Data-Driven Strategies to Improve Homeless System Performance

HOMES WITHIN REACH 2017
Data-Driven Strategies to Improve Homeless System Performance

**Moderator**
Jason D. Alexander, MPP
Principal & Co-Founder
Capacity for Change, LLC

**Presenter**
Joe Elliott
Manager, Specialized Integrated Services and Supports
Allegheny County Department of Human Services

**Presenter**
Greg Barchuk
Data Manager
Office of Housing and Community Development
Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

“If we have data, let’s look at data. If all we have are opinions, let’s go with mine.”

– Jim Barksdale
Allegheny County
Coordinated Entry

QUALITATIVE INFORMATION FOR DECISION MAKING

JOE ELLIOTT
Agenda

Allegheny County Background

Reason for Qualitative Feedback

Examples and Tools
  ◦ Provider Focus Groups
  ◦ HAPPYorNOT

Case Study – Single Shelter Access
Allegheny County

- Population: 1.2 million
- Integrated DHS
- 2017 PIT: 1,145
- CE began in 2015
- Allegheny Link
  - 3000 calls
  - 250 walk-ins
  - 160 field contacts
  - 1300 households
Why?

CPD-17-01 Establishing Additional Requirements for a CoC Centralized or Coordinated Assessment System

“CoCs must solicit feedback at least annually from participating projects and from households that participated in coordinated entry during that time period. Solicitations must address the quality and effectiveness of the entire coordinated entry experience for both participating projects and households…”
Provider Focus Groups

Many clients had self-resolved prior to referral
- Established an interim step in the referral process
- Established an inactive process

Expressed a need for sharing of assessment data
- Implemented the sharing of the CE assessment for referred clients

Misunderstandings on Coordinated Entry processes
- Trainings for the community
- Trainings for the providers
- Open communication and dialogue
HAPPyorNOT

Did Allegheny Link staff treat you with dignity and respect?

As a result of the services I received, I feel better prepared to manage my problems.
Did Allegheny Link staff treat you with dignity and respect?

89% Positive

Total feedback: 121
As a result of the services I received, I feel better prepared to manage my problems.

95% Positive
Total feedback: 72
Case Study – Single Shelter Access

**Original Process**

1. **Hello, Link**
   - Consumer connects with Allegheny Link about shelter bed availability

2. **Hello, there is a bed for you here**
   - Allegheny Link diverts callers who don’t need shelter; conducts assessment and puts consumer on waiting list for appropriate housing services

3. **Hello, Link**
   - Consumer placed on shelter waiting list

4. **Hello, Link**
   - Consumer calls daily to maintain active status on shelter waiting list

5. **Hello, there is a bed for you here**
   - Shelter staff reach out to consumer once bed opens based on waiting list names

6. **Hello, there is a bed for you here**
   - Consumer shows up at a shelter for bed
Challenges with Original Process

81% Utilization
Let’s try something different...

Pilot Process

1. Consumer connects directly to emergency shelter(s) about bed availability in person or by phone.

2. Shelter staff tells consumer there is a bed available.

3. If bed is available (A), it is provided to consumer. If no bed is available (B), the consumer has to try again the next day.

4. Consumer calls Link within 5 days to get referrals and complete assessment.
Utilization
Results from the Pilot...

104% Utilization
Success?

Shelter bed utilization

HMIS data entry timeliness

Client connection to Allegheny Link for assessment within 5 days

Client experience feedback
- Surveys with consumers in shelters during Pilot
- Interviews with consumers exploring perception of the different processes
- Feedback from those sleeping outside about the shelter process
Tell us about your experience getting a bed at an emergency shelter.

1. What was it like for you getting a bed today? (Circle one)
   - Very Hard
   - Hard
   - Okay
   - Easy
   - Very Easy

2a. What made it difficult? (Select all that apply)
   - Transportation
   - Shelter staff disrespectful
   - Didn’t know about shelter options
   - Making multiple calls to multiple shelters
   - Shelter hours
   - Other: __________________________

2b. What made it easy? (Please write in a response)

3. Approximately how many days did you spend trying or waiting? (Circle one)
   - Less than 1 day
   - 1 to 3 days
   - 3 to 7 days
   - More than a week

4. Prior to your experience today, if you ever called the Allegheny Link to get an emergency shelter bed (i.e., you didn’t have a place to stay that day or night), what was that process like? (Circle one)
   - Very Hard
   - Hard
   - Okay
   - Easy
   - Very Easy
   - Never called Allegheny Link

   Please describe the experience __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

