System Performance Measures in Context

HUD has developed the following seven system-level performance measures to help communities gauge their progress in preventing and ending homelessness:

1. Length of time persons remain homeless;
2. The extent to which persons who exit homelessness to permanent housing destinations return to homelessness;
3. Number of homeless persons;
4. Jobs and income growth for homeless persons in CoC Program-funded projects;
5. Number of persons who become homeless for the first time;
6. Homelessness prevention and housing placement of persons defined by Category 3 of HUD's homeless definition in CoC Program-funded projects;
7. Successful housing placement;

The purpose of these measures is to provide a more complete picture of how well a community is preventing and ending homelessness. The number of homeless persons measure (#3) directly assesses a CoC's progress toward eliminating homelessness by counting the number of people experiencing homelessness both at a point in time and over the course of a year. The six other measures help communities understand how well they are reducing the number of people who become homeless and helping people become quickly and stably housed.

Reductions in the number of people becoming homeless are assessed by measuring the number of persons who experience homelessness for the first time (#5), the number who experience subsequent episodes of homelessness (#2), and homelessness prevention and housing placement for people who are unstably housed (Category 3 of HUD's homelessness definition) (#6). Achievement of quick and stable housing is assessed by measuring length of time homeless (#1), employment and income growth (#4), and placement when people exit the homelessness system (#7).

The performance measures are interrelated and, when analyzed relative to each other, provide a more complete picture of system performance. For example, the length of time homeless measure (#1) encourages communities to quickly re-house people, while measures on returns to homelessness (#2) and successful housing placements (#7) encourage communities to ensure that those placements are also stable. Taken together, these measures allow communities to more comprehensively evaluate the factors that contribute to ending homelessness.

For CoCs to accurately assess their progress using these measures, they must ensure that their data are as complete and accurate as possible, from data entry to report generation.

How These Measures Will Be Used

There are two primary uses of the system-level performance measures. First, HUD will use the data as selection criteria to award projects under future NOFAs. HUD will carefully consider which performance measure data is most appropriate and constructive as selection criteria for awarding grants under the CoC program. HUD will evaluate how CoCs are improving their performance from year to year and take into account their unique circumstances and conditions.

Second, system performance measures data will enable communities to evaluate and improve their performance. Because these are system-level measures, they can reveal significant information about how well homelessness assistance programs are functioning as a whole and where improvements are necessary. The data will also help CoCs identify gaps in data and services. It is critical for CoCs to consider the populations they are serving when evaluating their performance and potential system changes. Populations such as youth, victims of domestic violence, and people experiencing chronic homelessness might have unique circumstances. In comparing services in their system, CoCs should strive to ensure comparisons are made among projects with similar target populations.