Reviewing Annual Reports and Preparing for Site Visits: Best Practices for State PATH Contacts

SAMHSA expects states and territories to regularly monitor their PATH providers to ensure the effective use of PATH funds to serve individuals who have a serious mental illness and are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. PATH data is an essential tool for evaluating provider program performance.

Reviewing Provider Reports in PDX

Once a PATH provider has submitted their report in PDX, State PATH Contacts (SPCs) must review and approve it. The strategies below can help SPCs with their review process to assess whether provider data is accurate and identify areas of improvement for PATH programs.

- When reviewing a provider's report, SPCs should ensure that:
    - There is no missing data. Data elements cannot be left blank and must have at least a zero entered. The report should show as 100% complete.
    - There are no active errors in the report.
    - The provider has entered a comment for each flagged warning. Review each comment to ensure it addresses the issue identified in the warning.
- Review the provider's Intended Use Plan (IUP) for established data-specific targets. Compare the data in the report with these targets and identify any areas where the provider did not meet the target.
- Compare the provider's data with the previous year's data. Are there unusual trends? Is there a significant increase or decrease in the data on particular elements? Make a note of any areas where the provider's data may be inaccurate and discuss these with the provider to confirm data accuracy.
- If data is confirmed as accurate but shows an unusual trend or is below target, add comments where needed to document explanations for the data or strategies for program improvement that you discussed with the provider.

Understanding Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Measures

PATH GPRA measures are specific goals and objectives that SAMHSA submits to Congress to communicate progress in achieving the program's mission and justify continued annual funding. The target for each measure is updated each fiscal year.

The PATH GPRA measures are described below.

- Number of persons experiencing homelessness contacted
    - This measure assesses PATH providers' general level of effort in outreach activities.

    - It is important to understand the definition of a contact for accurate reporting. A contact is an interaction between a PATH-funded worker(s) and an individual who is potentially PATH eligible or already enrolled in PATH.
- Percentage of eligible persons contacted who become enrolled in PATH
    - In other words, how many of the individuals who were contacted and eligible for PATH were enrolled?
    - PATH enrollment is defined as: A PATH-eligible individual and a PATH provider have mutually and formally agreed to engage in services, and the provider has initiated an individual file or record for that individual.
    - In general, the higher the quality of interaction during outreach, the greater the likelihood the person contacted will enroll in and benefit from PATH services.
- Percentage of enrolled PATH clients who receive community mental health services.
    - This measure is calculated by dividing the number of enrolled PATH clients who receive community mental health services by the total number of enrolled PATH clients.
- Number of PATH providers trained in SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) to ensure eligible clients are receiving benefits.
    - This output is important in that, once trained, PATH providers can better assist PATH clients in applying for and receiving the income benefits for which they are eligible.

PATH’s GPRA measures are reported based on nationwide data, but SPCs can use the percentage-based targets to evaluate providers’ performance on these measures. For output-based measures, SPCs can review providers’ performance on these measures and determine whether the provider met any state-specific targets or if their performance on these measures is reasonable, given the amount of PATH funding received and the overall setup of the provider’s PATH program. For example, a PATH provider based in a rural area would typically not be expected to have as many individuals contacted as a provider based in an urban area.

PDX flags warnings for data below GPRA measure targets for the percentage-based measures. If the provider’s data is below these targets, carefully review their explanation in the corresponding comment and consider strategies for improving their performance on these measures moving forward.

Using PATH Data to Prepare for Provider Site Visits

Site visits to PATH providers allow SPCs to evaluate PATH data and a provider’s performance in greater detail. The following strategies can help SPCs effectively use PATH data when preparing for a provider site visit.

- Download the provider’s PATH Annual Report from the previous two years and any recent progress reports.

- Review the provider's IUP to identify any data targets established for the most recent year for which annual report data is available.
- Compare the provider's data to the targets established in their IUP. Note any areas where the provider did not meet the target.
- Compare annual reports across years to identify any significant changes in data or unusual trends for key data elements.

Table 1. PATH Annual Report Key Data Elements

Element Number	Data Element
11	New persons contacted
13a	New persons contacted who could not be enrolled because of ineligibility for PATH
14	New persons contacted who became enrolled in PATH
15	Number with active, enrolled PATH status
16	Number of active, enrolled clients receiving community mental health services

Reviewing PATH Data

Consider the following questions when reviewing the data.

- Was there a significant increase or decrease in data for key data elements?
- Are there any unusual trends (for example, the number of new persons contacted significantly increased, but the number of new persons contacted who became enrolled significantly decreased)?
- Do the outcomes (Section 5 of the PATH Annual Report) and housing outcomes (Section 6) align with your expectations given the program's PATH funding and intended use of funds?
- Does the provider meet the PATH GPRA targets for percent eligible enrolled and percent enrolled receiving community mental health services?
    - Percent eligible enrolled = New persons contacted who became enrolled in PATH (Q14)/[New persons contacted (Q11) – New persons contacted who could not be enrolled because of ineligibility for PATH (Q13a)]
    - Percent receiving community mental health services = Number of active, enrolled clients receiving community mental health services (Q16)/Number with active, enrolled PATH status (Q15)
- Is the number of new persons contacted and the total number enrolled reasonable, given the type of program (urban vs. rural), the amount of PATH funding received, and the number of PATH staff members?
- Is the number of PATH staff trained in SOAR reasonable, given the total number of staff members and PATH funding received?

- Does the demographic data for those enrolled reflect the population of individuals experiencing homelessness in the provider's community? If not, what changes are needed to ensure equity in providing PATH services?
- Are there data elements that seem significantly under-reported (for example, you know that a provider is funded to provide community mental health services, but they only reported that a few clients received this service)?

Make a list of questions to discuss with the provider during the site visit.

- For performance-related questions, discuss strategies for program improvement.
- For data reporting-related questions, use case record reviews to ensure data completeness and discuss strategies for improving data collection.
- Consider asking the provider to describe their data collection process so you can ensure that they are collecting the required data elements and following the correct workflow. Inquire about the steps taken to ensure that their data collection process is trauma-informed.
- When developing an interview protocol for PATH client interviews, include questions about the client's experience with intake and follow-up assessments and how the provider explained data security and confidentiality.