

> Bowman Systems Case Study
**New England's Homeless
Population**



How regional collaboration, and the Web, will mean better services for New England's homeless population.

> Executive Summary

In social services, as in corporate America, the need for efficiency is crucial. Resources are scarce; demand is great. In the quest to use resources as efficiently as possible, one word continues to emerge among social service providers: cooperation.

> Challenges

In the New England Region, as in others in the United States, the challenges of addressing the needs of the homeless are only growing. Agencies need the ability to cross state lines, as do their consumers, so they can share information and experience – thus combining the power of their resources and work as teams to address challenges on a regional basis.

> Solution

In August 2003, eight people from Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine - along with a HUD field staffer — met to create the New England Regional Homeless Management Information System (NERHMIS). Their goals: promote regional collaboration in Homeless Management Information Systems and create the ability to speak with a unified voice. The enabling HMIS software vehicle common to each state - ServicePoint, by Bowman Systems – would carry forward, to become one of the enabling mechanisms for NERHMIS as well.

> Results

Membership in the group is up from 8 to 21, with the number of represented states growing from 3 to 6. Funding for technical assistance and training has been solidified thanks to a grant applied for by the University of Massachusetts in Boston. Additionally, the group has drawn the attention of the Washington DC-based QED Group, which works with HUD to assist communities implementing HMIS systems. QED sees the collaborative as an opportunity to promote efficiency and better meet HUD goals.

Of particular interest is the group's planned consumer advisory committee. This committee will be supported by Julia Tripp, a communications consultant and an expert in helping communities involve consumers in Continuum of Care planning and HMIS. Ms. Tripp has been contracted to work with the group as a consumer involvement specialist on the HUD National Technical Assistance Grant, and has provided assistance to five of the states in the region previously. NERHMIS hopes to have her bring together those she has worked with in each of the states.

The key to Ms. Tripp's efforts will be the ability of consumers to communicate their thoughts about the coalition's efforts by committee and via the Internet and Web.

The common software thread throughout all the NERHMIS member states is Servicepoint, the most widely used Consumer Management Information System available – the software of choice among social service agencies. Thus ServicePoint will play a key role in NERHMIS efforts, using its Web-enabled power and reliability to link members and agencies and gather data for the group. To more fully support the group, a Bowman Systems staffer has become a regular member - to record group feedback on the product, its support, and rollout challenges from the field. "Bowman Systems has the vision to support the initiatives of NERHMIS and this is an essential ingredient for us to meet the benchmarks and goals we have established," said Brian M. Smith, who chairs the group. In many ways, the group's work could be considered groundbreaking.

"This is the first federal region to establish such a network of collaboration and mutual support in the implementation of HMIS," Smith noted. "This is an exciting group of stakeholders working in a dynamic way to reduce homelessness in all of our communities."

> The Future

The group hopes to establish a NERHMIS webpage, a list serve and training for member states. It also hopes to start designing model demonstration projects, develop uniform outcome measurement and program analysis. It's hoped that the group will become a model region for ending chronic homelessness.

> Contact Information

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