

Donor and/or fund tracking.

Mechanisms for system-wide data aggregation

Flexibility and options for customization.

Growth options.

Required hardware, software, and technology to utilize the system

Availability of training and technical support.

Cost effectiveness.

⁵ Lake County Planning and Development (1998). Enhancing Service Provision to the Homeless: The Role of Information Management Systems. Conference Notebook, May 28-29, 1998. Waukegan, IL: Author.

Rights and Privacy Protections for Consumers:

- Involving persons who have experienced homelessness in the development of privacy protection policies, interview protocols, and case manager training can be beneficial to the overall system. Consumers offer an insider perspective to the ways interview questions can be asked, how information can be misused, the meaning of responses, and the interpretation of analytical findings.⁶
- Protect the privacy of personal information. Minimize the risk of overexposure of client-level data.
 - Establish information security procedures for program sites and the central server or data repository. Remove identifying information from data prior to transmittal to the central server. See Appendix C for a sample client code procedure.
 - Develop data sharing informed consent procedures at the client level for data shared between programs coordinating case management. Establish agreements about exactly what information is electronically transmitted to the central office for programs that function as part of larger collaborative groups. See Appendix D for sample client consent and agency confidentiality forms.
 - Affirm client rights to decline to participate in the data system, or to not respond to any question, unless required by programs for receipt of services.
 - Review federal and local laws governing privacy protection. Federal laws in this area are constantly evolving. The law most often referred to is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996.⁷

Sample Security Procedures:

Strip client information of identifying characteristics prior to transmittal to the central server.

Create a client code that is less identifiable than name and social security number, but allows for an unduplicated count of de-identified consumers across programs.

Require information security protocols, including informed consent forms, at each site.

Do not release client information to another agency without written consent.

Employ software that provides an audit trail, selectivity for electronic sharing of portions of records or flexibility in data sharing options, and user rights.

⁶ Friedman, D.H., and Hayes, M. (1999). Using Homeless Services Data to Document Impacts of Welfare Reform. Paper prepared for the Homeless Services Data Users Meeting, March 18-19, 1999. Washington, D.C.: Author.

⁷ For further information on privacy protection laws, see Freeman, P., and Robbins, A. (1998). The Health Privacy Debate: Can We Achieve Comprehension Before Closure? Boston: University of Massachusetts Boston, McCormack Institute of Public Affairs, Center for Social Policy.

Assessment of Existing Information Management Capabilities and Systems:

Current capacities should be assessed at both program and systems levels.

➤ Program level assessment –

- Review the types of information gathering forms and processes, databases, and reporting tools currently in place.
- Evaluate the resources available, including hardware, software, and networking capacities.
- Appraise cultural readiness for implementation, including the level of front-line staff comfort with technology and case management, as well as enthusiasm and commitment to the project at the ground level and among upper management. It is important to remember that direct service staff are often drawn to this work in order to help people. Collecting data often seems trivial in this setting. Strategies must be devised to show the relevance of these data to their work and their clients.
- Assess the mechanisms for ensuring client confidentiality.

Sample Site Readiness and Capacity Assessment Factors:⁸

Number of staff.

Size of program.

Amount of time available for case management.

Staff comfort and experience requesting clients' personal information.

Staff computer literacy.

Level of enthusiasm of agency leaders.

Availability and level of enthusiasm of any in-house MIS staff.

Level of access to computer hardware and in-house technical assistance.

Extent to which networking between programs or agencies required.

⁸ ANCHoR Team (1999).

➤ System administrator level assessment –

- Evaluate the resources available, including hardware, software, and networking capacities. If a central server model is selected, processing speed and data connection bandwidth are important factors.
- Review availability of staff for technical assistance, training, and data analysis.
- Appraise capacity to grow and adapt to constantly changing technology and needs.

Costs and Potential Funding Sources:

Implementation costs include those affecting individual programs and agencies, as well as for the system overall.

- Program level costs (these vary significantly by program size) –
 - Hardware;
 - Software; and
 - Personnel time for planning, oversight, training, case management, and data entry.
- Systems level costs –
 - Hardware;
 - Software;
 - Systems administration;
 - Technical assistance and site staff training;
 - If provided, stipends to programs to offset participation costs;
 - Programming; and
 - Data analysis.

It should be noted that hardware and software are primarily one-time start-up expenses, while staffing needs are ongoing. Periodic upgrades are, however, required for computer systems. System costs are invariably tied to the extensiveness and structure of the system. During the planning process, it may be helpful to speak with other communities that have implemented similar systems to obtain some idea of actual costs. For example, a centralized intake project with coordinated case management at twenty sites would be more costly than a design in which five sites utilized their own management information systems to submit paper forms on a quarterly basis.

Avenues for Ensuring Data Accuracy:

- Employ technologies and data-entry mechanisms that are user friendly. See Appendix E for a sample data entry form. For convenience, paper forms can be completed during meetings with clients, and data can be entered in the system at a later time.
- Conduct client interviews in a respectful, sensitive, and confidential manner. See Appendix F for a sample system explanation designed for consumers.
- Offer immediate direct benefits to consumers who agree to have their data entered into the system to enhance functionality, applicability, and support for the project, as well as improve data accuracy.
- Provide technical assistance to program staff.
- Design the system so that clients, case managers, program managers, and executive directors have a stake in the data outputs.
- Build queries into the software that enable service program staff to “clean” the data, i.e. detect and correct data-entry errors and omissions.

Stakeholder investment is critical to data accuracy. Direct benefits for consumers can help to control data quality. For example, the Massachusetts system includes benefit eligibility software. Program consumers who agree to have their data entered into the system can receive automated individualized reports listing their eligibility for various state and federal benefit programs. This type of direct benefit serves as an incentive for providing accurate data.

Consumer involvement in the development of interview protocols and privacy protections can also help to ensure that information provided to case managers is reliable. Agency operations, funder, and board reports can serve as incentives for program staff to “clean” data.

Data Outputs:

- Develop principles and procedures for access to data for stakeholders and the general public. See Appendix G for a chart describing the access procedure.

Sample Access to Data Principles:

Only de-identified aggregate data will be released.

Program specific information will be released only with written consent of the agency executive director.

Released data must represent at least 60% coverage (see below).

Data will be available to stakeholders and the general public.

Aggregate data will be available in the form of a report or as a raw dataset.

Parameters (i.e. what the data does and does not represent) will be presented with each dataset.

- Obtain agreements on the level of coverage that constitutes a threshold for data release.

Develop methodologies for defining a representative sample, by types of program (i.e., family emergency shelter, individual emergency shelter, supportive service programs, transitional housing programs, etc.). As lengths of service may vary considerably by type of program, methodologies must be adjusted accordingly. For instance, turnover rates in individual shelters may be more than twice that of family programs.

