

# Position Statement

2022

## Human Services Data Governance and Access

### Proposal

#### Issue:

The primary issue addressed in this position is one of data governance and operations. Counties have not been able to fully maximize statutorily approved uses of data due to disjointed and inconsistent data governance norms, policies, and operational processes. The Department of Human Services own many of these processes and the challenges they present impact counties, tribal nations, and Human Services program staff. It is not uncommon for counties to wait several months, even years, to secure access to data for statutorily approved uses. Staff with responsibility for governing data use are in siloed operations across DHS with differing understanding of applicable statutes that result in differing processes and different decision-making criteria.

Beyond issues of efficacy, the current approach to data governance and operations does not align with the modernized vision of human services and quickly evolving practice models. Improved access to data is critical to support the vision for modernized, integrated services, and Agile product development whether at the state, tribal, or county level.

#### Implementation Strategy:

MACSSA recommends a multi-pronged approach to address data governance and operations issues. Data governance goals will include quickly and easily providing access for statutorily approved uses to counties and tribes while enhancing effective compliance tools. A specific recommendation is to draft legislative language directing DHS to create a joint data governance structure that includes DHS, MNIT, Counties and Tribes. Important roles of the new governance structure would include, but are not limited to:

- Evaluate proposed data use cases and make decisions alignment with statutorily approved uses
- Establish uniform and consistent processes for requesting data access from the state. Evaluate opportunities for greater centralization and transparency.
- Issue decisions with rationale on requested data access.
- Disputes over access and use would be decided with equal representation from DHS, MNIT, Counties and Tribes.
- Work with IPAD and other appropriate staff to develop training materials and other technical assistance.

This approach recognizes that counties and tribes require authority, as opposed to limited input, to impact data operations at the source system level in order to ensure access for approved uses. It also provides necessary transparency and efficiency on data issues and decisions in alignment with system transformation goals.

### **Systemic Priority Alignment (highlight all that apply and explain why)**

- **Equity**
- **Integrated Services**
- **Fiscal Framework**

#### **Comments:**

Lack of access to data for case management, evaluation, and other statutorily approved uses has direct implications for all three system priorities: Equity, Integrated Services, and creating a transparent Fiscal Framework. MACSSA proposes to use the GARE Toolkit to assess equity implications from a modernized human services governance and operations model. From the GARE Toolkit (See [www.racialequityalliance.org](http://www.racialequityalliance.org)): What are the racial equity impacts of decisions on data access? Who will benefit from or be burdened by them? Are there strategies to mitigate unintended consequences?

### **Relevant Committee (highlight all that apply and explain why)**

- **Modernization**
- **Adult Services**
- **Behavioral Health**
- **Children's Services**
- **Policy**
- **Self-Sufficiency**

#### **Why:**

Issues related to timely access to data have come up in virtually all MACSSA committees in multiple contexts. The ability to readily access statutorily approved data will impact case management, eligibility coordination, and evaluation for all human services programs.

### **Rationale/Background:**

Modernization of human services programs, processes, and technology is imperative to effectiveness and sustainability of publicly funded human services. The current system is complex, fragmented, administratively burdensome for all, and doesn't produce the outcomes Minnesotans need from these critical community supports.

Key goals of Modernization include developing more person-centered and integrated service delivery models that are dependent on access to data. Program data is needed to create coordinated and effective service plans at the individual level and both individual and summary data are needed to evaluate outcomes and programs in the effort to continuously improve Minnesota's human services system.

Counties have effectively advocated for increased statutory access to data for these purposes. In 2017, local county Housing, Veterans, and Public Health agencies were included under the statutory definition of "Welfare Data" in support

of interagency data sharing. The statute allows for broad sharing of “welfare data” between covered agencies to support coordinating eligibility, case management, and program evaluation among other permitted uses. The 2017 changes also outlined acceptable data sharing between local “welfare” agencies with and Community Corrections and local school districts. Notwithstanding the expanded data sharing provisions from 2017, it remains difficult to access the data and use it for approved purposes.



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Approved on: