Q&A from Regional Training on System Performance Measures

NATALIE MATTHEWS: Yes, thanks so much, Tom. Lots of great questions that have come through. One that I wanted to see if we could get some discussion on was we've got a couple of questions that have come in on a similar topic and one is any advice that folks may have about how to engage with agencies that are not required to be an HMIS, so I want to just confirm that those agencies not funded by the CoC program or ESG are still required to be a part of these measures and if that is the case, just some thoughts or reflections on what the impact could be if they're not able to get those folks in the HMIS in a timely way. Any thoughts on that you guys would like to share?

TOM ALBANESE: Well, I'll start off and then open up to William or Abbi just quickly. All the measures, except for measures four and six, which is the income and employment growth and then the measure that relates only to CoC's approved to service individuals or families in category three of the homeless definition, those are the only two measures that are specifically limited CoC funded projects. Every other measures includes every project participating in your HMIS, at least one or more of the measures do and so, yes, that includes projects that may not get any HUD funding. The expectation being that when you report on how your system is doing your reporting, on how your system is doing irrespective of the funding streams that support individual projects and so it's really a look at your system's response to homelessness in your community and the constituent programs that make up that system. I don't know if William or Abbi want to chime in on that.

WILLIAM SNOW: Not much to add there. Tom covered some important stuff and we at HUD are also aware of the issues with data coverage. This isn't the new thing. We've doing HMIS since 2001 and the question and the issues that arise. We found the most success for the CoCs have been able to use some of that historical information to show that the data is not just being used as a statutory fulfillment or merely reporting for reporting's sake. CoCs that have been able to get faith-based providers on, for instance, or the VA to participate have been most successful when they've shown that using performance data leads to both financing and, more importantly, leads to success for the people that they serve and so that probably is not news to you. That's certainly not a silver bullet of any kind for anyone, but we would encourage you to find ways to show the data is good at helping people do their job better, so we would encourage you to continue to think about that. We will hopefully work on some material about how to communicate that kind of data or that information with your data in the coming several months. Probably several years, really, because we feel there's a lack of understanding of how to use data and talk about it really well and so we will try to help fill in the gaps there.

NATALIE MATTHEWS: Okay, great. I think we have time for one more question or, Tom, did you want to use these last couple minutes to wrap things up?

TOM ALBANESE: Let's squeeze in one more and then we'll do a quick wrap-up.

NATALIE MATTHEWS: Okay, sounds good. The final question that has come in just wondering if any sort of benchmark or goals for any of the measures from HUD, folks just wanting to get a

sense of if there's an expectation about a certain percentage of clients that don't return to homelessness, things of that nature.

TOM ALBANESE: William, it's probably best for you to answer that.

WILLIAM SNOW: It's a great question. We have some precedent on this. In the past CoC competitions and SHP and Shelter Plus Care competitions, we really look at community progress, so as we get more data, we likely will set thresholds. We certainly have the ability to do that now, but the thresholds are intended to be a benchmark. We aren't going to be comparing CoCs against each other necessarily. For instance, Los Angeles, we will be looking at Los Angeles in 2016 and compare their data to 2015 data. We won't be comparing Los Angeles data to Wyoming data. Eventually, when we have enough data to set thresholds, we will likely do what we have done in the past. I'm just throwing out a random number here, but if the average length of time is 100 days, we would say the CoC should be working towards improvement from the past or working towards 100 days. If they've already gotten down to 98 days, we will recognize that as a success and we will likely, again dependent on the NOFA, will not require a higher standard than other communities, but that threshold will likely push communities to move towards that threshold. Again, that will be established over time as we have more data to compare.

Q&A from 6/8/16 webinar
NATALIE MATTHEWS: One of the questions that has come through today is related to the point you made that several of the measures are reliant on the CoCs having robust and comprehensive participation from all providers, and not just those providers that get CoC program funding. So folks wanted to know a little bit more, maybe perhaps some examples of the types of incentives or types of messages that you would encourage them to use as they try to build their local capacity and coverage in that area.

TOM ALBANESE: I think the first place to start is looking at the funding streams that are supporting different projects and this is now information that you should be gathering, should have in your dataset in the project descriptor data element. At least for federal funding sources, there's a place to identify that. If a project is federally funded, more likely than not, it's expected to participate in HMIS. There are a few outlying programs still that aren't required as of today to participate in HMIS, but that's a place to start and certainly that should be both an incentive and a bit of a stick for folks if funders are requiring it. It isn't a federal mandate that you can point to because of the federal funding stream. I think it's important to look at local and state funding streams. Many states now are requiring participation in HMIS. Local communities, even private partners like United Way and so forth are recognizing the value of having an effective system where folks have that visibility and transparency and are participating in the same data system. You might talk with those partners to see if they are including those requirements in their funding contracts as a way to leverage participation and then, lastly, of course, if there aren't those levers to pull, I think it's important to have conversations with providers. Of course, here we're talking about privately funded providers

and to have a conversation with their leadership around the value of participating in a community system and why HMIS is really the backbone of that system. It helps everyone make the best decisions possible for the people we serve.