As an example, the annual turnover rate for Philadelphia shelters has been calculated at 6.2;⁹ that is, over the course of one year more than six different individuals occupied one shelter “slot”. A methodology for individual emergency shelter data in Philadelphia could involve defining a representative sample as being obtained when the number of records in the database is more than six times the shelter’s point-in-time capacity.

- Create vehicles for releasing the data. These may include web sites, reports, public presentations, etc.

⁹ Culhane, D., DeJowski, E.F., Ibenez, J., Needham, E., Macchia, I. (1994). Public shelter admission rates in Philadelphia and New York City: The implications of turnover for sheltered population counts. Housing Policy Debate, 5, 107-151.

IV. MODELS FOR SYSTEM DESIGN

The following section describes homeless service tracking systems in four communities. These programs are presented as potential structural models for tracking system design. Contacts for each program are provided in the Resources section (V).

Massachusetts Homeless Services Tracking System:¹⁰

The Automated National Client-Specific Homeless-Services Recording System (ANCHoR) is a networked computerized record-keeping system that allows homeless service providers across Massachusetts to collect uniform client information over time. The project's scope is vast; it currently includes more than 100 programs statewide and plans to expand to some 200 programs over the next few years. Massachusetts has enhanced this system through development of the Massachusetts Online Customized Homeless-Services Application (MOCHA), as well as a linkage with benefit eligibility software. The Massachusetts approach is unique due to the level of collaboration between diverse, grassroots service-provider groups, people who have themselves experienced homelessness, and researchers.

Benefits

The Massachusetts system is designed to balance the interests and needs of three levels of stakeholders: homeless men, women, and children; service providers; and policy makers and advocates.

Homeless program consumers who agree to have their information entered into ANCHoR immediately receive a print-out listing their eligibility for various state and federal benefit programs.

Homeless service programs are assisted in managing operational information through access to a wide array of agency, program, and client level reports.

Policy makers benefit through access to system-wide data for identifying service gaps, targeting resources, and making informed planning decisions at city, regional, and state levels.

¹⁰ For further information on the Massachusetts and Franklin County systems, see the United States General Accounting Office (1999). Homelessness: State and Local Efforts to Integrate and Evaluate Homeless Assistance Programs. GAO/RCD-99-178, June 29, 1999.

Structure

The *universe* includes outreach, emergency-shelter, transitional-housing, supportive-service, and permanent supportive-housing programs throughout the entire state.

Participation is voluntary. Programs are provided with software, receive stipends to offset the costs of hardware and data entry, and benefit from ongoing technical assistance training and support.

The system is *administered* by the Center for Social Policy of the McCormack Institute, a public policy research institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston, which houses the central server. The project was developed collaboratively by community leaders serving the homeless and is overseen by a Steering Committee that includes service providers, people who have experienced homelessness, government officials, and advocates.

Operations: Staff at program sites conduct client assessment interviews, and enter standardized information into the ANCHoR software. Data are then stripped of all identifying information except for a unique client code, and sent electronically to the central server aggregate database. The program can also be utilized for ongoing case management, including referral and follow-up. With written permission from individual clients, collaborative program sites can share client-specific data for ongoing coordinated case management. See Appendix H for a visual description of the system's operation.

Funding is primarily provided through contracts with the state and the city of Boston.

Highlight: Consumer Involvement

Massachusetts' approach has been enhanced by involvement of consumer stakeholders in the implementation process. At the early stages of development, consumers participated in the process of creating privacy protection and informed consent procedures. As programs began using the system, consumers participated in the design and delivery of training workshops for case managers. These workshops focus on sensitivity training and privacy protections, and are held throughout the year. Several consumer representatives also hold official seats on the Steering Committee. Two consumers represent the project nationally, through the Homeless Services Data Users Group convened by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In this role, they help other systems devise means to utilize consumers to enhance data collection and analysis.

Highlight: Consumer Benefits

Another unique feature of the Massachusetts system involves the linkage with MicroMax benefit eligibility software. As a result of this connection, after client data are entered into the system, program consumers receive a report detailing their eligibility for various state and federal benefit programs. Through this linkage, access to all of the appropriate benefits is ensured. Case Managers can use the system to forecast the effects of changes such as increased income on clients' circumstances. The MicroMax program also ensures that client eligibility is maximized, by calculating the most effective combination of benefits for each individual. Future plans call for the development of preformatted housing and benefit applications.

This element of the system not only benefits these homeless clients, but also increases the validity and comprehensiveness of the data. Families and individuals who derive direct benefits from participation in the system are more likely to share truthful information. In addition, aggregate data derived from the MicroMax linkage provides information on the use of public resources by homeless clients.

Franklin County Community Shelter Board:

Through a management information system, the Franklin County, Ohio Community Shelter Board (CSB) collects uniform data from the entire emergency shelter system. The project collects client-specific and county-wide data from all county shelters. The system provides program-specific and system-wide information on bed use trends, consumer demographics, and patterns of shelter use. Through the system, CSB has developed a uniform historical database that includes all clients served in this central Ohio county since 1991. Information learned from these data has been utilized to identify gaps in service and develop new programming targeted to meet these needs.

Structure

The *universe* includes all emergency shelter programs in the county.

Participation is mandatory. As part of a larger effort to coordinate emergency shelter resources throughout the county, programs that receive CSB funding are required to collect certain data elements.

The system is *administered* by CSB, a nonprofit agency that allocates, coordinates, and administers most of the funding for the county's emergency shelters. CSB serves as an intermediary between homeless service providers and funding sources, which include the city of Columbus, the county, state, and HUD.

Operations: Each program uses a standardized intake form which requests basic demographics, income and benefits information, and reasons for homelessness. These data are entered into the centrally managed system. Each shelter client is assigned a unique identifying number so that consumers can be tracked over time as they move through the system. The system provides an unduplicated count, as well as information on movement between programs.

Funding is provided by CSB.

Benefits

The project is designed to meet the planning and management needs of both individual agencies and the system overall.

Homeless-service programs receive data for program management, planning, and reports. The system also provides much of the data required to respond to outcome measurement standards employed by the Ohio Department of Development.

Policy makers utilize information generated through the system for planning, policy analysis, evaluation, and needs assessment.

Highlight: Community Planning

Historical data were used by the Scioto Peninsula Relocation Task Force to study the characteristics of homeless residents in an area of Columbus that contains half of the city's single men's shelter beds. Analysis of patterns of stay in the men's shelter system delineated two distinct categories of homeless individuals. The study found that 15% of the city's homeless men utilized 56% of the system's resources, while the remaining 85% stayed in the system for short transitional periods. The long-term shelter users often required additional services, including mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Identification of the specific characteristics and needs of chronically homeless men enabled community members to devise a new strategy, entitled Rebuilding Lives. As a result of the study, the Task Force recommended that the city and county develop service-enriched supportive housing for long-term users of the system, thus freeing shelter resources for those requiring short-term support.

