



INTRODUCTION

HUD's [System Performance Measures](#) help communities understand how their system is functioning and if they have deployed the right combination of strategies and resources. This brief is part of a [series of resources](#) to help Continuums of Care (CoC) improve their homelessness system and build the confidence to use local data in strategic decision-making. It helps CoCs interpret their performance data, identify high-impact performance improvement strategies, and establish a year-round approach to performance management. The strategies outlined below focus on three Measures, which together summarize how well the community is helping people become quickly and stably housed:

- Length of time persons remain homeless (Measure 1)
- Extent to which persons who exit homelessness return to homelessness (Measure 2)
- Successful placement from Street Outreach and successful placement in or retention of permanent housing (Measure 7)

How to Use this Brief

This brief is for CoC leads and other key stakeholders charged with monitoring and improving system performance. It should be read in conjunction with the two companion pieces: the [Data Quality and Analysis for System Performance Improvement](#) brief which gives key steps to analyzing the System Performance Measures and troubleshooting data quality issues known to influence performance results; and the [CoC Data Quality](#) brief which provides a framework for managing and improving overall data quality year-round.

These resources can be used in different ways. CoCs may wish to conduct performance analysis prior to selecting an improvement strategy, to focus efforts on those that will yield the greatest results.

Alternatively, communities less assured about the accuracy of their data or analytics capabilities may choose to jump-start implementation of improvement strategies, while continuing to monitor and improve data quality.

HUD's System Performance Improvement Briefs

- [Strategies for System Performance Improvement](#)
- [Data Quality and Analysis for System Performance Improvement](#)
- [CoC Data Quality](#)

INTERPRETING PERFORMANCE RESULTS

After [analyzing performance data](#), CoCs will need to take a deeper look at what is happening in the community to draw sound conclusions about the results. What patterns have emerged? Are any results surprising? Do the results lead to additional questions or a need for more data? For instance, if certain families have relatively long lengths of stay in Emergency Shelter, what are the barriers to rapid exits? If certain providers have substantially increased successful housing placements, what helped? Below are three important steps in the assessment process.

Assess: Project-level Policies and Procedures

Debrief with providers and review policies and procedures to investigate the extent to which project-level practices [promote positive housing outcomes](#). Communities will not move the needle on homelessness until providers are focused on permanent housing and committed to working with people who have the greatest service needs. Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing projects with a strong housing orientation actively

engage participants from day one to assess housing barriers, develop housing plans, and link households to the right types of assistance to facilitate movement back into permanent housing. Housing projects incorporate practices that help tenants regain housing stability as quickly as possible and incorporate policies and case management practices to avoid evictions and terminations at all costs. They focus intently on partnering with landlords and linking people to community resources and employment opportunities that lead to greater stability.

Assess: Coordinated Entry

Evaluate the coordinated entry process to determine if the path to permanent housing is as fast and effective as it can be. Use the [Coordinated Entry Self-Assessment](#), [evaluation tools](#), conversations with staff, and [participant surveys](#) to identify bottlenecks, inefficiencies, or barriers to housing and ask key questions about processes and protocols. Are complex application processes increasing wait times? Are certain providers regularly denying referrals? To what extent do participants feel their housing needs have been met? Why do certain populations or subpopulations have relatively longer paths to permanent housing?

Look at local data and information to determine if assessment tools and policies are matching households with appropriate interventions. Test whether assessors are coming up with consistent results. Examine data on returns to homelessness to investigate whether refinements to the methodology are necessary. Compare data on households served by prevention resources with households in shelter to understand if the assistance is [appropriately targeted](#). Review prioritization policies and referrals to determine if Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is truly dedicated to those with the greatest service needs, and if the system is housing individuals and families with the longest histories of homelessness across interventions.

Assess: The Homeless Assistance Portfolio

Examine the housing and services that are available in the community's homeless assistance system, compared with data on the inflow program participants to identify any gaps in capacity. Assess project performance relative to the cost of permanent housing exits to identify system strengths and weaknesses. Communities should be asking: Can we accomplish more with existing resources (i.e. by reallocating funds or right-size the amount of assistance provided to individuals and families)? Can we improve coordination with other community resources to fill gaps and extend homeless investments? How should new funds be invested to scale best practices?

HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

Every CoC's system has different strengths and challenges, and therefore, each community will need to undertake different actions to improve performance results. This section provides a set of high-impact system improvement strategies from which to choose, with links to additional resources to support implementation. CoCs should consider which areas are strong points and where there are opportunities for improvement.

