VISION FOR VICTIM SERVICES

Data Collection, Reporting and Outcomes Project

Problem

Pennsylvanians are committed to helping persons who suffer loss or injury from acts of criminal violence. Victims and their families may receive crisis intervention, counseling, shelter, court and medical accompaniment, financial assistance and other specialized services. Over 175 Victim Service Programs (VSP) throughout Pennsylvania provide services annually to hundreds of thousands of individuals (currently 400,000+) who become victims of crime. These programs count on funding from local, state and national government agencies as well as charitable organizations to provide quality services to victims and their families, witnesses and significant others, raise public awareness, affect critical changes, and bring education, protection and safety into communities, workplaces and homes in Pennsylvania.

To ensure that dollars dispersed throughout the Commonwealth meet the diverse needs of crime victims and their families, the funding organizations (funders) responsible for disbursing funds for VSP's have mandatory reporting requirements. Each VSP administrator must collect and report data on the use of funds it receives and the outcomes experienced by clients it serves. Administrators may spend as much as 44% of their staff time providing these reports.

Funders that finance and oversee VSP's are increasingly concerned with weaknesses in the traditional processes of reporting and accountability used by these programs. These numerous funding organizations include the United Way of Pennsylvania (UW), Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW), Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH), Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV), Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). Collectively, these organizations fund and/or oversee millions of dollars annually for VSP's.

The community of funding organizations has long recognized the need for improved data collection and reporting from the VSP's. Growing pressure from advocacy groups and increasing budget pressures offered the opportunity for funding leaders to seek an improved system for data collection, data reporting, outcomes performance evaluation and case management.

Solution

The Office of Victims' Services is working in collaboration with the PCADV, PCAR, DPW, DOH and the UW to provide a comprehensive coordinated data collection, reporting and outcomes tracking technology solution with the functionality of an integrated case management system.

As administrators of funds, these entities envision the enhanced ability for VSP's to provide quality service to victim services clients by improving the collection, tracking, quality and usefulness of information gathered from VSP's. In addition to reporting program measurement data, there is also a focus on reporting outcomes resulting from services rendered to help oversight and funding organizations better assess the effectiveness of programs.

A web-based system for victim service programs will achieve administrative efficiencies making the case management process easier, faster and less costly; thus allowing organizations to use important client demographic and service delivery information for benchmarking, performance-based budgeting, and reporting; and facilitating the exchange of information to promote funding requirements, strategic planning and decision-making.

The Data Collection Reporting and Outcomes Project will ultimately accomplish the following objectives:

1- Provide an automated, streamlined, standardized, data collection system that is user friendly and customizable.

2- Provide the flexibility to adapt to the needs of reporting organizations and funding agencies.

3-Reduce the administrative burden of VSP's and provide needed information as well as program performance data.

4-Provide a case management system for VSP's to assist in coordinating the service plans and delivery of services provided from multiple programs for victims and their families.

Business Issues

From a statewide funder's perspective, the current process utilized by VSP's in Pennsylvania for data collection is cumbersome, time consuming and outdated. A VSP may receive funding from as many as a dozen different funding sources. Each funder requires quantifiable data to show how their money is being spent, what it is being spent on, the number of individuals who benefited from their money and the services that they received. The problem lies in that each of the funders require specific data on a specific form for a specific period of time; but, there is no standardization and the process is far from modernized.

Recognizing the importance of the DCROP, the funders have formed a Governance Committee as an advisory body for the project. Additionally, a Project Charter was developed as a guide to the project and outlines the basis and purpose of the data collection, reporting and outcomes project; identifies the high-level goals and objectives of the project; and identifies the key stakeholders and their commitment to the successful implementation of the project.

Results

PCCD issued a Request For Quote on June 8, 2010, to vendors for an information technology system for Data Collection, Reporting and Outcomes Project. Contract negotiations are complete and work will commence with selected vendor in January 2011. The development and implementation of the technology solution is being funded by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Stimulus money.

The vendor will work initially with the six (6) VSP's that have been identified as pilot sites for initial implementation. After successful implementation with those sites, the system will be implemented in a structured roll-out of the remaining 110 VSP's located throughout the Commonwealth by December 2011.

The expected benefits of the Data Collection, Reporting and Outcomes Project are improved services to victims of crime and their families through increased focus on successful outcomes, better management of the provider/client relationship, and more efficient use of VSP funds. This project is an additional step to make sure victims are receiving maximum benefit from VSP resources and the programs are helping them achieve the best possible outcomes.