

**PUBLIC HOUSING
ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM
INITIATIVE**

SYSTEMS FOCUS GROUP



**OBSERVATIONS
AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

SEPTEMBER 15, 2007

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Executive Summary

The members of the Systems Group would like to thank HUD for the opportunity of participating in the Reform Initiative. We would also like to thank all the HUD staff that very graciously offered their time and technical expertise to the group. We would especially like to thank the group's facilitator from HUD, Mr. Robert Dalzell.

Within a short time of our initial meeting on July 12th it became apparent that evaluating and making recommendations for improvements to the various data processing systems would be a daunting task. Over the years both the breadth and scope of electronic data collection and reporting by HUD has increased dramatically. Today both HUD and its PHA partners interact with and rely on a wide range of diverse systems on a daily basis. While the increased use of these electronic systems has certainly increased the availability of programmatic information, the increased use and reliance on these systems also extracts a high cost. Both HUD and PHAs devote considerable resources, both in dollars and in manpower, maintaining, improving and operating these systems.

Given the extensive scope and significant costs of all the various systems, it is essential that they operate as efficiently as possible. In a time of diminished resources, neither HUD nor PHAs can afford to maintain or utilize systems which are poorly designed, hard to use or inefficient. It is also absolutely critical that HUD and its PHA partners have an effective partnership in systems development and use.

Unfortunately the HUD-PHA partnership involving electronic systems has often fallen far short of the ideal. While there are a variety of reasons for this shortcoming, the most important factors are a lack of effective communication and a lack of effective training. This conclusion does not represent the views of just the PHAs serving on the Systems Group. But rather the lack of effective communication and the lack of effective training were the single overriding concern stated by: PHAs across the county; HUD staff; industry groups and third party software vendors.

As one might expect, given the complexity and diversity of systems, there is a laundry list of specific software and systems issues of concern to various stakeholders. However, the issues of communication and training were a universal concern and one that evoked considerable passion from the various stakeholders. There exists a very clear sense of anxiety and frustration from all stakeholders. HUD staff expresses concerns of an ever-increasing amount of time spent on systems related problems and issues. PHAs express virtually daily frustration in attempting to use systems that they do not understand and for which they have received inadequate training.

The costs of this breakdown in communication and training, while not readily quantifiable, are nonetheless substantial. The wasted manpower by both HUD and the PHAs is significant and continues to grow. With the implementation of asset management and Asset Management Project (AMP) reporting requirements, the introduction of new systems such as SAGIS and the continual modification of existing systems, the current strain on both HUD and PHAs will only become more significant if not addressed.

The attached report outlines the issues, and specific recommendations to address each issue identified by the various stakeholders. Each recommendation is assigned a priority score of one, two or three. Priority one issues are those we believe should be addressed within six months. Recommendations coded priority two issues should be implemented within a year. The time frame for correction of priority code three issues is eighteen months.

The reader should note that our first priority code one recommendation is the formation of a permanent systems advisory group. We believe that without a continual dialog between HUD and its PHA partners, any long-term improvement of the various issues identified in this report will not be possible.

Summary of Recommendations By Priority

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Study Methodology

The Systems Focus Group held daylong meetings in Washington, DC on July 12th and 24th. The group held 2-hour teleconferences on August 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th and September 11th.

In addition to input from focus group members, input was also solicited from all PHAs through an Internet based web survey. The survey consisted of detailed questions concerning PHA experiences with a variety of HUD electronic systems, ranging from PIC to EIV to newly introduced SAGIS. The survey also solicited comments on general system issues such as training and communications. One hundred sixty PHAs participated in the survey, with sixty-five PHAs completing the entire document. Fifty-two PHAs gave written responses to open ended questions providing specific issues or recommendations for improvements. In addition, focus group members from the training and communications subgroup also solicited informal comments from PHAs, HUD staff, and various industry groups to obtain feedback specific to training and communication.

The final report is a compilation of contributions from all the groups' members. The recommendations contained in this report represent a general consensus as to the issues raised and recommendations offered.

Section I **Communications and Training**

1. Establish a permanent systems advisory group

Priority 1

Issue

PHAs lack sufficient input into development, modification and implementation of the various electronic systems. Often systems are developed and modified without any significant input of the end users, the PHAs. HUD's approach to changes in implementation of new business processes can be overly complex when a more direct and less costly solution may be available. In some instances, HUD makes changes to requirements that affect the PHA's business process that have an impact on their software systems. HUD's attempt to provide a solution is appreciated, however often the solution makes it more difficult for PHAs and software vendors to update their own systems. In many instances consultation with PHAs and software vendors could identify a different approach which would be less cumbersome and costly, yet still providing the same outcomes HUD is seeking.

Recommendation

It is recommended that a permanent systems testing and advisory group be established to assist with strengthening and identifying communication weaknesses, as well as other systems related issues. The vision would be to solicit participants from a diverse group of approximately 15 individuals internal and external to HUD. PHAs representatives would be selected to insure a range of agency sizes, geographic locations and job functions (e.g. executive, financial, management, technical, etc.). The advisory group would meet on a monthly basis via conference call and no less than on a quarterly basis in person.

The systems testing and advisory group would:

- Provide guidance on ways to improve as well as make HUD's interactive systems more useful to PHAs;
- Aid in providing guidance that would lessen any negative impact changes could have on PHA business and their business process and;

- Complete and oversee system testing and its corresponding release documentation in an effort to optimize implementation results for both HUD and PHAs.