Each of these components will better equip homeless systems to prevent and end homelessness and impact multiple facets of system performance. The table below summarizes the strategies in relation to the respective measures on which performance is expected to improve.

System Improvement Strategies	System Performance Measures		
	Length of Time Homeless (Measure 1)	Successful Placement and Retention of PH (Measure 7)	Returns to Homelessness (Measure 2)
1. Enhance Coordinated Entry			
Prioritize Vulnerable Households	✓	✓	
Right-size Assistance	✓	✓	✓
Incorporate Diversion Practices	✓	✓	✓
Streamline Admissions and Lower Barriers	✓	✓	
Link to Effective Outreach and In-reach	✓	✓	
Target Prevention Assistance		✓	✓
2. Strengthen Housing-Focused Practices			
Housing Focused Case Management	✓	✓	✓
Policies and Procedures to Promote Housing Stability		✓	✓
Housing Navigation	✓	✓	✓
3. Scale Permanent Housing Interventions			
Recruit Private Landlords	✓	✓	
Leverage Mainstream Housing and Services	✓	✓	✓
Reallocate Resources	✓	✓	
Build Rapid Re-Housing Capacity	✓	✓	✓

System Improvement Strategy Recommendations

1. Enhance Coordinated Entry

Fully implement [Coordinated Entry](#) and emphasize the following aspects.

Strategy	Recommendations
Prioritize Vulnerable Households	Prioritize individuals and families who have been homeless the longest and have the highest service needs across all interventions in the homeless portfolio. Identify these households using active or master lists , and consider case conferencing practices that hold projects accountable for housing this group. Develop admission preferences to dedicate PSH units to people who are chronically homeless and use the orders of priority set out in HUD's Notice CPD-16-11 .
Right-Size Assistance	Maximize the number of households placed in housing by using housing barriers assessments to match household with the most appropriate level of assistance, and by providing assistance (move-in costs, deposits, rental assistance, etc.) in a progressive and flexible manner . Be responsive to changes in participants' financial circumstances or housing costs and provide more assistance where required. Continuously examine data on returns to homelessness, including comparison of assessments and assistance received, to determine if there are changes needed to coordinated entry tools or protocols.

Strategy	Recommendations
Incorporate Diversion Practices	Implement a phased assessment process which identifies households seeking shelter who are eligible for diversion resources at all coordinated entry access points. Prevent these households from becoming homeless by helping them immediately identify alternate housing arrangements and, if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to resolve their housing crisis.
Streamline Admissions and Lower Barriers	Ensure tenant selection and admissions policies do not screen out participants based on factors such as rental, credit, or criminal histories, and sobriety, or income. Eliminate preconditions for acceptance to services. Standardize provider application and approval processes to help reduce wait times.
Link to Effective Outreach and In-reach	Expand outreach to people living on the street and in-reach to Emergency Shelters. Explore creative approaches for locating people not connected to services, building positive relationships, and engaging individuals and families in supportive services and mainstream resources that ultimately lead to stable housing.
Target Prevention Assistance	Use data on the characteristics of households in shelter to develop criteria for targeting prevention assistance . Identify all relevant services available in the community to determine what prevention assistance should be provided by the homeless system and where mainstream resources should be leveraged. Build strong partnerships with mainstream providers and get them to help identify households at risk, facilitate referrals to and from the homeless system, support participants in permanent housing, and improve discharge planning for people exiting systems of care and institutions.

2. Strengthen Housing-Focused Practices

From day one, individuals and families who enter the homeless system should be provided with support that is directly related to resolving their housing crisis and promoting housing stability.

Strategy	Recommendations
Housing Focused Case Management	All projects, including Emergency Shelters, Safe Havens, and Transitional Housing, should assess barriers to housing and support households, or link them to providers, to address issues that impede them from moving into permanent housing. Provide support to create a housing plan, resolve rental screening barriers, search for housing, negotiate lease terms, and mediate family conflict. Promote long-term stability by helping people who have been re-housed to connect with community-based resources and employment, understand their tenant rights and responsibilities, and develop plans for responding to future housing crisis.

