Session # C-7

Title: Use of Administrative Data Systems for Program Monitoring, Research and
Evaluation

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SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION
Examine the questions you want to ask: what data available? Do you need to combine different data types (administrative + survey) and sources to accomplish your goals. Administrative data has the advantage of large sample size (allowing for small area analysis), longitudinal data, and detailed program level variables. Disadvantages include limits to the kind of data collected, quality or completeness of some variables, lack of information on non-program participants States define who is included and what a variable measures in different ways. Polices and practices change over time even within a unit. Compare with caution. Several speakers emphasized that using these data involves a learning curve and partnering with people who know the data well is essential. The originating agency owns the data. You need to build a trust relationship with them to gain access. They need to know that you will protect the data and that they will be consulted about the products of your work. Any sharing of the data must include permissions from the originating agency. Data sharing agreements can be very difficult and time consuming to negotiate. As with any data about individuals, the relevant privacy laws and regulations must be observed. The South Carolina data warehouse is an excellent example of how to build a highly integrated collection of administrative data.
SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Questions about how to build partnerships to gain access

Concerns about politicization of data – agencies may find it easiest to prevent or delay access with complex data sharing arrangements. Reporting requests may be motivated by people with prior ideas about what they want the data to say.

State MIS systems and the departments that support them may be unable or unwilling to be helpful in making administrative data available.

Concern was expressed again about attempting to use data from different states or administrative units that may have varying definitions of relevant populations and measures.

KEY POINTS