This type of relationship would move HUD into a shared systems relationship with the PHAs and others in lieu of the current autocratic relationship.

2. Improve the quality and quantity of training

Priority 1

Issue

One of the prevailing systems related concerns of PHAs and Field Office staff is the lack of training for HUD's many systems, as well as poor training. In our survey of PHAs, 73% of the respondents rated HUD provided training as either fair or poor and no respondents rated the training as excellent. The various HUD systems are continually changing, imposing new requirements and procedures on PHAs and Field Office staff. Yet there is frequently no training. What training is offered is usually extremely limited, often consisting of only a one-time webcast offering general overviews of system information. When training is scheduled for a new system such as SAGIS, notification is usually "last minute" and the systems are not totally functional, which limits the benefit of the training.

Recommendations

PIC: We recommend that the PIC coaches take a more active role in PIC system training. PIC coaches could provide regularly scheduled training/problem solving sessions to PHAs via the internet and in person, when ever possible. Online conferencing software is very affordable and relatively easy to use. Such regularly scheduled sessions (perhaps quarterly) could provide refresher training for existing systems; introductory training for new/modified system functions; and an opportunity to discuss specific problems or issues of concern to either the PHAs or HUD.

We believe that in the longer term, such regular training sessions will actually reduce the workload of the PIC coaches. Improved training for the PHAs will result in a reduction in calls for technical assistance and problem resolution. In addition, problems discussed by a specific PHA during an on line session, are often issues that affect other PHAs. Discussing and resolving problems in a group setting is much more efficient than dealing with the same issue separately with numerous PHAs. Where quality webcast training is provided, it is recommended that the training be accessible anytime.

We also recommend that training for other major systems including EIV, FASS, and SAGIS be provided via the internet using webcast, online conferencing software, and in person regionally when ever possible.

Helpdesk - It is recommended that:

- Helpdesk staff be required to take an intense course in customer service training. Additionally, it is recommended that conversations between helpdesk staff and customers be tape-recorded. This would serve as an incentive for helpdesk staff to provide respectful and courteous customer service to all customers.
- Helpdesk staff obtains comprehensive program knowledge training that will equip them with the program knowledge necessary to more effectively assist PHAs and HUD staff with systems issues.
- Field Office staff be cross-trained to assist PHAs with HUD systems questions in addition to PIC Coaches.
- HQs develop a Train-the-Trainer Program that would train Field Office staff on systems, and then these same individuals would serve as a resource in training other HUD staff and PHAs.
- HQs conduct more Users Acceptance Training before implementing a new systems

3. Improve the quality of communications

Priority 1

Issues

Communication between PHAs, HUD Field Offices and Headquarters staff regarding systems issues is very weak and ineffective. There are several key problems that hinder effective communication such as:

a) Lack of notification about systems problems and changes:

When there are problems with HUD systems or changes the PHA's and/or HUD Field Offices are not informed, which causes the PHA's and HUD Field staff to spend a lot of unnecessary time on researching issues that

HUD Headquarters are already aware of, but have not communicated the issues to the PHAs and Field Offices.

b) Inefficient REAC/TAC Customer Service:

Customers contacting the REAC/TAC helpdesk are experiencing long delays in obtaining technical support or not receiving responses regarding reported systems problems. Callers complain that helpdesk staff treats them rudely. The word "horrible" is used to describe the level of support received from the helpdesk. In our web survey 47% of PHAs ranked their experience with helpdesk support as fair or poor. The helpdesk staff does not exhibit the knowledge skills and abilities necessary to provide adequate support to customers regarding systems problems. When a ticket number is issued for a problem, frequently the ticket is closed with the problem remaining unresolved.

c) Lack of clear guidance:

When HUD Headquarters issues information request to PHAs, it is difficult for PHAs to determine exactly what is being requested from them. The PHAs uncertainty is a result of the information request not being clearly communicated.

d) Weak Field Office Communication Channels:

Field Office staff is often omitted from distribution of information disseminated to PHAs from REAC. For example: When PHAs are granted an extension to submit data, the local field office is not informed of the extension. Also, systems changes occur and the field offices are not informed; which prevents them from being able to provide adequate technical assistance to PHAs.

e) Inadequate/Unrealistic deadlines/Last minute communication:

Requests for information from PHA or Field staff, training opportunity announcements, etc., are often communicated to PHAs and Field Office staff at the "eleventh hour", giving inadequate time for response, or to take advantage of a training opportunity. Changes to systems, system updates usually scheduled at the same time as critical deadlines such as SEMAP or FASS submission dates, and PIC delinquency assessment date. PHAs are required to take action by a certain deadline, and the deadlines are changed or extended at the last minute.

Recommendations

PIC: Expand the duties of the PIC coach in the local field offices. HUD currently provides essentially two forms of systems support to PHAs, the national help desk and the PIC coaches in the local field offices. This seems to be an inefficient use of resources and creates confusion between PHAs and HUD staff.

We recommend that the role of the PIC coaches be expanded and that the PIC coaches become the primary source of systems support and communicators to PHAs. We believe assistance provided on a more local level will provide more benefit to both PHAs and HUD. PIC coaches have knowledge of the PHAs in their jurisdiction, which is knowledge unavailable to help desk staff. The frequent interaction that occurs between PIC coaches and PHAs provides the field offices with a better understanding of current and future problems at a specific PHA. From a PHA perspective, having a single point of contact for systems issues allows for more effective and open communication.