Mid America Assistance Coalition MAACLink:

Mid-America Assistance Coalition's MAACLink is a shared client tracking database in the Kansas City (Missouri and Kansas) metropolitan area. MAACLink is computer-based network information system through which emergency assistance is documented, clients are tracked, funds are managed, and reporting is accomplished without duplication of effort. There are currently 104 agencies located in the metropolitan Kansas City area that directly input information on clients into the database. The computer network is capable of eventually supporting all of the emergency assistance providers in the area.

Benefits

The project is designed to meet the planning and management needs of both individual agencies and the system overall.

Homeless-service programs benefit through sharing information with other agencies to assure appropriate referrals and minimize duplicative services. Service providers can access an expansive set of reports, and utilize the system for fund and resource tracking.

Policy makers receive an annual statistical report compiled from the database that describes community needs and service usage.

Structure

The *universe* includes emergency-assistance providers – homeless shelters and hot line, food pantries, housing and fuel assistance providers, etc. – in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Participation is voluntary. Programs are required to pay for information and services on a monthly basis. MAAC provides on-site training and help-desk support for participating agencies, and supports the system by maintaining equipment, programming, software, and security. MAACLink staff also work to secure donated equipment for outlying agencies.

The system is *administered* by MAAC, a non-profit corporation that coordinates the work of emergency assistance organizations in the five-county Kansas City metropolitan area.

Operations: The project operates a remote access server. Agencies that participate in the system enter and access the data online. Via the internet, agency staff are able to review the service histories of their clients at other agencies. In turn, staff can enter client information, services provided, program enrollments, and shelter stays. Information is accessible in summarized form from reports that are built into the system.

Funding is provided by MAAC and program fees.

Highlight: Privacy Protection Policies

Agency partners are required to strictly adhere to confidentiality guidelines, and to obtain and maintain a signed release of information form from each individual entered into the system. Client and service data is released to MAACLink by the client.

Each agency user must sign a confidentiality agreement. Security procedures require a username and password for authorized agency staff. Use of unaggregated client personal information for any purpose other than determining eligibility for services is prohibited.

Spokane Homeless Services Automation Project:

The Spokane project consists of a community-wide intake and assessment system, and web site. Using database and internet technologies, the system provides an unduplicated count of homeless services users, an assessment of their needs, and data on multiple site users. The web site offers up-to-date information about the intake system as well as facts about specific homeless services, including daily shelter vacancies. Through the centralized intake process, Spokane's system works to improve the quality of care throughout the community, as well as provide accurate and timely information on the homeless. To maintain relevancy and endorsement, system forms are redesigned annually. In 1997, forms were adapted to document impacts of welfare reform.

Benefits

The project is designed to meet the needs of consumers, service providers, government officials, and the general public.

Homeless program consumers benefit from the "one-stop shopping" model, reducing the time and energy required to access services.

Homeless-service programs utilize assessment and outcome information to establish programming priorities, meet reporting requirements, and identify successful intervention strategies.

Policy makers receive ongoing systemic data regarding the number of homeless, how they use local resources, and gaps in services.

Community members benefit through access to information regarding local homeless issues and resources via the web site.

Structure

The *universe* includes programs providing homeless services in the city of Spokane.

Participation is voluntary. Providers must be willing to increase or change documentation processes and allocate staff time to the project. The program uses Microsoft Access; providers are given a free copy to operate on site, but may choose to submit paper forms. Participants receive ongoing training and support from a full-time project staff person at the city. Project participation has increased from three to seventeen partners.

The system is *administered* by the City of Spokane Human Services Department. The city allocates and administers funds to homeless and emergency service providers.

Operations: Consumers seeking services at participating organizations complete intake and log forms. Persons participating in case management and/or shelter services also fill out a detailed assessment at intake and program exit. Follow-up tracking is conducted quarterly for one year after program discharge. Data are then entered into the centralized system, and consumers using more than one service are identified. Services and progress are tracked over time as individuals and families move through the system.

Funding is provided by the city.

Highlight: Street Outreach

Through multi-agency outreach teams, the project also attempts to include homeless people who do not routinely connect with service programs. This outreach process has dramatically increased contact with street homeless dwellers. Log forms are completed during these contacts, thus ensuring that information on individuals who live on the streets is recorded in the system.

V. RESOURCES

The following pages list contacts that can provide additional detail on particular tracking systems, as well as the overall implementation process.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

James Hoben/ Michael Roanhouse
451 7th St., SW, Room 8140/ 7258
Washington, DC 20410
202-708-0574/ 1506
E-mail: james_e_hoben@hud.gov
michael_roanhouse@hud.gov

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Jeff Koshel/ Walter Leginski
200 Independence Ave., SW, Room 447D
Washington, DC 20201
202-690-8252/ 260-0391
E-mail: wleginsk@osape.dhhs.gov
jkoshel@osape.dhhs.gov

Massachusetts Homeless Services Tracking System

Donna Haig Friedman/ John McGah
McCormack Institute, University of Massachusetts Boston
100 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, Ma 02125
617-287-5550
E-mail: donna.friedman@umb.edu
john.mcguh@umb.edu

Franklin County Community Shelter Board

Matthew White
Community Shelter Board
67 Jefferson Ave.
Columbus, OH 43215
614-221-9195
E-mail: NH4967@handsnet.org

Mid America Assistance Coalition MAACLink (<http://www.maaclink.org>)

Christopher Bohling
Mid America Assistance Coalition
1 West Armour Blvd., Suite 20
Kansas City, MO 64111
816-561-2727
E-mail: maaclink@maaclink.org

Spokane Homeless Services Automation Project

<http://www.spokanecommunity.org/homeless/>

June Shapiro

City of Spokane Human Services

808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.

Spokane, WA 99201

509-625-6130

E-mail: jshapiro@spokanecity.org

University of Pennsylvania

Dennis Culhane/ Stephen Metraux

Center for Mental Health Policy and Services Research

3600 Market St., Suite 716/ 730

Philadelphia, PA 19104

215-349-8705/ 8487

E-mail: dennis@cmhpsr.upenn.edu

metraux@cmhpsr.upenn.edu

Policy Research Associates

Susan Cole

Nation Resource Center on Homelessness and Mental Illness

262 Delaware Ave.

Delmar, NY 12054

518-439-7415 ext. 260

E-mail: scole@prainc.com

Lake County Department of Planning and Development

18 North County Street- 6th Floor

Waukegan, Illinois 60085

847-360-6350

E-mail: planning@co.lake.il.us

Convened May 1999 conference on homeless tracking systems.

National Alliance to End Homelessness

Nan Roman/ Steve Berg

1518 K St., NW, Suite 206

Washington, DC 20005

202-638-1526

E-mail: nroman@naeh.org

National Coalition for the Homeless

Mary Ann Gleason

1012 14th St., NW

Washington, DC 20005

202-737-6444

Appendices

- A. Sample of advocacy tool developed from tracking system data.
- B. Sample of data elements that can be collected through tracking system.
- C. Sample client code procedure.
- D. 1) Sample agency agreement, including confidentiality form.
2) Sample textual and pictorial consent form.
- E. Sample data entry form.
- F. Sample client explanation sheet.
- G. Sample access to data flowchart.
- H. Sample operational flowchart.



Spokane Homeless Coalition



Human Services Department,
City of Spokane

Fact Sheet on Homeless Living in the City of Spokane

Collected by Homeless Providers within the Spokane Homeless Coalition and Prepared by the Human Services Department, City of Spokane

Aug 4th, 1999

Information was gathered on homeless persons using one of the many services provided by the City of Spokane's homeless providers between April 1st, 1999 to June 30th, 1999. This count is an unduplicated count.

- **1,970 individuals** living within **1,152 households** were homeless during this timeframe.
- **1,074 adults (55% of total persons), 162 youth living independently (8% of total persons), and 734 children (37% of total persons)** were counted.
- **1,168 homeless persons (59%)** were living in households that included children.
- **802 homeless persons (41%)** were living in single adult households.
- Within the **376 households** that included children (**33% of total households**),
 - **39 households (10%)** were two parent households,
 - **311 households (83%)** were single female head of household, and
 - **26 households (7%)** were single male heads of household.
- Within the **776 households** that did not include children (**67% of total households**),
 - **26 households (3%)** included 2 or more adults living together,
 - **443 households (57%)** were single males, and
 - **307 households (40%)** were single females.
- **287 adults (23% of adults & youth living independently)** represented ethnic/racial minorities. Most frequent was Native American.
- **232 children (32% of children)** were minorities. Most frequent group was Native American.
- **562 homeless adults (46% of adults & youth living independently)** reported having a specific disability.
- The most frequent reasons given for being homeless included **Alcohol/Drug Abuse (35%), Domestic Violence (30%), Mental Health Issues (25%)** and **Relocation/Evictions (21%)**.
- **493 homeless households (43%)** were in a shelter, **272 (24%)** were living in the rough, and **135 (12%)** were doubled up.
- **599 households (52%)** reported having no income, **184 (16%)** received TANF/AFDC, **125 households (11%)** were employed and **119 (10%)** received SSI, SSA or SSD.
- In **157 homeless households (14%)** there was one veteran.
- **666 households (58%)** live in the City of Spokane, **162 households (14%)** live in Spokane County, and **324 (28%)** came to Spokane from other counties or states.
- Average monthly income for a homeless household was **\$315**.

For more information on homelessness within the City of Spokane, contact the Human Services Department, City of Spokane at 509-625-6130. MASTER LIST OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE THROUGH THE SPOKANE HOMELESS SERVICES AUTOMATION PROJECT DATABASE:

<p>Contact Log (Brief encounters):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifiers Disabilities Medical Needs Needed Resources <p>Intake (All Seeking Services):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifiers Contact Dates Age Sex Organization Type of Service Funding Source Referral Source Income Source Amount of Income Welfare Impacts Home Location Reasons for Homelessness Current Living Situation Family Constellation Disabilities Ethnicity's Wait List Status in Organization <p>Assessment (Ongoing Relationship):</p> <p>Safe Housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of Housing Access to telephone Access to transportation Housing Costs Heat, Water, Sleeping Space, Security, Shut-offs. <p>Employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment Status Hours working Steady and Reliable Meets financial needs Health Insurance 	<p>Job Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has specific job skills Job goals Application skills and resources <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education History Financial Aid Resources Current GPA Current Attendance <p>Income Money Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate income Monthly budget Budgeting Skills Medical bills Other bills Collection Concerns <p>Nutrition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Stamps Enough Food Use of food banks Specialized Diets Prenatal Care <p>Physical/Mental Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health Coverage Doctor Dentist Medical Supplies Chronic Health Problem Chronic Mental Health Problem Alcohol/Drug Use concerns Sexual abuse history Physical abuse History Current treatment status with regard to each of the health concerns. Use of Hospital ER Immunizations, TB, Physicals <p>Family Relations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stable membership Friends, activities Formal support systems Unhappy relationships Conflict management Domestic Violence Legal issues 	<p><i>If Parenting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School age children in school School stability Attendance Discipline problems School discussions School supplies School/community activities Conference participation Volunteer activities in the school Special Needs children Safe access to school Physical and mental health concerns and treatment status Doctors, dentist Health coverage Immunizations, physicals and weight Permanent guardian Access to child care Quality of child care Early childhood education Family rules Safe play space Adult interactions with children (reading, library, activities, sports) Friendships Family conflict Childhood smoking, chemical abuse, law issues 	<p>Discharge (Ongoing Relationship):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifiers Contact Dates Sources of Income Amount of Income Employment Status Housing Status <p>Need, participation and completion status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Job Search Job Skills Other like skills such as budget <p>Need, participation and completion status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical care Dental care Mental Health Alcohol/Drug Tx Domestic Violence <p>Other Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linked with resources At least 1 adult employed All children with permanent guardian Level of Consumer Progress Graduated from the Program Housing destination Post ratings on 17 selected questions from the Assessment <p>Follow-up (Ongoing relationship):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifiers Housing Status Income Source and amount Rental or utilities assistance Post ratings on 12 selected questions from assessment
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The Massachusetts Homeless Services Tracking System

Client Code

To: Site Contacts
From: Project Staff
Re: *The Client Code is finalized and ready for implementation!*

As you are aware, the ANCHoR System allows you to collect comprehensive information on a client that you serve. Identifying information such as name, social security number, children's names, emergency contacts, street address and names that you enter into your ANCHoR computer will be "stripped" from what is sent to the central database at UMass. Instead a client code will be created that is much less identifiable but still allows the system to get non-duplicated counts of clients across sites. This code has been developed with the approval of the ANCHoR Oversight Committee.

Although keeping the code formula a secret is not required to assure client protection, limiting access to the formula only increases client protection. Please share the code with only those people at your site or agency that are dealing with client information. The following questions/answers attempt to explain the code:

How long is the client code?

-10 characters (using all capital letters and numbers). See one exception at the end of page two.

