

Recommendation on Data Quality Issues for IDEA Ad-Hoc Committee Review

Background: On April 20, 2011 CMHDA presented a letter to the OAC Evaluation Committee which included the following recommendation – *That the MHSOAC prioritize and devote as much of its available MHSAs state administrative resources as possible to a contract with a third party entity to provide technical assistance to counties and their contractors, for the purpose of ensuring quality data and its use in informing practice and policy. The contractor should also support counties in submitting accurate and reliable data into the Data Collection and Reporting (DCR) system, and generating timely and meaningful reports from the DCR for a variety of evaluation purposes.*

At the meeting on the 20th there was discussion of the recommendation and even a motion to develop more specific recommendations by a workgroup for the committee, but specific next steps for the process remain unclear. Considering timelines and urgency, staff sought volunteers from the IDEA ad-hoc committee to better specify objectives and deliverables that operationalize this recommendation. This recommendation is intended to be the beginning of efforts needed, regardless of where the resource derives from. Accomplishing the steps outlined below would provide counties and their contractors a chance to look at their data, understand its functionality to contribute to quality and performance, and develop a commitment to support or advocate for the support of on-going resources for continuously quality improvement, including regular use of DCR data.

Volunteer Counties: LA, Orange, San Bernardino, Contra Costa, Humboldt, Shasta, and Monterey met by phone and the recommendations include:

Step One: An immediate priority (FY 11/12) is to run six to 10 standardized reports for all counties on a regular basis from the DCR such as comparisons between pre-enrollment and post-enrollment, including data for the domains of living arrangements and employment and education that demonstrates changes in incarceration, hospitalization, homeless, employment and education rates. These reports should take into consideration the unique circumstances for small counties and be available on a client, FSP program, and county level. Furthermore, reports should be available to examine whether FSPs are supporting a reduction in racial and ethnic disparities among who is served and how they are served. Reports should also be developed that identify data inconsistencies or problem areas that can be used by counties and their contractors to improve the quality of data being collected (e.g., missing key event data, missing or late 3 month assessments, caseloads by PSC). Ideally counties would be able to produce these reports themselves at the local level, available in printable format (e.g., Adobe pdf) and in a usable format (e.g., Excel) for further analysis by counties. We believe that the production of these reports will be the single strongest incentive for counties and agencies to ensure the accuracy and quality of their data.

Step Two: There are small efforts that can be made in FY 11/12 to support the effective use of the DCR, which has strengths but capacity and structural issues. Specifically, if the following three deliverables or work activities are completed, counties and their contractors would be able to use the DCR more effectively:

1. Update and refine the current data dictionary (the current version is 443 pages),
2. Update and make more user-friendly the user guide, and
3. Provide technical assistance on how to use the data dictionary and user guide, including how to develop interpretive guidelines and summarize the empirical or rational bases for interpretation.