Expanding the role of PIC coaches reduces the national help desk PHA support role. The help desk could serve as a resource for PIC coaches, rather than a primary source of contact with the PHAs. The option of contacting the national help desk would remain in place to accommodate those times when the PIC coach is unavailable or other circumstances exist. But the primary source of systems assistance would be through the local PIC coach.

PIC/Other Systems: Further, it is recommended that the frequent monitoring of the 50058 Discussion Forum be reinstated. It is believed that currently Bob Harmon a former HUD employee, now a contractor is monitoring the forum on an occasional basis. It would be much more beneficial if the forum were monitored more frequently, as in the past. Prior to the PIC helpdesk being terminated the 50058-discussion forum was a wonderful communication tool between PHAs and HUD. The frequent discussion monitoring by HUD PIC Help staff was extremely useful. HUD PIC Help staff would monitor the discussions and provide written technical assistance. Because the discussion forum concept is such a useful tool and valued so highly, it is recommended that it be implemented across systems (e.g., SAGIS, EIV, FASS-PHA).

Helpdesk:

- It is recommended that the helpdesk be staffed with individuals who have much boarder program knowledge, such as HUD Headquarters staff. In this case contractor support is not effective at all.

- The PIC helpdesk worked great! It is recommended that the PIC helpdesk-operating procedures be revisited and implemented as part of the current helpdesk procedures.

Additional:

- It is recommended that the website be updated more timely, particularly the Frequently Asked Questions section.
- Create a vehicle to communicate with Field Office and PHAs regularly regarding HUD systems (quarterly webcast, HUD systems newsletter/bulletin; conference calls).
- Implement an annual conference and host in various HUD Regions where users can come to receive knowledge on updates, changes, enhancements; demos; and training on all HUD systems

4. Improve notification of changes to HUD's interactive systems

Priority 1

Issue

HUD often releases updates to their Systems without providing prior Public Housing Authority (PHA) and Software Vendor (SV) knowledge. The various system update releases have stated deadlines for implementation which often are insufficient to effectively digest, plan and implement in a timely manner due to competing priorities and limited resources.

When HUD releases changes to their interactive systems they do not always provide technical specifications regarding the changes made. This makes it difficult for PHAs and their SV to understand fully and accurately the changes required of their respective systems in order to meet implementation deadlines.

Recommendation

HUD should provide a minimum advance of 120 days of the implementation deadline for any change to a HUD system. At the same time, HUD should provide impact guides for PHAs and technical reference guides including difference documents for all changes to their interactive systems

Section II **General Systems Issues**

1. Allow PHA reset of user passwords

Priority 2

Issue

Requiring users to contact HUD to reset passwords is time consuming and delays the work at the PHA.

Recommendation

PHA system administrators should be allowed to reset passwords of their staff.

2. Reduce the quarterly recertification of users in EIV

Priority 2

Issue

Requiring users to be recertified each quarter is burdensome for medium and large PHAs with significant numbers of users. In addition, the current method of user recertification, which requires accessing multiple screens is very cumbersome.

Recommendation

Replace quarterly user recertification with annual recertification. During the period between the annual certification process monitor user logins and automatically disable any user account which has remained inactive for more than 90 days. In addition, streamline the interface for user recertification.

3. Provide on line help when completing various forms

Priority 3

Issue

A number of HUD systems such as VMS, FASS, MASS and SAGIS require on line data entry by PHAs. However, there is no context sensitive help system associated with any of these on line forms. If a user has a question concerning what data should be entered into a particular field, they must reference whatever printed training materials have been made available. The lack of on line help increases PHA workload and results in unneeded technical assistance calls to the HUD.

Recommendation

Provide context sensitive help for all on line forms. Ideally the user should be able to right mouse click on any field and view a pop up box containing information and instructions for that field. In addition all data entry forms should contain a hyperlink to the most recent complete instruction manual for that form.

4. Simplify the WASS user security process

Priority 3

Issue

Establishing a user in WASS and assigning necessary permissions and roles is very cumbersome. The entire user administration system is very confusing and poorly designed. Attempting to add a new user and provide access to required sub modules is at best an exercise in extreme frustration.

Recommendation

Develop an "enrollment" wizard that will simplify the process of adding users and establishing permissions. Create a straightforward step-by-step process that will guide the user through the enrollment process. In addition, rewrite the instruction manual for the security module. Include in the revised manual a flow chart that clearly illustrates the relationships between the user account, roles and access to the various sub modules.

5. Allow for group user administration updates

Priority 3

Issue

There is no provision in the security administration module to apply global changes to a group of users.

Recommendation

Allow group user administration updates. Provide a tool to load a group of users and make them active or terminated. Also would be good for mass role updates. The same can be mentioned for WASS and EIV.

Section III **Form 50058 & PIC**

1. Correction of name mismatches with the SSA database

Priority 1

Issue

PHAs receive inadequate/inaccurate information concerning the nature of the name discrepancies with Social Security. Currently all the PHA is told is that the name reported is in error, however, PHAs are not told the name on file with SSA. This results in PHAs trying to "guess" at the nature of the problem and how to correct it. PHAs do not know if the problem is with the first or last name. PHAs do not know if the problem involves a totally incorrect name, or is related to something as simple as an apostrophe or hyphen in the name, or a transposition of letters in the name.