NATALIE MATTHEWS: Okay, that's great. Thanks so much, Tom. One of the other series of questions that came in was around the concepts of data quality. I know you talked through that a little bit and this may be something I'm not sure if William or Abbi would like to jump in as well, but folks were curious about whether or not there would be any threshold or baseline requirements for things like coverage or utilization in the same way that there is for the [PH] A-Heart and related to that, folks were also curious if there would be any sort of either validation checks build into the HDX system as there are for the AHAR and sort of identify potential issues or any recourse that they could take with their vendors to help validate the data. A lot of folks were expressing some concern about the accuracy of the information and were looking for some tips on what the expectations would be in that area.

WILLIAM SNOW: I'll take a stab at this one. The answer's yes, that's the short answer. We believe and know that your data is only as good as the data quality itself. If you have high marks in all areas, you are showing 0% return to homelessness and other areas, it won't matter if you only have one program out of 100 in your HMIS. You've got to have a high amount of your bed coverage in HMIS, so bed coverage is a really critical concept. The 2015 notebook gives you an idea of a type of threshold we're looking at. We used an 85% threshold there. We'll probably continue to use a similar type threshold as we go forward. Another thing to consider is data quality. Data quality, I like to look at us as being in a 101 state with data quality. Null and missing values is the core of what we looked at historically and what we continue to look at, but really that's the starting point. That is not the best proxy for how well a CoC is doing with data quality or their HMIS. We will continue to evaluate better ways to collect data quality and understand what's really going on, but you should know that certainly null and missing values is a starting point. You could refer again to the 2015 competition as to what we're looking at with that, but that's certainly an important concept with validations in HDX. This first round in HDX is pretty minimal. Our goal was to get it out there so that you would be able to submit your data. We did not put a lot of validations in. there will be some and we'll look at what validations are appropriate over time. We want to make it so that your data is as good as possible, as clean as possible, but we still want you to be able to submit, so we don't want to put so many validations that it prevents that process from happening. Does that answer all the question, Natalie?

NATALIE MATTHEWS: That was wonderful, yeah. I think that got to quite a few of them. The one piece that we may not have touched on quite yet is whether or not there are any talks about additional data quality reports or ways that folks can try to work with their vendors to help validate for this first year.

WILLIAM SNOW: Yeah, good question. Right now, we don't really have anything that we're providing in that regard. We know a lot of vendors have various types of data quality reports,

some better than others. We certainly would say do what you can. The first goal right now is to show that something can be produced.

We know that that's not actually the case in all CoCs, so goal #1, produce the measures and then move onto running what you can for data quality. One of the basic things, again, is null or missing value, but even looking at entry and exit dates, that's often a key to these measures. I think we all know that, that's a big part of measuring performance is did you exit people at the right time and did you enter them at the right time. That's a nice set of things to look at from the get-go and I think most HMIS have that as a data quality concept in the first place.

NATALIE MATTHEWS: Okay, wonderful. Thanks, William, that was really helpful. I think those are the data quality pieces then and, Tom, I just want to make a few quick points based on questions that we received before we close out the presentation. One point to make is that there were quite a few folks that weren't quite certain when HDX would be open and for how long it would be open and so I just wanted to clarify that HUD announced in their last list on the topic that the goal is to have HDX open in mid-June and at that time when it ideally opens in mid-June, that's when HUD will provide guidance on how long it will be open for and other sorts of submission requirements. Please be on the lookout for another list or message for HUD when HDX is open and at that point, that's when they'll be providing more information on how long it'll be open for and any guidance and tips for folks on how to submit. The other quick point that I did want to make based on the questions is that several of you have asked if these questions and answers will be provided and it is HUD's intent to make the questions and answers available, so we'll be working on condensing those questions and answers that were provided over the course of all three webinars and we'll put a document with the questions as well as the slide deck will be available on the HUD exchange website. Tom, so we've got another minute or so left. I guess I'll turn it back over to you for the closing slide.

TOM ALBANESE: Thank you so much, Natalie, and thanks, William and Abbi, for being on today as well. Just a couple quick reminders. Again, this will be the first year that communities will be submitting system-wide performance measure in this way for these metrics to HUD, so you can expect that this will be a baseline for us, but as William said, at the very least it's a way to demonstrate you're able to produce and report this information even if you're still working on data quality, of course, so now is the time to focus on implementing the steps we've discussed today. Of course, focusing on data quality, your ability to generate data and understanding the data. Do you know what you're submitting and what it means? Working with your governing body, your collaborative applicants and your HMIS lead and other related committees in that regard will be key.

You can expect as well additional resources to be coming, as Natalie mentioned, some FAQs tied to this webinar and just other questions HUD has received. There will be some guidance around submitting information through HDX that we mentioned earlier and later in the year, you might expect some guidance around strategies to improve your performance. Lastly, I just want to stress one more time to please take some time, carefully review the HUD system performance measure resources, the videos that are out there. They are going to be a great asset to you and they're there to help you along. I want to thank Natalie, Abbi and William

again for taking the time. Thank you all today for joining us and have a great day. Thank you so much.

