July 24, 2025

11:00am-12:00pm

CT Data Strategy Board Meeting Minutes

| **Attendees** Voting Members: Lauren Sheehan, Meredith Clay, Beau Anderson, Haley Gross de Jimenez, Mollie Machado, Marie Satterwhite-Porpora, Nadine Malone, Stephanie Lazarus  Non-voting Members: Jackie Gardner, John Merz, Jim Bombaci, Suzanne Wagner |
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# **Ops/Admin**

* **June Meeting Minutes:** Maria Satterwhite-Porpora made a motion to accept and approve the June meeting minutes, Stephanie seconded
* **Financials/Contract Updates:**Jackie Gardner updated the board that HUD Contracts are still in the process of being transferred to ACT and was delayed due to the revised letters needed from the CoCs. Additionally, the Department of Housing (DOH) contract has not been received yet.  
    
  John Merz relayed his discussion with Steve DiLella at DOH that the contract is in the queue, but there is no estimated timeline for it yet.

# **Updates/Standing Meeting Items**

* **CoC MOU Update:**Meredith Clay reported that a subgroup of the Data Strategy Board (DSB) met with Lauren Paretti at Housing Innovations to create one MOU that will be between ACT as the lead agency and both CoCs (CT BOS and ODFC), as well as the DSB
* **Data Standards Updates & Data Collection** [**Changes**](https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HMIS-Data-Standards-Manual-2024.pdf)**:**Jackie Gardner reported the data standards are retiring Gender and Sexual Orientation. In the new federal fiscal year data standards launching in October, both fields will not be required data elements, however communities can collect any additional data if desired.  
    
  Jim Bombaci reported that the HMIS Vendor, CaseWorthy, plans to keep the two fields available and will be adding the new category of Sex that only allows for Male/Female/Data Not Collected/Client Refused/Client Doesn’t Know per the upcoming Data Standard Updates.  
  Beau Anderson expressed concerns related to risks around continuing to collect these data elements and how people will answer the new question. Stephanie Lazarus and Nadine Malone agreed with the concerns shared.  
    
  Maria asked if there is a risk of harm to people by not continuing to collect these data.  
    
  Discussion followed related to the advocacy efforts that can be made related to no longer having data to report as a result of these new policies.  
    
  Haley Gross de Jimenez suggested this issue be discussed locally with CANs.

Jim mentioned the historic data and a need to maintain this information, especially related to youth homelessness.  
  
Lauren explained that not having these data could make housing matching more difficult for people.  
  
Nadine indicated that SmartSheets can support continuing the collection of these data.  
  
Jim indicated that the Engage Mobile App can also support continuing the data collection as it is distinct from HMIS.

Lauren asked for this information to be shared with local CANs.

Meredith made a **motion** to “*Remove gender data collection from HMIS when the new data standards go live on October 1, 2025.*” Beau seconded the motion. All voting members approved the motion and all non-voting members abstained.  
***Motion Passed***

Beau made a **motion** to “*Stop collecting sexual orientation in HMIS when the new data standards go live on October 1, 2025.*” Mollie Machado seconded. All voting members approved the motion and all non-voting members abstained.  
***Motion Passed***

* **Enhancement Request Subcommittee Update**:

Lauren reviewed the request from BH Care related to people with pets. The request was sent to Nutmeg to review and provide a cost and time estimate for the project.

Jim explained that the original request was for a custom report, but the conversation expanded to the potential for adding this information as a tab on the By-Name-List (BNL). Nutmeg estimated the timeline to complete BH Care’s request is 20 hours with a cost of $3500, however there is no current funding available for enhancements at this time.

Lauren shared a concern about the request being useful to the field, while also recognizing that we still need a longer-term strategy for these types of requests.

John reminded the group that unless there is funding available, the conversation is moot for right now.

Jim mentioned that adding pet data to the BNL isn’t as big of a lift as a custom report and wouldn’t be considered a one-off project because of the systemwide benefit.

Nadine indicated the pet information could be helpful for getting people matched to appropriate housing options and the field should be more than just a “Yes/No” response to if a person has a pet. Examples provided: Type of animal (e.g. dog/cat) and if the animal is just a pet, emotional support animal, or certified service animal.

Stephanie added that every animal will be considered an emotional support animal because people do not want to give up the animals with which they’ve formed bonds and that DMHAS directives allow emotional support animals for clients served.

Lauren acknowledged that we see the need and benefit to the system and asked Jim to let the DSB know if there is a way to collect the information in a way that fulfills the need for BH Care and the system overall at a lower cost through the BNL.

Jim will follow up with BH Care regarding the costs.

Beau expressed concern about this subverting the Enhancement Request process and impacts to the DSB strategies.

Haley also expressed the need for a comprehensive approach to these requests, rather than 1-off requests.

Lauren indicated that any requests that don’t merit an enhancement are rejected, but if the request meets a global need we will consider it.

* **Meeting Adjustment starting with August**:

Lauren indicated that we are not going to be able to work on the DSB Priorities and Strategies by limiting our meetings to one hour per month and asked about increasing the monthly meeting time to 90 minutes or returning to meeting twice per month.  
  
The group discussed other standing meeting conflicts, but all agreed that starting the DSB meeting 30 minutes earlier would work with their schedules.  
  
John suggested that the first part of the meeting be spent working on the Priorities and Strategies to ensure they get adequate discussion.  
  
 Beau also suggested a retreat in early fall.

* **Cold Weather Data Collection**:  
  Beau asked to discuss upcoming cold weather shelter data collection and potential formation of a subgroup, however time did not permit a full discussion and it will be on the agenda for August.

**Communications to CoCs/CANs/Providers**

* Review of items to discuss and/or vote on in advance of next DSB Meeting:
  + DSB CoC Liaisons should report the following to CoCs:
    - There is a new Lead Agency for CT HMIS: Advancing Connecticut Together
      * Jackie Gardner hired as HMIS Director
    - The DSB meetings are closed to non-members at this time
    - All meeting notes will be available on CTHMIS.com
    - Removal of Gender and Sexual Orientation from Data Collection in HMIS

**Items tabled for discussion until next meeting:**

* Strategic Discussions:
  + [DSB Priorities](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VNJEiHh8J-C-mLqpTUElv-ZLY1gYs5W6vTVZ-0AoGeE/edit?usp=sharing) and future planning
* Cold Weather Data Collection
* Document Updates
  + Policies & Procedures (Attached to Agenda Email)
  + Data Quality Management Plan (Attached to Agenda Email)
  + Release of Information
* Roles & Responsibilities Clarity
  + Roles of DSB, ACT/HMIS Director, & Nutmeg