In addition, at times the name as reported by the PHA is correct, in spite of the errors generated by PIC. PIC staff has written and implemented an algorithm to validate each household member's SSN. However, this algorithm is not functioning correctly. There are instances in which the PHA has confirmed directly with SSA that the name as reported by the PHA is indeed correct, yet the PIC system reports the name as incorrect.

Recommendation

Supply the PHAs with the name on file in the SSA database. This will eliminate the need for PHAs to spend valuable time and resources investigating simple typographical errors. In addition, eliminate the algorithm and perform a direct match against the SSA data. There should also be a method to allow PHAs to certify that the name as submitted by the PHA is correct, in spite of the errors generated by the PIC system. Finally HUD needs to accept the reality that precisely matching every single participant's name, 100% of the time, is impossible.

2. Interfacing with other PHAs in resolving duplicate tenant ID issues

Priority 1

Issue

Currently the PIC error reports provide the PHAs with no information concerning other PHAs other than the PHA ID number. The reports do not provide the name or physical location of the PHA. Thus before the PHA can begin addressing the actual issue, they must spend valuable time researching who the other PHA is, obtain contact information and locate the appropriate staff member to assist them.

Recommendation

Include detail information on the PIC error reports about the other PHA(s). The PIC system already stores contact information for PHAs under the Authority Information section. Modify this contact information to include the primary contact person at each PHA for resolving PIC related issues. Provide this contact information in the PIC error reports.

3. Code Public Housing units as vacant on EOP

Priority 1

Issue

A large majority of PHAs who responded to our online survey expressed frustration that they are required to perform a two-step process simply to perform a routine move out. First the PHA must create and submit an action code 6 to PIC indicating an end of participation. The PHA must then manually log on to the PIC system, navigate to the unit database, find the corresponding unit and manually mark the unit as vacant.

It is exactly situations such as this that require PHAs to perform unneeded work that undermines PHA confidence in PIC and other HUD electronic systems. PHAs naturally wonder why they should even attempt to submit accurate information to PIC if HUD isn't going to use that data and will instead make PHAs manually enter the information.

Recommendation

Automatically mark a unit in PIC as vacant whenever a code 6, end of participation record is received. Publish clear guidelines to PHAs that explain under what circumstances the unit status will need to be manually changed in special use situations.

Note: This change was originally listed in HUD's proposed PIC new release requirements, but is now listed as "trash". This change would be of great assistance to PHAs.

4. Limit the frequency of PIC program updates

Priority 1

Issue

Currently the PIC system software is updated twice each year. Also additional non-critical updates are being implemented outside of the scheduled updates. Such frequent updates create difficulties for PHAs and software vendors. PHA staff is often only gaining proficiency with the latest PIC update when yet another version is implemented. This can be compared to being required to learn a new version of software such as Word or Excel every six months. You can imagine how frustrating that would be.

Recommendation

Maintain the twice a year update schedule, but organize the updates as follows: The second annual update (currently scheduled in November) would be limited to only the correction of software errors. No new functionality or changes to the user interface would be included in the second update. All changes in functionality and the user interface would be limited to the first annual update (currently scheduled in April). In addition, with the exception of a regulatory mandate, no software updates will be performed outside the normally scheduled updates.

5. Provide full social security numbers in error and other reports

Priority 1

Issue

Currently the PIC system is masking the full social security number in error and other reports provided to the PHAs. By not providing the full social security number, HUD makes participant/tenant verification difficult and time consuming for PHAs. The vast majority of PHA software utilizes the full social security number as the unique tenant identifier. Most software does not allow for a search by partial social security number. This means PHAs must often resort to a manual search of files to locate the referenced participant

Recommendation

Provide the full social security number on error and other related reports. While we understand the need to protect the data, the current policy makes no sense. The PHAs already have the full participant social security number on file, both on paper and stored electronically. Obviously PHAs are already supplying the numbers to HUD. Clearly it is more than a bit bizarre to entrust PHAs to collect social security numbers, store social security numbers, report social security numbers to HUD, but not be entrusted to view the very information they have already submitted!

6. Allow Alternate IDs for Foster Children

Priority 1

Issue

In some areas of the country social service agencies will not release the SSN for foster children. The Alternate ID Management System will not assign an alternate ID because the child has a valid SSN on file. PHAs cannot enter the foster child into the system without this data.

Recommendation

The Alternate ID Management should allow an "override" in these situations and issue an alternate ID.

7. Provide methodology for changes of Head of Household

Priority 1

Issue

The previous head of household (HOH) field (3w) if completed creates a fatal error.

Recommendation

There should be a method of changing HOH other than submitting and "End of Participation" on the former HOH and a Historical Adjustment for the new HOH.

8. Correct reporting rate calculation for Public Housing

Priority 1

Issue

Despite the fact that PHAs administering the public housing program have their vacant units coded properly, as well as residents with an end of participation coded properly, PHAs report that these units are still included in the denominator of the PIC reporting rate.

Recommendation

Correct the logic in the PIC software so that vacant units are excluded from the denominator when calculating the reporting rate.

9. Correctly reflect new admissions on PIC reports

Priority 2

Issue

If after a new admission's household 50058 data has been submitted successfully to PIC and the PHA subsequently submits an interim recertification or end of participation for the same household, the PHA is not credited with the admission in PIC's New Admissions Report or the Ad Hoc New Admissions Report.