Where on the ANCHoR computer screen is the client code entered?

-In the "Alias" field, in the BID screen.

How is the client code created?

-First initial of client's last name, third initial of client's last name, six-digit date of birth, client's gender, and first initial of mother's last name before she was married (i.e., maiden name initial)

Example:	Client's name:	William Simpson
	Client's Date of Birth:	September 5, 1948
	Client's gender:	M
	Mother's name before she was married:	Kelley
Client Code:	SM090548MK	

What if some of the information is missing?

-The code should always be 10 digits. If a piece of code that should be a letter (i.e., first and third initial of last name, gender, or first initial of mother's maiden name) is missing, put the number "8".

So, continuing with the previous example, if the mother's last name before she was married was unknown the code should read: **SM090548M8**

If the client's last name was also unknown, the client code should read: **88090548M8**

If part of the code that should be a *number* (i.e., any part of the date of birth) is missing, put the letter "X".

So, using the original client code, if the client's *year* of birth was unknown, the client code would read:
SM0905XXMK

Similarly, if the entire date of birth was unknown, the client code would read: **SMXXXXXXMK**

What if a client is in danger if his/her whereabouts are known and even sharing any initials, date of birth, and/or mother's initials is unacceptable?

If a female client decides it is too dangerous (perhaps because of domestic violence) to share even the code information and is female, she would be listed as: **JANEDOE1**

The next woman at your shelter in a similar situation would be listed as: **JANEDOE2**

If the client is male, he is listed as: **JOHNDOE1**

The next male clients in the same situation would be **JOHNDOE2, JOHNDOE3**, etc.

What if I know for a fact that there is another person in the system that has the same client code?

-This is unlikely but technically possible. For example, same sex twins being served in the system might have the same client code. If this is the case, place an asterisk (*) at the end of each client code. For example, each client would have the following client code.

SM090548MK*

Note that in this exception the code is actually 11 characters long.

Using the "Notes About The Client" section at the end of the BID screen:

-Please use the Notes About The Client section in the BID screen to capture (1) the client's mother's full last name (if the client shares it). This will provide us with an added check to assure the accuracy of the code. The client's initials, D.O.B, and gender can be cross-checked with the BID screen. There is no set field in ANCHoR to cross mother's maiden name, so recording it in "Notes" is helpful.

Also, any other names the client may go by can be recorded in Note About the Client.

Thanks! Please call John McGah at (617) 287-5532 should you have any questions/comments.

MID AMERICA ASSISTANCE COALITION

AGENCY PARTNER AGREEMENT

Terms and Conditions

The purpose of this document is to set out the terms and limits under which the Mid America Assistance Coalition (MAAC) will operate Project Link. Project Link is MAAC's computer-based network information system through which emergency assistance is documented, clients are tracked, funds are managed, and reporting is accomplished accurately and without duplication of effort. The computer network, housed at the MAAC office, is an IBM-compatible Novell Network eventually capable of supporting all the emergency assistance providers in the metro area.

Agreement with these terms must be indicated by the signature of the Executive Director of the partner Agency before an account for that agency can be established on the Project Link network. (See page 3 of this agreement.)

System (MAAC) Responsibilities

MAAC agrees to furnish participating agencies with data pertaining to emergency assistance service provided and recipients. Conditions under which the interchange information is facilitated between MAAC, partner agencies, and other computerized systems will also be provided by MAAC.

Training: MAAC will provide four (4) hours on-site training to participating agencies. The training will include input training and training on how to interpret information obtained from the system. Partner agencies will be responsible for making their personnel available for training *before* being permitted to participate in the system.

Equipment: MAAC will maintain the file-server, the network software and necessary support for the system. To do this, MAAC agrees to the following:

1. Maintain adequate equipment at MAAC to support the database.
2. Provide the programming and on-going systems support, including a service contract on the hardware/network at MAAC.
3. Purchase necessary software for the operation of the network.
4. Provide security of the data in the system, including back up.
5. Provide information to users, including periodic reports to agencies on their clients/assistance.
6. Set standards for equipment at outlying sites.
7. Work to secure donations of suitable equipment for outlying agencies.

User (Partner Agency) Responsibilities

Agency Partners agree to do the following:

1. Acquire and maintain computers, software, and modems according to MAAC standards
2. Provide for telephone line usage between the agency and MAAC.
3. Commit its personnel to training and assure MAAC that untrained and/or unauthorized personnel do not use the computers.
4. Follow the validation requirements for emergency assistance.
5. Strictly adhere to the guidelines regarding confidentiality. (Exhibit A)
6. Assure the accuracy of information entered into the system. Any updates in information, error, or inaccuracy that comes to the attention of the User Agency will be corrected by the User Agency or called into MAAC for correction.
7. Obtain a signed Release of Information Form (Exhibit B) from each individual entered into the computer system and maintain this form on file at the agency.

Errors, negligence, or misconduct by an agency

If there is error, negligence, or misconduct by an agency, that agency will indemnify and hold harmless MAAC, its agents, servants and employees from any and all claims, demands, actions, suits, judgements, and liability arising out of or in connection with this Agreement or the use of data obtained under the terms of this Agreement.

Charges

User agrees to pay for information and services on a monthly basis. The amount of the charges is set out in Exhibit C, which is attached hereto and made a part hereof and is computed based upon the following:

- a. Initial hook up charge
- b. Monthly subscription charge
- c. Training
- d. Standard Statistical Report charge
- e. Special report charge

The charges will be revised in the first quarter of each year with an estimate of costs for the calendar year and forwarded to the User Agency.

All payments must be received by MAAC within fifteen (15) days of the date of the monthly billing.

ENFORCEMENT OF CONFEDENTIALITY

MAAC ha the absolute right to terminate without notice services of Project Link for the purpose of investigation of any suspicion of breached confidentiality. Thereafter, MAAC may terminate this agreement if MAAC, in its sole discretion, determines that there has been a breach of confidentiality.

Signatures of Partner Agency and MAAC Executive Directors

The Executive Director (or equivalent) of the Agency Partner indicates agreement with the terms stated in pages one (1) through three (3) of the Partner Agency Agreement by signing below. This page will then be forwarded to MAAC. Both of these steps are prerequisites to the establishment of a User account on the Project Link network. Once received, the Executive Director of MAAC will sign this page and a copy will be sent back to the Agency Partner.

Executive Director
User Agency

Executive Director
MAAC

Agency Name

Agency Address

Effective Date and Term

This agreement will become effective on the _____ day of _____ 19____,
And continue in effect for one year. Thereafter, this agreement will be automatically renewed on
each subsequent anniversary date, unless terminated immediately for cause by either party with
30 days written notice.