5. If you are interested in a brief follow-up phone interview to talk about your experience, please leave your name and contact information (phone, email).
## Summary Synthesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitators</th>
<th>Allegheny Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Process was easy and clear (“Process was clear,”</td>
<td>- Staff were informative and helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was able to get right in”)</td>
<td>- Receiving consistent information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Knowing the process or right people to call</td>
<td>- Link outreach staff meeting at homeless camps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Accessible location</td>
<td>- Having a phone at the time to get re-contacted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Good luck or having faith</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Multiple calls to multiple shelters or same shelter</td>
<td>- Need to call daily for bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Waiting period for a bed</td>
<td>- Waiting period to get a bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Poor customer service:</td>
<td>- Hold time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not answering phones</td>
<td>- Not having a phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not providing helpful information on phone</td>
<td>- Not understanding the process/misinformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consumer not knowing about different shelter options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Problems with warm transfer from Allegheny Link to shelter staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Every shelter has own process for entry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Feeling discouraged due to lack of waiting list and negative staff interactions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Client Experience Feedback

Experience Getting Shelter Bed: Pilot
ES-CX Survey (May/June 2017)
N=62

- Easy: 61%
- Okay: 29%
- Hard: 10%

Experience Getting Shelter Bed: Original
ES-CX Survey (May/June 2017)
n=37

- Easy: 45%
- Okay: 41%
- Hard: 14%
Questions?
YOUR WAY HOME
MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Greg Barchuk, Your Way Home Data Manager
History
Established in January 2014 as Montgomery County’s unified and coordinated housing crisis response system for families and individuals experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness.

Vision
To make the experience of homelessness in Montgomery County rare, brief and non-recurring.

Goal
To reduce homelessness by 50% in 5 years.
SINCE 2014, YOUR WAY HOME HAS REDUCED HOMELESSNESS BY 33%
OLD VS NEW SYSTEM

The OLD Way: Silos & Side Doors

1st Come
1st Serve → Housing Ready → Fragmented

The NEW Way: Coordinated & Unified

Coordinated Entry → Housing First → Unified System
WHY SET A GOAL?

- Be bold!
- Hold ourselves accountable
- Use resources more effectively
CASE STUDY: TARGETING SERVICES

Location of Shelter Residents Prior to Shelter Entry (CY 2014)

Could be diverted from entering system?
Comparison of callers versus enrollments into shelters (2014)

- **Street Homeless**
  - Reported to Call Center: 611
  - Served in Shelters: 150 (25% enrollment rate)

- **Housed and at Risk of Losing Housing**
  - Reported to Call Center: 675
  - Served in Shelters: 339 (50% enrollment rate)

*Your Way Home Montgomery County*
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR SYSTEM?

Challenge  
High number of shelter admissions are for “at risk” households  
High rate of callers reporting street homelessness are not enrolled in shelter

Solution?  
Provide an alternative service to entering shelter (Diversion)  
(1) Enhance Street Outreach services  
(2) Prioritize street homeless for shelter

Test and Scale  
Does this reduce the number of shelter admissions from at risk locations?  
Does this increase the success rate of street homeless outreach?
Researched promising practices for diversion

Trained providers

Re-oriented coordinated entry system so that all “at-risk” households were provided diversion

Households that couldn’t be diverted were admitted to shelter

86% of households (503 of 586) at risk of homelessness in Montgomery County, PA, are diverted from entering an emergency shelter

*Source: Your Way Home 2016 Community Impact Report
Comparison of shelter entries from 2014 to 2017

- **22% point increase**
- **20% point decrease**

**Did it work?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelter Type</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shelter/Hotel Voucher</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Not Meant for Habitation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing/Safe Haven</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Setting</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Housing</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/Family (Doubled Up)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel paid for by client</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/refused</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Your Way Home Montgomery County*
Policies and procedure changes
- Stronger emphasis and oversight on prioritizing street homeless households for shelter entry
- Verification of homelessness became required for shelter entry (completed by Street Outreach)
- Increased data collection and referral tracking in HMIS
- Updating shelter prioritization through community feedback sessions

Street Outreach Expansion
- Funded 24/7 street outreach with stronger outcomes measures
Comparison of data collected before and after Street Outreach Expansion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>October 2017</th>
<th>October 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total served</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households served</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing data</td>
<td>Mostly below 5%</td>
<td>55% chronic homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8% Disabling conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td>40% exit destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25% SSN</td>
<td></td>
<td>100% income at entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1+ Conditions</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living on street</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No income at entry</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No benefits at entry</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg LOS</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>73 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total leavers</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exited to ES</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit unknown</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did it work?
Family Shelter Waiting List, 2016 vs 2017

...But are we sure?
Single Adult Shelter Waiting List, 2016 vs 2017

…really, really sure?
WHAT LIES AHEAD?

- Reducing the length of stay in shelter
  - Data shows that shelter residents who are entering directly from a hospital, jail, or detox get “stuck” in shelter

- Expanding prevention services for homeless families with children
  - 30% of homeless population is under age 12
  - 700 children per year are homeless under the Dept. of Education definition
“Hiding within those mounds of data is knowledge that could change the life of a patient, or change the world.”

– Atul Butte, Stanford School of Medicine