



## King County

### Department of Community and Human Services

Jackie MacLean, Director

401 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 510  
Seattle, WA 98104

**(206) 263-9100** Fax (206) 296-5260  
TTY Relay 711

July 18, 2013

The Honorable Kathy Lambert  
King County Council District 3  
Metropolitan King County Council  
Room 1200  
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Lambert:

Thank you for your June 20, 2013 letter expressing strong concerns regarding operations and related data quality of Safe Harbors, the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for the Seattle-King County Homeless Continuum of Care. As you note, the quality of the Safe Harbors system and data is instrumental in our understanding of who is homeless and what they need, and in our efforts to end homelessness in King County.

King County and our Safe Harbors partners took advantage of the opportunity for technical assistance offered to us by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in order to strengthen our HMIS, and as an opportunity to work on continuous improvement. The resultant *Seattle/King County Safe Harbors HMIS Assessment Report* reflects a thorough assessment of Safe Harbors and provides recommendations and a roadmap for strengthening implementation to meet our data needs.

King County Department of Community and Human Services staff is currently working with Safe Harbors and our partners at the City of Seattle, United Way of King County and the Committee to end Homelessness to respond to the recommendations in the report and to develop a work plan that will result in improvement. The draft work plan will be reviewed by partners in September and October 2013. We will ensure that the work plan has specific deliverables and timelines for the priority areas, which will be reflected in the 2014 Safe Harbors contracts as appropriate.

Since receiving a draft of the technical assistance report earlier this year, we have worked with Safe Harbors, our partners and the Department of Commerce on a number of improvements that have been made, or are scheduled for this calendar year. Progress and work plan items specific to the key areas of concern that you indicate included the following:

#### Improvement in Vendor Management of Adsystem:

August 2012: With a goal of improved vendor response and ticket resolution, the Washington State Department of Commerce developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the HMIS vendor, Adsystem, to raise performance expectations. The number of Adsystem unresolved tickets has been reduced significantly from 509 to 40 between August 2012 and June 2013.



**Enhancement of Information Technology (IT) and System Administration Skills:**

- November 2012: Seattle Human Services Department (HSD) added and filled a Director of Data Integrity position. This position supervises both Safe Harbors and HSD IT, which strengthens Safe Harbor's access to IT skills and support.
- January 2013: Safe Harbors hired a new Safe Harbors Technical Program Manager with a background in system and vendor management to increase the technical expertise and leadership for Safe Harbors.
- November 2013: Safe Harbors staff will have completed system administration certification training and testing through Adsystemtech.

**Improvement in Responsiveness to the Needs of Provider Agencies:**

- June-July 2013: A group of Safe Harbors users is assisting Safe Harbors with Adsystemtech Version 5 roll-out through user testing to ensure user needs for functionality are met.
- Third Quarter 2013: Safe Harbors is on track to train and implement Version 5 of the HMIS software. The implementation of Version 5 will provide new technologies to better address provider agency needs, such as enhanced reporting functionality and Web-based training.
- October 2013: A Safe Harbors User's Group will be in place and begin meeting to ensure user needs for functionality, reporting and training are understood and met.

**Improvement in Data Quality:**

- Ongoing: Safe Harbors has implemented a monthly on-going data quality review process involving review of data quality and completeness, and subsequent agency notifications, education and data clean-up.
- 2013 HUD data submission: The Safe Harbors Annual Housing Assessment Report (AHAR) table shells were accepted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for 2011 and 2012. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's acceptance of the table shells indicates that HUD considers our data to be of sufficient quality and completeness to be useable for data analysis. There was a marked improvement of data quality from 2011 to 2012 reflected in the AHAR data.
- Fourth Quarter 2013: Safe Harbors, with the users group, will review and revise its HMIS client consent forms and procedures in an effort to increase the number of people who provide identifying information.

Now that the technical assistance report is final, we are able to complete the implementation of the recommendations and measure their success. I will keep you apprised of progress.

We are working closely with the King County Information Technology Department on this project.

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I appreciate you expressing your concerns and your interest in the success of the HMIS. If you have any questions, or need additional information about Safe Harbors, please do not hesitate to contact me at 206-263-9006.

Sincerely,

  
Jackie MacLean  
Director

cc: Brian Bonlender, Director, Washington State Department of Commerce  
Mary Schwartz, HMIS Support Staff, Washington State Department of Commerce  
The Honorable Mike McGinn, City of Seattle  
The Honorable Sally J. Clark, President, Seattle City Council  
The Honorable Sally Bagshaw, Seattle City Council  
The Honorable Tim Burgess, Seattle City Council  
The Honorable Richard Conlin, Seattle City Council  
The Honorable Jean Godden, Seattle City Council  
The Honorable Bruce A. Harrell, Seattle City Council  
The Honorable Nick Licata, Seattle City Council  
The Honorable Mike O'Brien, Seattle City Council  
The Honorable Tom Rasmussen, Seattle City Council  
Catherine L. Lester, Interim Director, City of Seattle Human Services Department  
Jerry DeGriek, Office of the Mayor, City of Seattle  
Sara Levin, Vice President of Community Services, United Way of King County  
Dan Brettler, Member, Committee to End Homelessness Governing Board  
The Honorable Dow Constantine, King County Executive  
The Honorable Larry Gossett, Chair, King County Council  
The Honorable Joe McDermott, King County Council  
Bill Kehoe, Director, King County Information Technology  
Diep Nguyen, IT Service Delivery Manager II, King County Information Technology  
Kelli Carroll, King County Council Staff  
Mary Bourguignon, King County Council Staff  
Jeff Morris, Legislative Aide, Councilmember Lambert's Office  
Terry Mark, Deputy Director, Department of Community and Human Services  
Gretchen Bruce, Acting Special Projects Manager III, Committee to End Homelessness  
Greg Ferland, Division Director, Community Services Division  
Kate Speltz, Project/Program Manager II, Community Services Division

