

5.2: Data System Assessment Checklist

Instructions

This Data System Assessment Checklist will help your team understand whether your system is fully meeting your needs. The checklist also includes suggested enhancements or changes if needs are identified.

1. Read the item under the first column. If this exists for your agency, check the “True” box in the center column, and then proceed to the next item.
2. If you do not check “True,” read the information in the right column (Potential System Enhancements or Changes) to see what modifications or improvements can be made to your existing system.
3. Once you have completed the entire assessment, examine which items were not checked to determine if there is overlap in potential system enhancements (e.g., a change to forms may address numbers 2 and 3 below) and identify priorities for resources.

Data Input

Data Input	True?	Potential System Enhancements or Changes
1. The input forms provide the necessary data collection fields for all information required by the agency, model, and funder to produce reports.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Modify data collection fields (input forms) to match reports.
2. The input forms are easy to use; home visitors do not complain about the time or	<input type="checkbox"/>	Modify existing forms or create new ones to collect all necessary data. The new forms will improve the staff

complexity in entering their case file data.		workflow. The team works with staff to develop and test the new forms.
3. There are input forms for all information that is required for client documentation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	New forms or tables can be created to assure all client documentation is captured.

Data Storage and Case Management

Data Storage	True?	Potential System Enhancements or Changes
4. The data is stored in a secure system; only authorized individuals have access to sensitive program data.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider creating at least three levels of user access control (e.g., direct service staff, supervisor).
5. There is a procedure for backing up data; so, in case of hardware failure or natural disasters, client or program data would not be lost.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data locally hosted (within the building or community where services are being provided) is at risk of being lost. Consider backing up on a daily basis and/or in real time to a more secure platform such as a cloud server. A potential alternative is to routinely have backups stored in a disaster proof vault.
6. The data system is accessible to program staff in a convenient way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	If access is a concern, consider re-evaluating the system and its use. If internet connections are poor, consider using a locally-hosted data system.

Data Case Management	True?	Potential System Enhancements or Changes
7. The data system supports the staff in managing their caseloads.	<input type="checkbox"/>	If the data system does not support caseload monitoring, consider building an ongoing report to monitor caseloads based on multiple factors including travel time and needs of current clients.
8. The data system provides reminders of upcoming screenings and/or allows home visitors to track client screenings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Create reminders that are often called “ticklers” in data systems. Many data systems support calendar-based reminders.

Data Output

Basic Reporting	True?	Potential System Enhancements or Changes
9. The data system contains reports that	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with contractor or database manager to develop new reports. Databases should not require hand-counting data. If this is the case for your program, it may be ultimately

meet model, funder, and agency requirements.		easier and cheaper for your program to design a custom report with a vendor.
10. The reports are readily accessible to the users.	<input type="checkbox"/>	If reports exist but the end users cannot access them, consider training staff and giving appropriate access to reports.
11. The reports can be easily changed to meet evolving reporting requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	If reports are “hard coded” meaning they were developed using a query code (i.e., someone with experience in programming language has to recode the report) and are not user changeable, they may lack agility to meet changing needs. Consider a reporting module like Crystal Reports, Business Objects, or Cognos. Reports that are generated with these tools can be user modified.

Custom Reporting and Data Extraction	True?	Potential System Enhancements or Changes
12. The data system contains customized reporting capabilities that are easy to use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider training a staff member on a business intelligence tool and adding it to your data system.
13. Data can be readily exported by staff in a usable manner for use by other analytic software such as Excel, SAS, or SPSS.	<input type="checkbox"/>	If your current data system does not allow you to export raw data for reanalysis, consider hiring a contractor to add data export capabilities. Note that Excel, SAS, and SPSS primarily work with “flat” files, or files where all of the data is in one table; whereas databases typically work with “relational” files where data is found in multiple tables that are connected to one another, which can complicate data export.
14. Custom reports can be created without incurring additional development costs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	If the creation of new custom reports requires hiring a contractor to develop the reports, adding a business intelligence tool and training a staff member to use it might be a sensible option. There can be a cost savings and efficiency advantage in the long run if many custom reports are required yearly. Options can be explored with an appropriate data system consultant or contractor.