

Collecting, Compiling and Reporting Outcome Data: Special Problems Confronting Large Systems

Christine Torre

Los Angeles County
Department of Mental Health

May 2001

Characteristics of Large Systems

- Complicated administrative structure
- Multiple funding sources
- Complexity of programming
- Staffing – recruitment/turnover
- Diversity of populations
- Multiple constituencies with differing needs
- Slow to respond to changes

Los Angeles County as an Example

- Population size – 10 million
- Multiple geographic entities
- Reporting structure – local, state, county
- Outcome requirements
- Demographic diversity
 - Rapidly changing
 - Multiple languages
 - Range of incomes

Data Requirements by Level

- State required system level
 - Client self-report
 - Provider report
 - Administrative data
- Local system level
 - Data for planning purposes
- Program management level
 - Program performance data
 - Licensing, etc.
- Provider/clinician level
 - Treatment planning
 - Other requirements

Data Collection Problems

- Provider/clinician level
 - Administration methods
 - Technical issues
- Program level
 - Staff resources
 - Service differences
- System level
 - Data transmission issues
 - Data overload
 - Data sharing and reporting

Issues of Data Compilation

- Technology needs
- Staffing and other resources (expertise)
- Cost considerations
- Data quality
- Combining information to see the whole picture

Reporting Data in Useful Formats

- Purpose of the data
- Audience
- Distribution
- Frequency of distribution

Some Solutions at the Provider Level

- Provide training initially and on-going to all staff across the system
- Maintain centralized core of resource staff to trouble shoot and respond to questions
- Develop simple, uniform, easily understood policies and procedures
- Monitor data submissions early and on-going to detect problems

Program Level Suggestions

- Communicate frequently with program managers
- Understand program differences and be responsive to those differences
- Work with managers to assist with the use of data in quality improvement and program performance

System Level Suggestions

- Minimize amount of data collected
- Standardize data submissions and requirements as much as possible
- Make data easily available
- Have clear understanding of intent of data collection and planned uses of the data
- Be cautious with comparisons

Issues Still To Be Addressed

Questions To Be Answered

- What are the cost/benefits of “outcome” data collection processes?
- Can we make better use of existing data?
- How close are we to selecting uniform indicators for use across systems?