National Human Services Data Consortium

2019 Spring Conference

Nashville, TN
April 15-17, 2019

Connecticut's HMIS Journey and Lessons Learned

Presented by Nutmeg Consulting

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About Us

- Nutmeg Consulting has been an HMIS technical consultant in Connecticut since 2006
- Many staff have Non-Profit backgrounds, often users of the HMIS system
- Originally worked with 3 CoCs, gradually expanding to statewide support

Russ Cormier
CEO

James Buckley
Vice President of R&D

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What We Hope You Get Out of This

- Examples and approaches

- Inspiration and new ideas

- Cautionary Tales

- A yardstick

Questions Encouraged!

About CT's HMIS System

THEN

- 2 different HMIS systems

- Hodgepodge of non-HMIS compliant solutions

NOW

- 1 Unified Single Vendor Statewide system

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About CT's HMIS System

- **Statewide system**
  - All HUD funded providers
  - CT Department of Housing (DOH)
  - Department of Mental Health (DMHAS)
  - Connecticut Veteran's Administration (VA)
  - United Way's 211 Infoline
  - Many other Non-Required Project Types

Organization Structure

- **Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (Lead Agency)**
  (Manages HMIS from the state, provides data analysis, Advocacy, Funding)
  - **Nutmeg Consulting**
    (Technical Development & Assistance, Training, Support, Documentation)

- **Participating Providers**
  - **CT HMIS Steering Committee**
    (serve as the decision making body and provide advice and support to CCEH)

CONNECTICUT COALITION to
END HOMELESSNESS

CT HMIS
Measuring Success

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About CT's HMIS System

"She was a relentless and fearless leader who never wavered in her commitment to the people who are homeless and poor in Connecticut,"

- Dennis Culhane professor of social policy at the University of Pennsylvania

Richard Cho
Chief Executive Officer

Brian Roccapriore
Director of HMIS

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Data Sharing Agreement Basics

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- # Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

  – Between Agencies

- # **Release of Information (RIO)**

  – Between client and agencies

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Release of Information – Old Version

- Several Statewide meetings on the Initial ROI

- Several Draft ROI's, often borrowed from other states

- First ROI Document – **4 Pages of Privacy Text**

- Could Exclude Organizations

- Could share only a subset of data

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Sharing Status - OLD

- **Six Choices**
    - Full Data Share with ALL participating agencies
    - Partial Data Share with ALL participating agencies
    - Full Data Share with SOME participating agencies
    - Partial Data Share with SOME participating agencies
    - I DO NOT WANT to share data with any other agencies
    - Refused to sign release

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Sharing Status - CURRENT

- **Three choices**

  - Full Data Share with ALL participating agencies

  - Enter Anonymous Client

  - Client Refused to Sign

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Release of Information – Current Version

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Key Text

"I understand that **my information may be used for research, evaluation, and advocacy. This may include research projects that seek to match my needs with other agencies or programs that may assist in providing housing, case management, or other health and/or homelessness-related services**. I will always be protected by federal and state privacy laws. My personal identity will never be part of any research reports."

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And for Coordinated Access…

"Do we have your permission to release your information into the system that would be shared with the homeless providers in the community?"

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ROIs – What We Learned

- Don't Design for Edge Cases
- Aim for as simple as possible
- You pay for more complicated choices down the line
  - In Cost
  - In Time
  - In Effectiveness

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ROIs – What We Learned

- Benefits
  - Less duplicate clients = Better data
    - *Duplicate Check on client creation enforced*
    - *We also deduplicate in reporting (per HUD guidance).*
  - Limited choices make the choice easier
  - Broad ROI's allows new approaches to using data as you invent them.
  - Holistic view of a client's journey

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Data Integration & Reporting

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Making Data Easily Available

Self-Host or get Full Read/Write access to your HMIS Database!

- Hosted – Obtain full read/write permissions on the DB
- Self-Hosted – Own or control almost everthing.

Making Data Easily Available

- Hire a SQL Database expert, not just a statistician or data analyst. They are different roles with some overlap!

- They will help you invent new tools and save your bacon several times a year.