Date of agreement

EXHIBIT "A"

CONFIDENTIALITY GUIDELINES

The User Agency agrees to abide by all present and future federal and state laws and regulation and with all MAAC procedures and policies relating to the collection, storage, retrieval, and dissemination of Project Link information.

The User Agency agrees to limit access to information furnished by the Project Link network to its own employees specifically for the purpose of verifying eligibility for service or entering into the system records of service provided.

User Agencies agree to use due diligence and care in assigning staff to use the Project Link system. All such employees will be required to sign a statement of confidentiality (Exhibit A-1). Each statement of confidentiality will be forwarded to MAAC and maintained on the file. The name of the person who is entering information is a part of the computer record. MAAC personnel will verify that the person is authorized to enter data into the system.

The User Agency further agrees to furnish to MAAC the names of all staff members who have access to the Project Link information and certify that such staff are competent to have access to this information according to the provisions of this agreement. MAAC may, at its option, disapprove access of the system to any individual, for any reason or for no reason at all.

The User Agency shall be responsible for the maintenance, accuracy, and security of all its emergency assistance records and terminal sites and for the training of agency personnel regarding confidentiality.

The User Agency Executive Director must accept responsibility for the validity of all records entered by their agency. The User Agency Executive Director may designate an immediate subordinate staff member with supervisory responsibilities for verifying the accuracy of information. The User Agency will provide MAAC with the name(s) and title(s) of the staff member(s) authorized to supervise data entry personnel.

MAAC reserves the right to immediately suspend furnishing information covered by terms of this agreement to User Agency when any terms of this agreement are violated or are suspected to be violated. MAAC shall resume furnishing such information upon receipt of satisfactory assurances that such violations did not occur or that such violations did not occur or that such violations have been fully corrected or eliminated.

MID AMERICA ASSISTANCE COALITION

Statement of Confidentiality
And
Request for MAACLink User Account

Please complete the following:

Employee Name: _____

Agency Name: _____ Agency Code (Example: JKDB 00): _____

IMPORTANT--PLEASE NOTE

This form must be completed by new users and existing users on an annual basis.

New users must fill out this form in its entirety.

Existing users must only fill out the above portion and the initial part of this form.

If you have any questions regarding the completion of this request, please contact Mid America Assistance Coalition at (816) 561-2727. **After filling out this form, mail it to MAACLink;** Mid America Assistance Coalition; One West Armour Boulevard, Suite 20; Kansas City, MO 64111; or fax it to (816) 561-7277.

Statement of Confidentiality

I agree to maintain strict confidentiality of information obtained through the MAACLink computer network. This information will be used only for the legitimate client service and administration of the above named agency. Any breach of confidentiality will result in immediate termination of participation in MAACLink.

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

Executive Director's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Request for Account

Each user requires a unique username and password (to be kept private). Use of another user's username (account) is grounds for immediate termination from MAACLink. When selecting your username, use letters from your name. For example, Jane Doe could be "JANED" or "JDOE". Select a password that others are not likely to guess.

Preferred Username (3 to 10 characters): _____

Password (5 to 10 characters): _____

Existing users: Please complete upper portion of the reverse side and this entire side.
New users: Please complete the form in its entirety.

User's Responsibility Statement

Your username and password give you access to the MAACLink network system. Initial each item below to indicate your understanding of the proper use of your username and password. Then, sign where indicated. Any failure to uphold the confidentiality standards set forth below is grounds for immediate termination from MAACLink.

Initial Only

- _____ I understand that my username and password are for my use only.
- _____ I understand that I must take all reasonable means to keep my password physically secure.
- _____ I understand that the only individuals who can view MAACLink information are authorized users and the clients to whom the information pertains.
- _____ I understand that I may only view, obtain, disclose, or use the database information that is necessary in performing my job.
- _____ I understand that these rules apply to all users of MAACLink, whatever their work role or position.
- _____ I understand that hard copies of MAACLink information must be kept in a secure file.
- _____ I understand that once hard copies of MAACLink information are no longer needed, they must be properly destroyed to maintain confidentiality.
- _____ I understand that if I notice or suspect a security breach, I must immediately notify Mid America Assistance Coalition at (816) 561-2727.

I understand and agree to the above statements.

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

After filling out this form, mail or fax it to:
MAACLink
Mid America Assistance Coalition
One West Armour Boulevard, Suite 20
Kansas City, MO 64111
FAX: (816) 561-7277

Massachusetts Homeless Services Tracking System Computerized Record Consent Form

In order to improve the records we use in _____ as a basis for providing shelter and
(shelter name)

other services, we have begun to use a computerized record keeping system called ANCHoR. We would like to put the information you tell to shelter staff in your intake interview and other meetings in this system. The benefits to you of participating in our record system include reports that you and your case manager can use to assist you to receive the services and resources you feel that you need. Before January 1998, we expect to add features to this system that will give you and your case manager reports that will be helpful when you apply for certain public assistance benefits. In addition, your participation can help us to improve the availability of important services for homeless people in Boston by keeping track of how many clients need shelter and other services, and which services they need. We will use the summary of the needs of our clients (without using anyone's name) to advocate for more adequate resources for homeless people.

We protect the information in the computerized system by limiting who can enter or read the information you share to those who work directly with you or have administrative responsibilities in the shelter. The paper forms and computer are stored in a location that is accessible only to those two persons. We ask each staff member who is authorized to read or enter information into the computer to make a commitment to maintain the security of the system. Any person who violates this agreement will receive the following penalty-

If you check the box below for consent, you can choose not to answer any question at any point. We will put no information in our system for any questions you may chose not to answer. At any time in the future, you may notify us that you choose to with draw your consent and we will delete your records from the computerized system. If you check the box indicating no consent to participate, we will keep your information on paper records in our office as we have always done in the past. The shelter will keep the information you share in the computerized or paper system as long as the shelter usually keeps client records, that is for _____ years. The shelter's funding sources often requires this length of time. Our staff will use the information in your computer record to plan and provide services for you. If you choose to exclude the information from this system, your choice will not limit or change the services we will offer.

I, _____ ☐ DO CONSENT ☐ DO NOT CONSENT
(signature or initials)

to have information I share in intake interviews and other meetings with shelter staff in the computerized record system.

(date)

I understand that I may ask to have this in formation removed from the computer record at any time in the future.

(signature)

(date)

A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM IS GIVEN TO THE CLIENT

I CERTIFY THAT I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM TO THIS PERSON AND INFORMED HIM/HER THAT: PARTICIPATION IN THE ANCHOR COMPUTERIZED RECORD SYSTEM IS VOLUNTARY; HIS/HER IDENTITY WILL NOT BE REVEALED TO UNAUTHORIZED PERSONS; AND HE/SHE CAN REFUSE TO ANSWER ANY QUESTION.

