

Measure #7:
Successful Placement from Street Outreach &
Successful Placement in Retention of Permanent Housing

Ending homelessness in the U.S. by 2020 will require us to make significant improvements in the way our homelessness systems function. The department has developed a set of seven system-level measures to help communities understand their systems' performance. This video features Measure 7 of the seven, and explains why this measure is important, how it is calculated and how you might consider using this measure locally.

As we were reviewing the performance requirements in the HEARTH Act and developing the specific System Performance Measures, we realized that there was an area that the HEARTH Act did not address that we had been asking about for years in the CoC NOFAs – successful placement in and retention of permanent housing. We also realized that we were missing a crucial outcome related to serving unsheltered people. So we developed an additional metric to see where people are exiting to from street outreach.

The goal for this measure is fundamental to each homeless assistance project and system – moving people from homelessness to permanent housing. We will be looking for improvements in each of these measures over time.

As I said, this measure has two parts, the first focuses on housing and other destinations for people served in street outreach projects and the second focuses on housing placement and retention for people in various sheltered or housed situations within the homeless system. Let's start with Measure 7a.

We are measuring how successful street outreach projects are at helping people move off the "street" and towards permanent housing, recognizing this process may be direct or may involve other temporary situations along the way. This is important because we know that people living on the street and other places not meant for human habitation are at an increased risk of death. In this part of the

measure a lot of places in addition to permanent housing are considered successful destinations, such as emergency shelter, foster care, temporarily staying with family or friends, safe havens, and transitional housing.

To calculate this metric, we are looking at people experiencing homelessness who were served by any street outreach program in the CoC in the reporting period – this means that they have a street outreach entry in HMIS, which is required at the first contact. Our universe is the people who were served in and who exited from street outreach by the last date of the reporting period. Within the group of those who exited, we consider a positive exit to be a move off the street, with some minor exceptions, like jail or prison, and other places not meant for human habitation. From there we calculate the percentage of positive exits—positive exits divided by total exits.

The measure is looking for an increase in the percentage of people who exit to positive destinations from a street outreach project during the reporting period. Let's look at how this will work. Bob has been homeless on and off for a long time. The street outreach workers in his city know him and have had an active client file for him for a while. This year, after a really heavy snowstorm, Bob agreed to move into the community's safe haven program. After he gets settled and starts working with the safe haven's staff, the street outreach workers stop working with him and he "exits" their program. Bob would be counted as a positive housing placement for street outreach.

Now let's consider Larry – he has a similar history and the outreach workers have been talking with him regularly over the past few months trying to get him to move into an SRO. But then Larry disappeared, and eventually the outreach workers closed his case in HMIS. Larry would not be counted as having a positive housing placement. Let's look at one more situation. Mary is in a similar situation as Bob and Larry, and the street outreach workers have been encouraging her to enter a homeless project, but she refuses to come inside and becomes very ill while still living on the streets. The outreach workers stay in touch with her while she is in the hospital and she agrees to move to a permanent supportive housing

unit when she is well enough to be released from the hospital. Once she enters that PSH unit, she's exited from the street outreach project with a positive destination.

Doing the calculation we find that 67% or 2 out of 3 of the people living outside exited the street outreach system to a positive destination during the reporting period. We recognize that building relationships with people who are unsheltered is a process but we also know the risks of living outside and we expect that outreach workers are doing everything they can to move people into safer locations. These measures can help you to understand what your current rate of placement is, and consider whether it's as high as it can be, or whether there are ways that your community's outreach programs can improve their engagement and housing placement strategies.

Let's look at how to use the information in Measure 7a, to see if we can learn how to help people move from the street to housing. As we've said, this is not an analysis that HUD requires, but communities with the ability to do so should dive deeper. Here are eight people who exited to a positive destination after working with street outreach. For these people, street outreach has accomplished the goal for this measure – moving to a project in the homeless system from a place not meant for human habitation. So we can see that four people exited straight to their own permanent housing. What can we learn about them that could help us to house more people? It turns out that three of the four people who were housed by street outreach were Veterans who were able to access SSVF rapid rehousing or VASH to move into their own housing. With this information, CoCs can ensure that all Veterans who are unsheltered are assessed and referred to housing resources available to Veterans and that other people living on the street are referred to CoC permanent housing projects. Looking behind the overall system measure to understand the difference in outcomes for different groups of people or project types can provide important information for system planning.

Now let's look at the next housing placement measure—7b in the guidebook. This measure calculates successful housing placement in two ways – when people

move from the homeless system into permanent housing, and when people enrolled in permanent housing programs like PSH remain housed either in the housing program or move to other permanent housing.

So let's start with measuring the number of people who move from the homeless system to permanent housing, 7b.1 in the guidebook. The universe is all people who exited an emergency shelter, safe haven, transitional housing or rapid rehousing project during the reporting period. Then we look at the LAST exit from one of those project types to see how many of those people exited to a permanent housing destination. Just to be clear, if Bob went from an emergency shelter into a safe haven, and then exited that safe haven to a permanent housing destination, we wouldn't look at the first exit from emergency shelter to safe haven, because he hadn't yet exited the homeless system. We only look at the last exit – the one where he's leaving the homeless system – to see if it's to a permanent housing destination. In this example, 20 people exited from homeless programs, but only 12 went to permanent housing destinations. That means this system has a 60% permanent housing placement rate.

The final part to this measure, 7b.2 in the guidebook, measures successful housing outcomes for people served in permanent housing projects other than rapid rehousing. We're essentially talking about permanent supportive housing projects, but technically, this measure could include SROs and other permanent housing for people who are homeless. In this example we can see that a total of 40 people live in these permanent housing projects. Notice that this part of the measure doesn't include rapid re-housing projects because people do not have permanent assistance from the homeless system in those projects, performance in rapid re-housing is measured in 7b.1.

For people living in permanent housing, successful housing outcomes are defined in two ways -- retaining their unit in the project or moving to other permanent housing. Remember, permanent supportive housing projects typically aim to stabilize people in permanent housing with supports, and people are allowed to stay as long as they need to, so it's a positive outcome if they remain. But it's also

a good outcome if people don't need the PSH environment anymore and decide to move on to other forms of permanent housing.

In our example of 40 people in PH, let's look at how many of these people are still enrolled in or exited to permanent housing by the end of the reporting period. Thirty people retained their housing, and 10 people left. Of those 10, 5 went to other permanent housing, and 5 went to non-permanent housing. That means that a total of 35 people retained or exited to permanent housing, out of 40 people, which is an 88% permanent housing retention/placement rate.

As with the first part of the measure, we are looking for an increase in the percent of persons who are successfully housed in permanent housing, so after the first year we will be able to look at whether the system is making progress. With the focus on system improvement over time, your CoC could set targets to improve placement in or retention of permanent housing expecting that overall performance would increase by a certain percentage a year. You could also look at performance by project type to see if there is an area that needs additional focus, for example building housing retention capacity of PSH providers. Again, this isn't required, but HUD encourages you to do this type of analysis.

It is important when doing this level of analysis to ensure that expectations are appropriate for different project types according to their role in your system and the realities of their situation. For example it may not be appropriate to expect the same level of placement in permanent housing for emergency shelters as for transitional housing.

Thanks for listening to Measure 7, Successful Housing Placements and Retention. Please check out all the videos in the Performance Measures series!