Strategy	Recommendations
Policies and Procedures to Promote Housing Stability	Incorporate provider-level policies and procedures aimed at promoting long term housing stability . Remove lease provisions and participation agreements that require involvement in services or that deem things like alcohol use as a violation or grounds for eviction or termination. Build capacity to address problems, such as missed rent payments or disturbances to neighbors, through effective case management and motivational interviewing practices . Promote landlord-provider communication about program participants who are at risk of losing their housing and support landlords to resolve housing or lease issues before they escalate.
Housing Navigation	Beef up resources to help households locate housing units in the community, assess various options, and choose units that are the right fit and in desired neighborhoods, when possible. Be familiar with rental screenings used by local landlords and track vacancies, unit locations, and rental costs in the private market to inform housing navigation efforts. Promote choice and engage households in the decision-making process.

3. Scale Permanent Housing Interventions

Help more people become quickly and stably housed—optimize local resources and expand permanent housing options.

Strategy	Recommendations
Recruit Private Landlords	Expand the number of permanent housing units available through outreach to new landlords and cultivating long-term relationships with owners and managers. Replicate proven recruitment strategies , which draw on effective marketing and engagement efforts, and innovative incentives such as landlord payments or damage insurance funds .
Leverage Mainstream Housing and Services	Build partnerships with mainstream systems to leverage affordable housing resources and home-based services. Partner with local PHAs to prioritize housing subsidies for people who are chronically homeless and create meaningful preferences for people experiencing homelessness. Support people in permanent housing by linking mainstream healthcare , mental health, employment , or family services to housing subsidies. Replicate strategies using Medicaid and TANF to scale permanent housing interventions for individuals and families .
Reallocate Resources	Draw on the performance analysis and portfolio assessments outlined above to identify system strengths and weaknesses. Establish funding priorities and consider re-directing investments to fill gaps and expand high performing permanent housing projects.

Strategy	Recommendations
Build Rapid Re-Housing Capacity	Use local data and information on best practices to standardize a Rapid Re-housing project model and align funding sources to support expansion. Provide trainings and technical assistance on re-housing best practices. Use findings from high-performing projects to inform the project model and provide peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Link Emergency Shelters, Transitional Housing projects, and Street Outreach to Rapid Re-Housing interventions.

ONGOING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

CoCs can improve their system year-round by regularly monitoring, evaluating, and acting on performance results.

Establish System-Wide Performance Goals and Benchmarks

Collaborate with a cross-section of community leaders and stakeholders to set short and long-term goals for system improvement. Consider local factors, such as a new infusion of resources, a shift in local government priorities, or a change in the homeless population to help prioritize the top one or two goals. Set local performance benchmarks to ensure everyone knows what is expected of them. Reflect on local changes in performance, priorities for system change, and [national benchmarks](#) to identify the right indicators of success. Check performance targets to ensure they are realistic and safeguard against unintended results. For example, setting a goal of ‘zero’ returns to homelessness is unrealistic and could lead providers to ‘over-serve’ households or deny those with the greatest needs. Ensure performance benchmarks are appropriate for different project types per their role in the homeless system and the target group served.

Develop a Performance Management Plan

Identify the group of individuals in the community who will oversee performance. Develop a comprehensive [performance management plan](#) which includes performance goals, baseline data, benchmarks, improvement strategies, and timelines. Include roles and responsibilities, and the process by which this group will review performance data and develop performance improvement plans.

Monitor and Communicate Performance Year-Round

Analyze performance on a quarterly or biannual basis to assess the degree to which the CoC is making progress on goals and benchmarks, and if the performance improvement strategies are having the intended impact. Meet often to discuss findings and revise strategies where required. Communicate performance at regular intervals to give providers an opportunity to use the results to inform practice and to showcase results to funders and community stakeholders.

Build Capacity and Replicate Best Practices

Use the performance monitoring process to identify providers that are exceeding performance expectations and learn more about their successful practices. Determine which providers are struggling to meet performance targets and respond to technical assistance or capacity building needs. Consider developing an annual training calendar and implement peer-to-peer learning opportunities, such as learning circles or Communities of Practice, to support replication of best practices.

Incorporate Performance into System Planning

Use performance data to inform decisions about how to optimize existing funds and strategically invest new resources to expand high-impact strategies. Set objective performance criteria for the review, ranking, and selection of projects in the CoC Competition. Explore ways to embed performance expectations in local funding agreements for targeted homeless programs, such as with performance reporting requirements, incentive payments that reward positive outcomes (such as [Pay for Success Models](#) or [performance-based contracts](#)), and selection criteria for competitive awards.