

Summary

The goal of professionals in the homeless services field is to increase self-sufficiency, reduce recidivism, reduce dependence on public assistance, and improve overall life skills of the homeless populations. The various service programs provided to homeless people are designed to reduce public assistance costs by helping people achieve permanent independence.

Program managers do have quarterly aggregated statistical reports from shelter and service providers regarding the numbers of people being served for payment purposes. However, information about service effectiveness is mostly anecdotal. In 1999, there was little evidence to either support or demonstrate the programs were achieving their intended objectives.

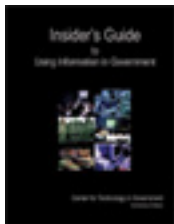
State and local program managers need access to data across service programs and over time to determine the most effective mix of services for particular client populations. This type of data resides in various separate systems or in paper records. As a result, it is unclear that these goals are being systematically achieved.

The investigation, conducted as part of CTG's **Using Information in Government Program**, included the design and development of a prototype system to help the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Housing Services decide if it was:

- feasible to develop an integrated database from such a wide variety of data sources.
- possible to accurately match individual client information across multiple systems,
- reasonable to create a system that would allow for the integration of external data sources,
- realistic to think that effective partnerships could be formed to support the necessary collaborations to ensure HIMS included the necessary data, and/or
- possible to create a single definition of effectiveness.

Publications & Results

Online Resources (1)



Insider's Guide to Using Information in Government

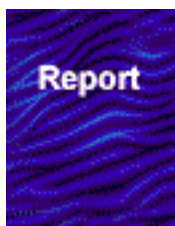
Wed, 01 Nov 2000

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Every day, the people inside government use information to develop policies, make decisions, evaluate programs, and deliver services. The Insider's Guide to Using Information in Government draws from real agency experiences to provide a practical resource for government professionals. It covers six related topics (strategy, policy, data, costs, skills, and technology) and illustrates them with stories of state and local agency projects ranging in focus from internal knowledge sharing to statewide program evaluation.

[Link to Insider's Guide](#)

Reports and Working Papers (1)



Putting Information Together

Tue, 01 Feb 2000

Organizations spend millions of dollars putting information together in data warehouses, but as many as 50 to 80 percent of those projects fail. This report, which summarizes the fourth seminar in the UIG Seminar Series, highlights the lessons learned from the creation of the prototype Homeless Information Management System.

The Center for Technology in Government (CTG), through the Using Information in Government (UIG) program, has worked with New York State agency project teams and partners from the public, private, and academic sectors to identify benefits and strategies for integrating and using information for program planning, evaluation, and decision making. The policy, management, and technology issues identified through our work with agency teams were shared with the public in a series of seminars focused on increasing the value of information to government programs. This report summarizes the presentations given at the fourth session of the Using Information in Government Seminar Series, "Putting Information Together: Building Integrated Data Repositories," which was held on February 9, 2000 at the University at Albany/SUNY.

Public Events

Putting Information Together:

Building Integrated Data Repositories

February 9, 2000

Integrating related data from multiple sources into one repository presents many challenges. This seminar highlights the management, policy, and technology challenges faced by the NYS Bureau of Housing Services and their local partners in the collaborative effort to develop an integrated data repository to support the assessment of services to the homeless population. The Homeless Information Management System prototype data repository will also be showcased. The summary report "Putting Information Together: Building Integrated Data Repositories" is available.

Press Releases & News Stories

Press Releases

Meet the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)

Thu, 05 Jul 2001

First Gateways Project Chosen

Fri, 29 Jun 2001

Serving the Needs of the Homeless with HIMS

Fri, 01 Oct 1999

Prototype

The Homeless Information Management System (HIMS) prototype demonstrated that integrating related data from multiple sources into one repository presents many challenges. Many of the lessons learned from building this prototype are included in the Putting Information Together seminar summary. The summary highlights the

management, policy, and technology challenges faced by the NYS Bureau of Housing Services and their local partners in the collaborative effort to develop an integrated data repository to support the assessment of services to the homeless population. The prototype HIMS data repository was showcased at the seminar.