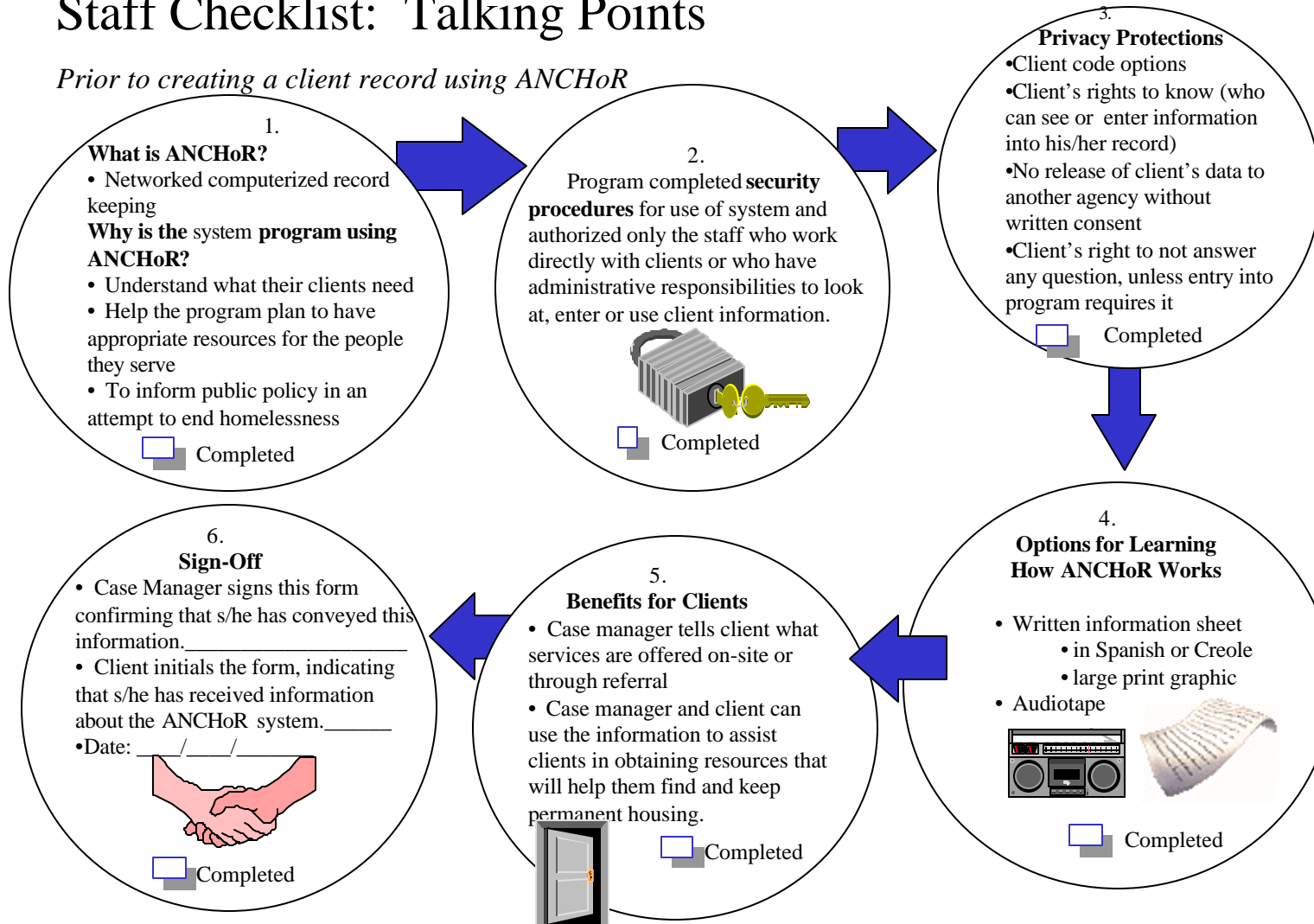
(signature of interviewer)

(date)

(printed name of interviewer)

Staff Checklist: Talking Points

Prior to creating a client record using ANCHoR



STAFF ONLY: Organization/Program:_____ **Agency Consumer ID#**_____
Grant Activities (Circle all that apply) Outreach/Contact, Case Management, Shelter, Transitional Housing, Permanent Housing, Mentoring/Follow-up, Parenting, Life Skills, Mental Health, Education, Childcare
Grant and Year: Circle all that apply) Supportive 96, Supportive 97, Supportive 98, SAFAH, Other:_____

SPOKANE CONSUMER INFORMATION

LAST INITIAL:_____, **FIRST INITIAL:**_____, **MIDDLE INITIAL:**_____. Staff Initials: _____
CURRENT DATE: _____. **BIRTHDAY:** _____-_____-_____, **SEX:** M____, F_____
ETHNICITY: (Circle One) White, Native American, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Biracial: _____ & _____, Other: _____.

STOP HERE IF YOU HAVE ALREADY COMPLETED AN INTAKE

Referred From (Circle one): Self, Interagency Outreach Team, Other Outreach, Shelter, Hospital, Clinic, Mental Health, Drug Treatment, Police, Other: _____

Veteran_____, **Dependent of Vet**_____.

Present Income (Circle All Types That Apply):

-TANF, GAU, SSI, -Food Stamps, -SSD, -SSA, -Private Retirement, -Unemployment, -State Industrial, -Part or Full Time Work, -Child Support, -Medicare, -Medicaid, -Veterans Benefits, -No Income, Other.

Total Present Monthly Income \$_____

Total Amount of Food Stamps: \$_____

I have been Sanctioned by Welfare: Yes, No, NA

Since homeless is childcare: Improved, Worse, Same, NA.

Since homeless is health care: Improved, Worse, Same.

Changes in Welfare Have Impacted Me: Yes, No.

If welfare impacted has: (Circle Option)

-Income changed: Improved, Gotten Worse, Same. -Housing: Improved, Gotten Worse, Same.

If doubled-up, the total in HH: *Increased, Decreased, Same*

When Last Housed, Did You Live In:(Circle One):

City of Spokane, Spokane County,

-Other WA County: _____.

-Other City/State: _____.

Reason Became Homeless (Circle all that apply):

Lack of Income, Evicted, Moved, Alcohol/Drug Abuse, Domestic Violence, Illness, Jail/Prison, Mental Health Problems, Other: _____

Have Been Homeless Before: Yes, No, If Yes

Indicate The Number Of Times: _____

Current Living Situation (Circle One):

-Shelter or Hotel

-Transitional Housing,

-Living in the rough (streets, camping, car, etc.)

-Jail/Prison

-Doubled up for less than 30 days & no separate sleeping space.

