State of Michigan Uses Data to Increase and Analyze Success

Positive Stories / Lessons Learned from HPRP:
Community Success Story

HPRP Grantee:	Michigan State Housing Development Authority
CoC Name and Number:	MI-500 – Michigan Balance of State CoC

Latest CoC Point-in-Time Count:

Total persons in ES:	837	Total persons in TH:	1,243
Total persons in Safe Haven:	0	Total unsheltered persons:	419
Total persons, sheltered and unsheltered:	2,499		

Beyond using the HPRP funds to address homelessness in the state, the State of Michigan had three goals to accomplish in the implementation of HPRP:

Learn about Michigan's homeless population and how their characteristics differed from the national population,
Evaluate the program's selection criteria to see if it was serving the "right clients," and
Standardize the process of eligibility determination.
Michigan collected data on HPRP participants' characteristics using a risk assessment matrix, and is now analyzing this data along with statewide outcomes through HMIS to learn who was served by the program, how they fared after HPRP, and which characteristics were correlated with housing success. They expect that their analysis will help them understand who benefits the most from homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing services, and that they can use this information to direct future efforts in the State.

HUD intended HPRP's "but for" clause to prioritize the applicants who were most likely to become homeless. In Michigan, HPRP homelessness prevention providers were additionally charged with serving only those for whom short- or medium-term assistance would stabilize their housing. The State created a tiered risk assessment matrix, based on national research of homelessness characteristics, to systematically identify those at greatest risk of impending or sustained housing loss. After initial interviews determined which applicants met the minimum eligibility requirements, all communities screened applicants for "priority risk factors" that severely impacted the household's current housing situation. Priority risk factors included an eviction notice or actual eviction, significant and sudden loss of income, and 50 percent or more of income spent on housing. These factors helped providers screen for those with the most need. The risk assessment matrix also included 30 secondary factors. Each community selected at least three secondary factors to allow for local targeting and to further standardize eligibility determination on the local level.

A preliminary analysis conducted on the 8,576 households served through the State's direct HPRP grant showed the five most commonly identified risk factors to be: a physical disability or other chronic health condition, short-term unemployment, a high amount of medical debt, prior episode(s) of homelessness, and a lack of transportation that impacts employment. The comparison of risk and demographic factors also revealed that prevention participants looked very similar to homeless participants on all but four risk factors: homeless persons were more likely to have moved in the last year, have domestic violence experience, be a member of a young household with young children, and lack transportation to work.

The State of Michigan also conducted a rapid re-housing follow-up analysis of more than 6,000 participants who received financial assistance, learning that only 6.5 percent returned to homelessness (as measured by shelter admittance) two years after HPRP began. The 6.5 percent were more likely to be in single households (54%), and these singles tended to be older and male. Family households (46%) most often had young children and a single, female head. Both singles and families who returned to shelter were much more likely to have a disabled adult in the household (45%) than households who remained housed (19%). Households who returned to shelter were the most vulnerable in the first three months after exiting HPRP, and the rate of failure declined substantially after that point.

Barb Ritter, Michigan's Statewide HMIS Project Director, explains that the power of these HMIS data and risk factor analyses lies in enabling Michigan to stretch its resources further: "As resources diminish, it is

critical that we get beyond the 'first-come, first-served' approach and 'right size' the resources based on household risk. Seventy percent of those sheltered in Michigan are sheltered once and never return. We need to find ways to predict the 30 percent who have significant and persistent need. Our data now shows us the characteristics of the people who enter shelter more than once – are there other characteristics, besides a history of failure, to help us predict who will need more help?" With these targeted questions and the wealth of statewide data, Michigan's HPRP screening practices are now the model for its ESG programs under HEARTH.

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