Recommendation

Correct the logic in the PIC software so that new admissions are correctly reflected on the various reports.

10. Provide more information with PIC error messages

Priority 2

Issue

The error messages returned by PIC only contain a field number and at times, rather cryptic error message. This causes significant added work for the PHAs in attempting to ascertain the exact nature of the error.

Recommendation

Provide a description of the field in error in addition to the field number. In addition, rewrite error messages so they describe in plain English the nature of the error.

11. Improve processing of data transactions and system capacity

Priority 2

Issue

At times the PIC system can take days to process transmission of resident data. In addition PHAs often report extremely slow system response times or not being able to even gain access to the online system. PHAs routinely report the need to "get on the system early" (6:00 AM EST) or work on weekends in order to access the various on line systems.

Recommendation

The PIC system's ability to process data needs to be expanded. In addition, further investigation is required to determine if slow system response is related to system capacity or internet access issues at various PHAs.

12. Provide reports in real time

Priority 2

Issue

Currently reports in PIC are updated on a monthly basis. This lack of real time reports creates significant additional work for PHAs. Since current database changes are not reflected in reports, PHAs are forced to manually check each PIC record to verify that data updates are correctly reflected in the PIC database.

Recommendation

At a minimum PIC reports should reflect all data updates received by the end of the previous day (perhaps 10:00 PM EST).

13. Reduce fatal errors on EOP

Priority 2

Issue

PHAs sometimes receive fatal errors when submitting end of participation records. Clearly some fatal errors are applicable to terminations, for example, if the participant isn't currently active at the PHA. However, it makes no sense to return fatal errors concerning issues with the participant (such as an incorrect name match with the SSA database). Obviously a PHA may have no ability (or any reason to) research and correct errors for a moved out resident.

Recommendation

End of participation submissions should generate fatal errors only under very limited circumstances. So long as the participant is active at the associated PHA, a termination action should always be processed, irrespective of any other errors.

14. Allow PHAs to modify unit status

Priority 2

Issue

PHAs must rely on field office staff to change units to reflect unit conversions, removal from inventory and other associated actions. Often the field office staff is overworked, resulting in delays in updating the status of units. This makes it extremely difficult for PHAs to insure that the status of all units is reflected correctly in PIC.

Recommendation

Allow PHAs to change the status of units without the intervention of field office staff. Such PHA changes could be limited to only select PHA staff, such as users with administrator privileges. In addition, field office staff would receive notification of such changes entered by the PHAs and could contact a PHA if there were questions about the changes.

15. Accept EOP records with an earlier effective date

Priority 2

Issue

PHAs often submit annual or interim certifications to PIC in advance of the certification effective date. In fact PHAs are required to complete annual certifications at least 30 days in advance of the effective date. However, participants may move out of the assisted dwelling prior to the certification effective date. When this occurs PIC will not accept the end of participation record. In order to process the end of participation the PHA must perform a two-step process of first voiding the previously submitted certification, wait for the submission to be processed and then create a second submission containing the end of participation record.

Recommendation

Change the program logic in PIC to accept code 6 end of participation records with an effective date earlier than either an annual or interim certification previously submitted by the PHA. As a precaution against an inadvertent end of participation, a warning message could be returned to the PHA whenever such action occurred.

16. Provide a fatal error report

Priority 2

Issue

Currently PHAs are only informed of fatal errors on the unique error report for a particular submission file. There is no method for a PHA (other than manually referring to all the submission reports) to track fatal errors. In PHAs with a large amount of PIC activity, this can result in fatal errors being overlooked. In addition, with the change to asset management and individual AMP group reporting, the ability for supervisory staff to track fatal errors across multiple AMP submissions is essential.

Recommendation

Add a "Last Fatal 50058 Submission Error" data to MTCS, Ad Hoc Reports. This would greatly enhance the PHAs ability to track and correct fatal errors in a timely fashion.

17. Allow mass Alternate ID updates

Priority 2

Issue

There is currently no ability to perform multiple alternate ID updates in PIC. This creates a great deal of work and manual data entry for PHAs with a large number of participants.

Recommendation

This issue could be addressed in two ways.

- a. Provide a pre-defined list (yearly or as needed) of alternate IDs to the PHA. The PHA would then utilize the I.D s as needed and the 50058 would be accepted based upon cross-referencing with the allocated I.Ds.
- b. Provide a tool where many HOHs can be loaded and have I.D.s created at once. Then the PHA could import that data and update their records accordingly.

18. Improve PIC data downloads

Priority 2

Issue

Downloading resident and unit data is an issue for large PHAs. PIC can only handle downloading 10,000 records at the most, which requires PHAs to do multiple downloads. Unfortunately the PIC system times out after about 10 minutes, interrupting the download, because the system does not consider the download as an "activity". The system will also "skip" records during a download of resident data for the Section 8 program.

Recommendation

The PIC system should note downloading data as an activity or extend the time limit for inactivity.

The PIC system should also have a more efficient and consistent method for downloading unit and building data. The building and unit data can be

downloaded by development as a text file in the "PIC Download" section of PIC and includes the head of household information, which helps in identifying vacant units. The unit data can also be downloaded through the "Housing Inventory" sub-module as an excel spreadsheet with occupancy data. These two sections should be combined under one screen.

