What do we need to get Supportive Housing’s “data house” in order? The dust-mop? Or the dynamite?

Eric Grumdahl, Dakota County
Lisa Thomquist, Hennepin County
Patrick Tsaska, Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota
CSH Central Region Conference
September 13, 2012

Our plan for this session
- Share our thoughts about challenges and potential solutions
- Break into “constituent groups” to brainstorm
- Report back and wrap up

Guidelines / suggestions
- Not about “bashing”
- Constructive criticism and creative solutions!
- Many viewpoints / disagreement is okay
- Listening is more important than persuading

Constituencies
- Funders / government / policymakers
- Policy analysts / evaluators / researchers / geeks
- Housing and service providers
- Consumers

Challenges: HMIS on an island
- Data systems are in silos – like their programming
- MAXIS, SSIS, MMIS, Workforce 1, and HMIS
- HMIS is outside the fold – all other data systems are internal to state agencies. HMIS run by vendor.

Opportunities: Enterprise strategies
Challenges: Where do we focus?
- Who is a data system designed to serve?
  - Program participant
  - Case manager/Agency
  - Community accountability

- If the data system is designed to serve one level, it can serve all levels below. But the system can’t work backwards. If it is designed for accountability only, that doesn’t mean it can serve policy makers, case managers, or program participants.

Opportunities: Improve service delivery
- Users of SSIS and MAXIS can review client history for screening or intake.
- Both systems facilitate better resource targeting and coordination across big systems or networks of providers.
- Case notes, payments, and service authorizations in SSIS are used every day to make service improvements, budget adjustments, and policy changes.
- Flexible access, ad hoc reporting and support for complex user permissions are essential for success.

Challenges: Compliance-focus
- SSIS and MAXIS are client-focused: used to deliver benefits to individuals.
  - While complex, the data are good: used to issue benefits, pay clients, pay vendors.
  - HMIS used to report to funders.
  - Not client driven (data independent of the services people get).
  - Not agency driven (most agencies don’t use it to manage their business).
  - Not policy driven (most funders don’t use it to manage their programs).
  - Compliance driven (set up to meet reporting requirements of funders).

Challenges: Murky accountability
- Fingerprinting
  - Unclear governance / authority / power to create change.
  - Many priorities = no priorities.
  - Vendor dependency.
Other challenges

- Usability / support for common workflows
  - Wait now, what do I enter for “effective date” again?
  - Back-date mode?
  - Which report do I run?
- Incentives and disincentives for who uses the system and how they use it
- Limited user roles and permissions
- Data permeability (import / export)
- Difficulty aggregating data for analysis
- Scaling reporting expectations to levels of service

Wish lists

- What is our wish list in re-imagining HMIS? From the perspective of:
  - Program participants and agencies delivering services
  - Public policy makers and data geeks looking to measure outcomes and evaluate programs
  - Community accountability/funders on what the system produces

Constituent Group Brainstorm

- Focus on features, virtues and values
- Each group to answer:
  - What values do we want the system to embed?
  - What level of program support do we want the system to represent? Individual client service delivery, agency level case management, policy data, compliance?
  - What do you want out of the system (reports, evidence of impact or outcomes, etc.)?
- Designate a reporter to summarize your conversation

Group reports / key messages