Q&A from 6/9/16 webinar

NATALIE MATTHEWS: Okay, great. Thanks so much, Tom. Please continue to go ahead and submit questions if you would like, but in the interim there were a couple points that were raised through questions that I thought would be good to spend these last couple of minutes discussing. The first, Tom, is if you could quickly affirm the reporting period for the system measures and how that will go into effect this year and how it will roll out in years to come as well.

TOM ALBANESE: Well, for this year, when the model opens later this month, continuums will be expected to report data for FI15. That is period ending September 30th of last year. As I mentioned earlier, HUD has decided that for most measures, except of course point in time count, the annual period that will be looked at each year will be the federal fiscal year. Of course, federal fiscal year '15 is come and gone. We're in the middle of '16, so you can expect that through the reporting period. William's on as well. I don't know, William, if you have anything more to add to that.

WILLIAM SNOW: Nope, no more to add.

NATALIE MATTHEWS: Okay and then the second question to just share more broadly with the group and I know you talked about this a bit earlier on, Tom, but just for those communities that might be struggling with getting all providers that homeless assistance providers, getting all of them in the HMIS and engaged in system efforts like coordinated entry and like the system performance measures. Folks were just wondering if there were any suggestions from you or from William about how best to incentivize participation, how to make the case and how to get those providers that are not required participating in the system.

TOM ALBANESE: I'll just say a few words and then I'm sure William might have a thought or two, but I believe that there is a stronger argument for providers no matter how they're funded or what they're compelled to do to participate in HMIS and participate in their community homeless system because providers and politics and don't operate in isolation nor do people, more often than not, use or turn to just one source of assistance in the community to have their needs met. Ultimately, homeless systems are, again, a manifestation of what a community desires to provide for its members. In that light, participating in HMIS, yes, it's an investment. Yes, it costs time and money to do these things with your community partners, but that's the nature of our work and I think if we want to best meet the needs of people who experience homelessness, we owe it to them to collaborate together to make sure our services are seamless, that there's ready access to assistance and if there's a ready means for us to know whether or not we're meeting the needs of people who access our systems across all providers. The only way to do that is by having common data systems, a common way to look at information no matter which project somebody engages with. I don't know if, William, you've got some more to add there.

Q&A from Regional Training on System Performance Measures

WILLIAM SNOW: Yeah, I appreciate that comment. That actually is first and foremost to us. We've found that the most successful communities have been able to show providers that regardless of your funding source, this isn't about meeting some sort of reporting requirement. It's about making the system better. That being said, that doesn't sway everybody, for sure. Another mechanisms that CoCs have been able to use are contracts and MOUs associated with other funding sources, so if you don't get HUD dollars, you can work with your state or your county or wherever you're getting other sources to see if HMIS usage can be part of the contract that's engaged. That's a little more of a stick as opposed to a carrot approach. Sometimes that's necessary and it can be helpful. Another thing just to reinforce what Tom said, we all know most of you know that already and time is usually the key. Just persistent discussion with folks, continually reminding them of the value of the data and the importance of representing them in the whole system is important, but we don't want to say that you're not doing that or that it's easy. We know that it's hard and it take time.

NATALIE MATTHEWS: Great, so those are the only questions that have come on our end to share. There were a couple that were put in in the last moment or so, so if we were unable to answer that question, we do encourage you guys to put it in through the HUD after question portal and we'll be sure to respond to your question that way if we were unable to do so today, so thanks again to everyone who submitted questions and we'll close things out.

TOM ALBANESE: Right, so just to cast things off here before folks hop off, we wanted to just emphasize a couple critical next steps. Again, this will be the first year that CoCs will be asked to report system performance measures in this way. Certainly there's been some degree of system reporting in the past, but this is the first time it's been standardized and as comprehensive as it will be. Now is the time to focus on implementing the steps we discussed on today and focus on improving your data quality, your ability to generate system performance reports. If you don't know if you can generate these reports, that's a good place to start. You don't want to be caught scrambling later this month. The sooner you're on this, the better, so we want to stress that and, of course, having your CoC governing body, your collaborative applicant, your HMIS lead all engaged and aware of what's happening and have them playing their part is critical. This is not just a function of your data committee, your HMIS lead. This is something that should be owned by your governing board and they should be actively involved.

Then, lastly, I just want to point out there is more guidance and resources you can expect to come around this. I think I can share, but I certainly heard it from my HUD friends that they know this is a long road. They know that there's a lot of work that goes behind this. They know that this year is a starting point and that things won't be perfect this year by any stretch, but we have to begin somewhere. We have to start looking at this data. We have to start looking more critically how our community systems are performing, so you can expect more guidance around that as well as strategies to improve your performance over time. I want to thank everyone for attending today. Please look at the resources we pointed you to today if you haven't already. Thank you so much and have a great afternoon.