The PIC system should also have a more efficient and consistent method for downloading resident data. The MTCS Ad hoc reports should allow downloads by individual development not just program type as well as allow queries on any field in the 50058 form such as citizenship status. The 50058 Form Viewer has a report capability by program and by development. It is not clear why there are two different methods for downloading resident data and if there are any differences between them.

19. Modify the form 50058

Priority 3

Issue

The physical form 50058 is too long. The form is organized as if it were going to be completed by hand, rather than completed electronically. Virtually no PHAs complete the form manually, since all the included information must be reported to the PIC system. There is no longer any reason to have a printed form with detailed headings and extensive line-by-line calculation information.

Recommendation

Create a streamlined paper copy of the form 50058 for inclusion in the tenant files. One possible model is the Multi Family HUD 50059. The form 50059 reports very similar data to the 50058, but in less than half as many pages.

20. Reduce data collected on the form 50058

Priority 3

Issue

There are virtually no regulatory requirements mandating the collection of any of the data reported on the form 50058. While it is understood that to fulfill its oversight responsibilities HUD must collect some data on program participants, current data collection requirements are excessive. PHAs must now send to HUD

even the most esoteric portions of rent calculations involving participants. Because virtually every piece of information concerning participants and rent calculations can be collected does not mean it should be collected.

For example on the 50058 in part 8 "Expected Income Per Year", 17 lines are devoted to the detailed calculation of various deductions from income. However, mathematical errors are extremely rare, since the PHAs computer software automatically calculates virtually all these fields. In addition, verification of the accuracy of the data is impossible to obtain from the form. For example in part 8 of the form, HUD cannot confirm from the data reported if the participant's medical expenses are or are not accurate. All that can be ascertained is if the PHA computer software performed the correct calculation in applying the medical expenses as a deduction from income.

Recommendation

Reduce data collection to that information needed for program oversight and collection of key statistical data. Data reported through the 50058 should clearly include information such as family member information; total family income, net deductions from income and rent paid. However, there is no need or value in PHAs reporting every single calculation related to determining tenant rent.

21. Separate data collection and program enforcement.

Priority 3

Issue

The current PIC/50058 reporting system is serving two distinct, and at times incompatible purposes: collection of program data and; nation wide program enforcement. PIC submissions generate so called fatal errors, not because the data submitted is in error, but because there is an issue of data conflict with the national database.

One such example are the fatal errors generated because two or more PHAs report the same family members to PIC. A second example is the issue of name mismatches with the Social Security Administration database. Clearly both of these issues need to be brought to the attention of and addressed by the PHAs. However, totally rejecting such submissions only results in the PIC database being less, not more accurate. Rejecting a submission because of a discrepancy with a residents name or presence of certain family members does not change the reality that the participant does exist and is occupying a dwelling at the PHA.

Recommendation

Explore methods of separating the two distinct functions of data collection and data validation. HUD needs to recognize that collection of data and accuracy of data are two distinct functions. As a comparison the IRS does not reject a tax return because of discrepancies in information. Rather the return is accepted, processed and any data errors are later investigated and corrected if necessary.

Similarly PIC submissions should be accept by HUD irrespective of certain data discrepancies. The discrepancies should be brought to the attention of the PHA and corrections made as needed and as PHA investigations are completed. PIC coaches in the area offices could interface with and assist PHAs in resolving certain data errors (see the discussion of expanded role for PIC coaches in the training section of this report).

22. Allow on line editing of PIC data

Priority 3

Issue

Currently all changes to the participant files stored in PIC must be made through submission of an electronic form 50058. There is no provision for PHAs to manually update participant data through the on line system. This limitation often creates a great deal of work when PHAs need to correct or update participant data. PHA software is often designed to limit the ability to recreate a previous PIC submission or send an update containing a very minor change.

Recommendation

Allow for small updates to be performed via logging on and performing an on line update. For security and quality control purposes, such manual updates could be limited to certain PHA users, such as those with administrator privileges.

23. Provide building and unit ad hoc reports

Priority 3

Issue

The tenant module of PIC includes the ability for a HA user to run ad hoc reports. This is a very useful functionality. This functionality is not available in

the building and unit module. In this module the HA user can only choose from a very limited number of reports.

Recommendation

Add an ad hoc report feature to the building and unit module.

24. Provide direct entry of 50058 data

Priority 3

Issue

Maintaining IT systems to submit 50058 data to HUD is too expensive for public housing agencies. It is expensive and burdensome to keep up with the changes mandated by HUD and is a duplication of effort.

Recommendation

HUD should consider exploring ways to have public housing agencies enter 50058 data directly into a HUD system instead of having PHAs build and maintain their own "in-house" systems.

25. Allow On Line Voids

Priority 3

Issue

There are times when a PHA submits a transaction that must be "voided" for a variety of reasons. However, the PIC system requires PHAs to do special programming to create void transactions.

Recommendation

PIC should allow PHAs to do on-line void transactions, similar to the on-line End of Participation, which will allow PHAs to maintain the 50058 data more quickly and efficiently.

Section IV **FASS**

1. Provide for electronic upload of data to the FDS

Priority 1

Issue

The FDS data entry is done directly in the REAC's Financial Assessment Systems for Public Housing Authorities (FASPHA). This system is very slow updating, numerous saves are required and as a result is very time consuming. Under the Asset Management requirements, the amount of data entry required is going to significantly increase as the data entry for both Operating Fund and Capital Fund will have to be undertaken for each Asset Management Project number (AMP).