Partners

Government Partners

- New York State Archives and Records Administration
- New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Housing Services
- New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance , Division of Audit and Quality Control
- Suffolk County Department of Social Services
- Westchester County Department of Social Services
- New York City Office of Domestic Violence and Emergency Intervention Services
- New York City Homeless Providers Technology Committee

Corporate Partners

- AlbanyNet, Inc. now known as VeraNet Solutions
- Hewlett-Packard
- Oracle Corporation

Academic Partners

- Lakshmi Mohan, Associate Professor, Management Science and Information Systems Program, School of Business, University at Albany, SUNY
- Giri Tayi, Professor, Department of Management Science and Information Systems, School of Business, University at Albany, SUNY

Center for Technology in Government

- Peter A. Bloniarz, Director of Program Development
- Donna Canestraro, Project Support Manager
- David Connelly, Graduate Assistant
- Meghan Cook, Project Management Specialist
- Sharon S. Dawes, Director
- Ophelia Eglene, Graduate Assistant
- Sally Goodall, Operations & Information Director
- Pam Neely, Graduate Assistant
- Theresa Pardo, Project Director
- Richard Sloma, Archival Specialist
- Fiona Thompson, Research Associate
- Derek Werthmuller, Director of Technology Services
- Jihong Zeng, Graduate Assisitant

Participants

- Housing and Employment Opportunities for the Less Privileged (H.E.L.P.)
- **Homes for the Homeless**

Funding Sources

This project was funded by a portion of CTG's New York State budget allocation.

Original Scope of Work

Project Goals and Objectives

The immediate goal of this project is to determine the feasibility of creating and using an integrated information resource to assess the effectiveness of services to homeless families and single adults. It seeks to identify the policy, management, and technology barriers to producing a comprehensive integrated information resource and to determine whether and how they can be overcome. In addition, one of the expected benefits from the use of the integrated information is new knowledge about the effectiveness of programs. This new knowledge can be directly applied to program planning and resource allocation decisions that guide service programs for the homeless.

In more general terms, the project seeks to increase understanding of the risks and benefits associated with efforts to integrate multiple disparate data sources into a newly integrated resource to support decision making and planning in the public sector. The project will explore mechanisms for mitigating the risks and realizing the benefits. It will make recommendations regarding the policy, management, and technology issues that must be addressed by any organization with similar goals and resources.

To achieve these goals, three parallel tracks of activity will be undertaken:

1. Develop and evaluate a standard for evaluating homeless services.
2. Develop and evaluate a set of standard definitions for services provided to the homeless population.
3. Develop and evaluate a prototype **Homeless Information Management System** designed to provide state and local government managers and local shelter providers with information needed to more effectively evaluate, plan, and manage their programs.

Specifically, the following set of questions will be addressed in this project:

- What are the policy, management, and technology barriers to integrating multiple disparate sources of data about homeless families and adults, the services they receive, and the programs that provide those services?
- What mechanisms can be developed or adapted to address these barriers?
- Is the information being collected today sufficient to address the service's assessment goals? If not, what other information is needed?
- Does the prototype system deliver its expected value? Does it add value at the management level? Does it add value at the service delivery level? Why or why not?
- What policy, management, and technology changes are required at the State level and in the provider agencies to take full advantage of the new resource?

Related Web Sites

The Intergovernmental Solutions Program

<http://www.albany.edu/igsp/>

A partnership between the University at Albany's Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy and New York State to develop a professional learning community focused on intergovernmental effectiveness. Program goals are to capture and share knowledge about how successful intergovernmental work occurs.

The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services - Homelessness

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/progsys/homeless/index.shtml>

The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Data Council

<http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/datacncil/>

International Homeless Discussion List Archives Home Page
<http://csf.colorado.edu/psn/homeless/>

National Coalition for Homeless
<http://nch.ari.net/direct1.html>

The National Resource Center on Homelessness and Mental Illness
<http://www.nrchmi.com/>

American Public Human Services Association
<http://www.aphsa.org>

Housing Enterprises for the Less Privileged (H.E.L.P.)
<http://www.helpusa.org/home.htm>

Welfare Information Network
<http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/WIN/homeless.asp>

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