-Treatment Facility (type): _____

-Other: _____

-Housed but at serious risk for being homeless.

-Housed but at risk due to Domestic Violence.

COMPLETE FOR ALL FAMILY MEMBERS INCLUDING YOURSELF.

	Living With	Other Parent	Other Residence	SEX	Date of Birth	ETHNICITY	DISABILITY
Consumer	Y N	Y N	Y N				
Adult2-Relationship:	Y N	Y N	Y N				
Child 1	Y N	Y N	Y N				
Child 2	Y N	Y N	Y N				
Child 3	Y N	Y N	Y N				
Child 4	Y N	Y N	Y N				
Child 5	Y N	Y N	Y N				
Child 6	Y N	Y N	Y N				
Child 7	Y N	Y N	Y N				
Child 8	Y N	Y N	Y N				

COMPLETED BY STAFF: (UPDATE EACH TIME FORM IS COMPLETED!)

1. Was there space available today for the requested service(s)? Yes___, No___; **2.** Was the person sheltered today? Yes___, No___ **3.** Did this person receive/get an appointment for case management today? Yes___, No___ **4.** Was this person put on a pending/waiting list? Yes___, No___ **If Consumer is ineligible, give reason:**

Massachusetts Homeless Services Tracking System Client Information Sheet

This information sheet is available in several different languages and is also available in large print and on audiotape in several languages.

What is the System?

It is a networked, computerized record keeping system.

What is the purpose of the System?

The purpose of the ANCHoR System is to gather information on homelessness to help better serve the homeless community by learning what causes people to become homeless and what services they need to find permanent housing again.

Why is this type of information being collected?

To identify the various services needs of individual clients.

How can the System benefit clients?

A summary of the information gathered from clients will be used to advocate for more adequate resources for homeless people.

How can the System benefit you?

Through a series of questions, the agency can obtain information from you about what caused to become homeless and what you need to help you find permanent housing again. With this information, you and your case manager can work together to identify the services you need and work to obtain them.

What are your rights as a client?

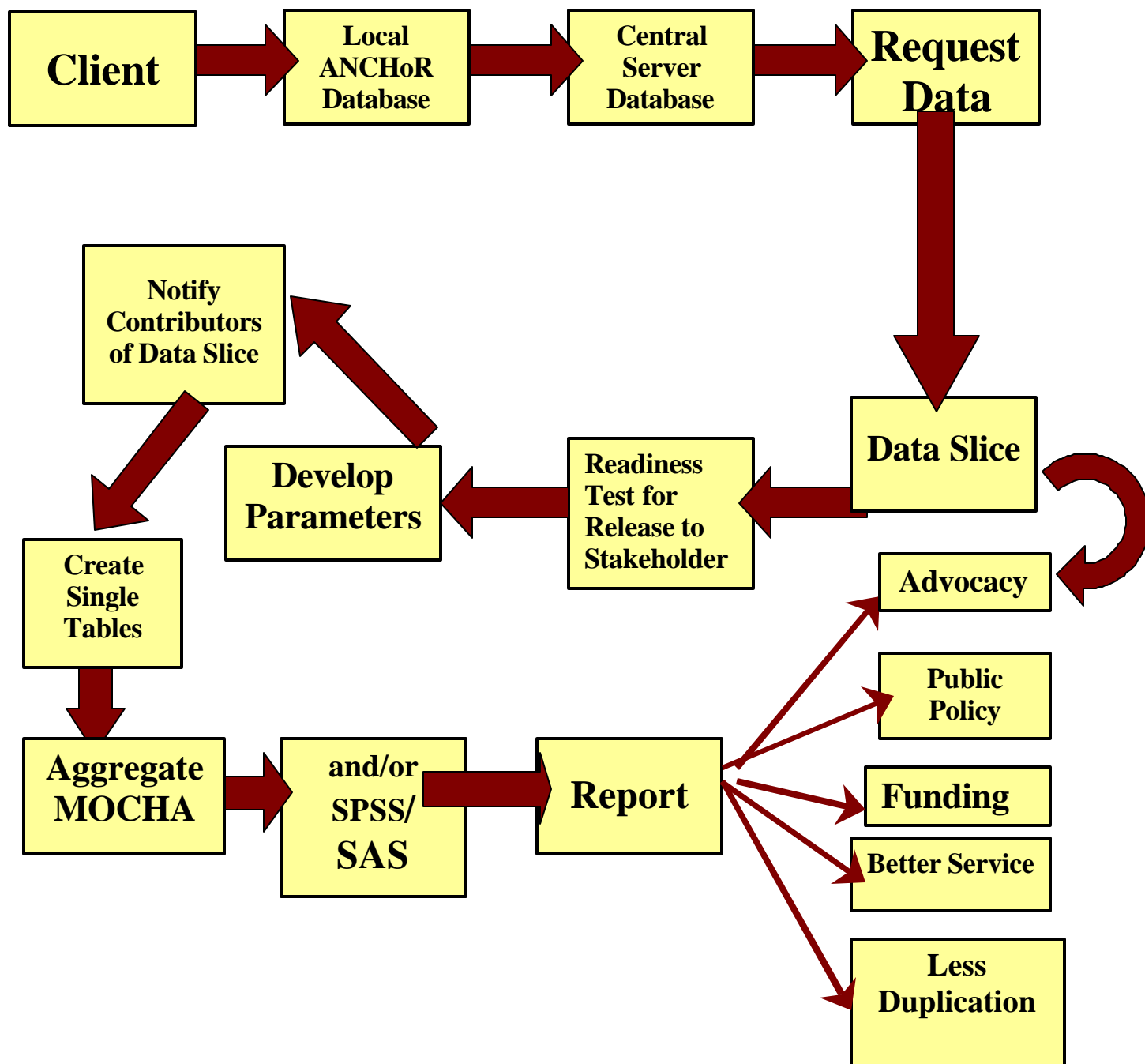
☐ You may be ☐ You are not
required to answer some questions as a prerequisite for a program, but there will be other questions you can choose not to answer. You have a right to view your record and correct inaccurate information. You also have a right to a copy of your record at any time. We will also **NEVER** give any information about you to anyone outside this organization, **UNLESS YOU GIVE WRITTEN CONSENT**, or as required by law through a subpoena or court order.

Who has access to your information?

Only the staff who work directly with you, or who have administrative responsibilities in this organization will be authorized to look at, enter or use information that is kept in your file. There are strict guidelines for who has access to your information. Aggregate anonymous data from clients will be used by homeless advocates, shelter staff, and local, state, and federal officials to better address the needs of the homeless.

ANCHoR Project, UMass

Access to Data Continuum



How ANCHoR Works