Additionally, items which are collected through FDS such as unit months and occupancy are already reported via PIC system and creates a double reporting burden for PHAs

Recommendation

The system should be modified to allow the FDS schedule to be uploaded via an excel spreadsheet. The format of such worksheet may have to be controlled by REAC, but it will provide the housing authorities a tool which will help the reconciliation of the data transmitted as well as reduction in the data entry errors caused by extended period of internet interactive data entry.

It is also recommended that the information submitted through PIC or VMS system should not required to be re-entered through FDS.

Section V **MASS**

1. Eliminate Duplicate data entry

Priority 2

Issue

PHAs are entering data into the MASS system for data already electronically maintained by HUD.

Recommendation

The MASS system should be pre-populated with vacancy information already collected through PIC such as the vacancy for capital work and other reasons. MASS should also be pre-populated with finance information already collected in FASS such as funds obligations.

Section VI

VMS

1. Decrease the frequency of VMS reporting

Priority 1

Issue

The VMS System started in 2005 to meet the requirements of Implementation of the Consolidated Appropriations Act (HR 4818 – H Rept 108-792), 2005 Funding Provisions for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. HUD was required to utilize the monthly utilization data for the months of May, June and July 2004. This provision has since been changed to utilize the annualized data for the program.

This annualized data is submitted via Financial Data Schedule by the PHAs at the end of every fiscal year within 50 days of the end of the fiscal year. The requirement to submit VMS information by month every quarter and the need to revise it continuously to make minor changes which are timing differences is very cumbersome and is duplicate reporting. The requirements to revise prior quarters even if the fiscal year has been closed creates a gap between the general ledger maintained by the PHAs, the amounts reported on the Independent Auditor's Report and the amounts on VMS.

Recommendation

VMS reporting should be either eliminated or changed substantially to reflect actual practices that are followed under GAAP by the PHAs. If VMS is continued to be maintained, the frequency of reporting should be greatly reduced with a requirement to match the data to the audited financial report for any fiscal year.

2. Improve instructions for VMS data entry

Priority 3

Issue

The training material does not provide enough information on the data elements for upload in the system.

Recommendation

The VMS User's Manual needs to include more information on the data fields to be uploaded.

Section VII **EIV**

1. Provide SSN on EIV reports

Priority 1

Issue

It is difficult to efficiently match the EIV data to resident data without a SSN.

Recommendation

The SSN should be made available to PHA users with EIV access. In addition the EIV system should include "PHA use" fields such as an internal account number for a resident which would also greatly assist in data matching.

2. Increase frequency of report downloads

Priority 2

Issue

PHAs need to download reports (such as failed certifications) more frequently than once a month.

Recommendation

Reports should be available for download more than once a month, perhaps once a week.

3. Improve Timeliness of data

Priority 3

Issue

Virtually all PHAs have found EIV to be an extremely useful tool for income verification. However the one frequent complaint expressed by PHAs is the timeliness of the data reported by EIV. PHAs still find it necessary to process a significant number of third party verifications in order to obtain current participant income data.

Recommendation

We recognize that the timeliness of data provided by EIV is limited by the information provided by the IRS, SSA and other agencies. However, to the extent possible, HUD should investigate the feasibility of obtaining more current data for inclusion in EIV.

Section VIII **SAGIS**

1. Provide for electronic upload of data

Priority 1

Issue

The new methodology about to be launched by REAC for operating subsidy calculation involves data entry directly in the REAC's SAGIS Systems for Public Housing Authorities. Under the Asset Management requirements, this data entry will have to be done for every Asset Management Project number (AMP). A portion of the data to be entered is already available in PIC.

The volume of data to be entered by all medium and large PHAs for each AMP is going to be time consuming, extremely cumbersome and will require heavy use of HUD's servers. There is also an issue of whether the system will time out before all of the data is entered for each AMP. In addition, information will have to be entered on the subsidy calculation and again on form SF-424.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the operating subsidy calculations be uploaded via an excel spreadsheet. The format of such worksheet may have to be controlled by REAC, but it will provide the housing authorities a tool which will help the reconciliation of the data transmitted as well as reduction in the data entry errors caused by extended period of internet interactive data entry. Additionally, once the data has been uploaded for calculation of the subsidy amount by AMP, the form 424 for each individual AMP should get populated automatically.

Section IX **Asset Management Issues**

1. Restrict access to PIC data by AMP

Priority 2

Issue

Access to PIC data, both for the tenant and building and unit modules, is controlled at the Housing Authority level and does not allow access to be limited by development or AMP. This creates a problem for PHAs that contract with one or more private management companies in that if they provide access to a PMC for one development they have access to all PHA developments, even those outside of their contractual responsibility.

Recommendation

Provide the functionality in PIC to limit access to information by development or AMP.

2. Store a record of PIC changes

Priority 2

Issue

When a change is made in PIC, no record is kept of the former status of the data.

Recommendation

Create a function in PIC that will maintain historical information, especially in the building and unit module. As PHAs create AMPs this will allow both HUD and HA staff to track units and buildings. In addition, units going into or out of exception uses as well as the transaction dates can be tracked. The substance of this recommendation is included in HUD's list of proposed changes. We strongly support this change.

3. Limit system lockouts to the AMP level

Priority 3

Issue

When a PHA submits changes that affect building or unit data the PIC building and unit module freezes (will accept no changes) until the change is accepted or rejected by HUD.