Our SQL Guy, Bert
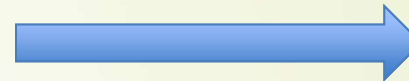
Making Data Easily Available

- **SQL Database Administrators are not cheap and self host is more complex/expensive to manage but…**

  – You can use your own reporting tools against the database

  – They can optimize slow system, if it's slow, it will be used less

  – You can mitigate performance issues with large reports

  – You can copy and manipulate databases with much greater control

  – You can use Triggers, Stored Procedures and custom views to get around software limitations

  – Add Custom Auditing

  – Plug into other data sources without APIs or build new interfaces to your HMIS database.

  – You can troubleshoot your HMIS system almost as well as the vendor (in some cases)

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Making Data Easily Available

CT HMIS Alternate Reporting Site (Data Warehouse)

- Nightly Copies of our HMIS Database

- Client level data is anonymized

- Access granted to researches

  - Steering Committee Approval for studies

  - Business Associate Agreement (BAA)
    Used between agencies that share PII data/Electronic Health Record (EHR) data. It holds each other accountable for keeping the data secure and only used for the intended purposes

- Reduces stress of live reporting engines on the HMIS system

- Can be optimized to be easier to use (expanded lists and clearer relationships, "flattening" of data)

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How We Get the Most Data Into the system

- Made access to HMIS "Free" for the first 13 years
- Supported non-mandated programs
- Offered Carrots to funders
  - Reduce double entry and provided exports to other systems (DDaP)
  - Provided custom reports to replace aging/poorly maintained reports (DOH ES, RRH)
- Implemented Coordinated Access very early (and made it statewide)
- Provided centralized support and training for the entire state.
- Say "Yes" to partnerships and provide multiple avenues to exchange data.

Sharing Data with Special Populations

- Frequent Users Systems Engagement (F.U.S.E)
  - Cross referencing Department of Correction Reentry and HMIS Shelter Data
  - Create SQL extracted form both systems (Shelter stays from HMIS, length of time in correction facilities) and identify high utilizers from the matched data
    - This is sent to the DMHAS research Group and then clients are awarded housing vouchers and case management

- Social Innovation Funding (S.I.F.)
  - Match HMIS homeless data to state Medicaid data
    - Service level data is extracted from HMIS
    - Send to DSS Medicaid provider where the data is matched
    - Last 2 years of medical claims are pulled
    - Data sent to NYU's research team, targeting high utilizers of shelter and medical care and provide housing, matched with a primary care physician and case management.

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Sharing Data in Different Ways

- ## Domestic Violence Victims
  (Special safety and privacy concerns)

  – CCA DV (CT Coalition against Domestic Violence) provides coded identifiers

    - Coded Identifier (Masks the person)

    - VERY basic data about the situation recorded (check intake process)

      – Avoid most demographics that could ID the person

      – Ask for a point of contact (CM), Risk priority, Preferred CAN area, VI SPDAT Score, CH status

    - Anonymized client created (Stored Procedure) and added to By Name list for triage

  – Integration with the normal Coordinated Access

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Sharing Data in Different Ways

Coordinated Access

- One of the few CA efforts that is statewide

- Department of Housing provides the glue to bring together

  - 211 - DOH provides funding to 211

  - CT HMIS - Provides the platform and technical resources

  - Coordinated Access Network - Joint partnership between communities

Each CAN is strongly tied to HMIS, with many providers in the CAN, as well as 211 sharing the same system.

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Sharing Data in Different Ways

- Veteran Client Alerts
  - Started as a conversation between CCEH, Nutmeg Staff and Provider
    - Came up with a strategy
  - Special task force alerted to new Vets entering the system
  - Made possible with full database access / ROI

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On Data Analysts

- They are essential to understanding your data but…
- Some Analysts tend to take data from your HMIS system and manipulate it in ways that aren't always
  - Transparent
  - Easily understandable
  - Well documented

    This creates a "black box" of data, where the underlying structure isn't always clear.

- The best Data Analysts, work within the source and implementing improvements in data collection and cleanup.

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Whew….

- Questions?
- Share your own experiences!