Recommendation

When a change is submitted only the development or AMP that it affects should freeze.

Section X

Section 8 Voucher Program

1. Alter the methodology for calculating the PIC reporting rate

Priority 1

Issue

It appears HUD is using VMS data from the previous quarters submission as the denominator in calculating the PHA's voucher reporting rate. However, this methodology is flawed and misstates the PHA reporting rate. Under the current funding formula PHAs receive a fixed amount of funds, rather than reimbursement for expenses related to a fixed number of vouchers. This means that PHAs are continually adjusting the number of vouchers under lease in order to keep expenditures within the funds available. As a result the number of vouchers currently reported in PIC may differ substantially from the number reported on the previous quarters VMS submission.

Recommendation

The voucher reporting formula needs to be adjusted to compare VMS and PIC data from the same month.

2. Provide notification of Automatic EOPs for Section 8 Ports

Priority 2

Issue

Automatic EOPs for Section 8 Ports are causing problems in maintaining resident data for the PHAs the residents leave from. The only way for PHAs to find these residents is to constantly download Section 8 resident data from PIC and match to their internal files.

Recommendation

PHAs should either automatically receive notification when an automatic EOP has been done for one of their residents or there should be a report by PHA of automatic EOP's for each week or month.

3. Provide transaction code for restoration of households in PIC

Priority 3

Issue

PHAs receive fatal errors due to admittance dates being older than a certain time when Section 8 households who have lost their voucher due to non-compliance with annual reviews or inspections are restored to the program.

Recommendation

There should either be an additional transaction code for restorations or the time for the admittance date should be extended.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that the electronic systems we use in performing the important task of providing housing assistance require change to make the process more efficient. HUD should be commended for initiating a process to allow stakeholders and HUD staff to collaborate on how to improve systems processes, to eliminate administrative burdens and assist with the transition to asset management.

This report has identified issues that make it difficult to effectively operate in the public housing environment, as well as recommendations to resolve the stated issues. As described at the beginning of this report, training and communication are viewed as the two most critical areas that need to be addressed in the short term to improve operation efficiency. Since the key to any successful relation is clear and accurate communication, we believe it is imperative that the communications channels be improved. In addition, not having training or low quality training is also among the top concerns of stakeholders. Without training it is impossible to expect PHAs and HUD staff to be efficient in utilizing systems to perform day-to-day operations.

We ask that the recommended establishment of a "systems advisory group" be highly considered. This type of group would provide an excellent opportunity to open up the lines of communication between HUD and its stakeholders. We believe this "open" communication would significantly improve relations between HUD and its partners regarding systems issues.

Respectfully submitted by the members of the Systems Focus Group:

Bryan Hoffman	Lebanon County Housing Authority – Group Chairman
Anne Marie Flatley	New York City Housing Authority – Group Secretary
Chetana Chaphekar	Houston Housing Authority
Gail Livingston	Boston Housing Authority

Andrea Hartt	Emphasys Software
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Charles Eldridge	HUD	Diane Kiles	HUD
Floyd May	HUD	Christopher Stevens	HUD
John Zuber	HUD		

Appendix 1 **Survey Comments**

As was mentioned previously in this report, the Systems Focus Group solicited comments from all PHAs through an Internet based web survey. One part of this survey offered PHAs the opportunity to provide free form comments concerning the various HUD electronic systems. The following pages contain the unedited comments we received from fifty-two PHAs.

PHA 1 – Arizona

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Make it easier to go back to same spot on previous screen instead of to the beginning. 2. To submit, should be able to use "enter" button. 3. Links to Help screen needed. 4. Make it easier to assign rights to user - should be clearer instead of trial and error. 5. Printing - screen shows what you want printed, but sides are cut off. 6. PIC submission report should be available more often than once a month. 7. Separate housing programs within same PHA - would like separate error reports for Public Housing and Section 8.

PIC Issues

Tenant ID Management - should be allowed more than one change at a time (i.e. change name and birthdate at the same time). When have same social security number for two people, difficult to change. Must assign alternate ID to change one person's number and then have to change the other. Too many changes to correct something simple.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. Employment verification has a date of termination, if applicable. 2. Add verification of Child Support from the state ATLAS, child support enforcement. 3. Have EIV capabilities for new residents. At least make the Social Security benefit information

EIV Issues

1. Employment verification is too old. The most current information available would help even if it is 3 months old, compared to 6 months old. No phone number listed for employer and no termination date given (if applicable). We need hire date only, not the date reported to Social Security or EIV (second date is confusing). 2. Social Security verification does not explain deductions.

We need to know the amount paid for Medicare, if the state or other agency is paying for Medicare, if there is any other deductions - what are they for and the amounts for each. 3. No amounts listed (weekly, bi-weekly) for Unemployment Compensation.

Top Ten FASS Recommendations

1. When you run reports for submissions with more than a couple programs, the reports print with a page break right down the middle of a program. 2. Include a validate button at the top of both the balance sheet and revenue & expense pages. 3. The HCV Income Statement Report doesn't indicate that it is for the HCV program on the report. 4. It would be nice to be able to select income statement and balance sheet reports to be printed individually for each program and to request IS and B/S reports for all programs at one time. 5. In the reports selection, since date created cannot be changed, it is very confusing to have a drop down box. Just showing the date created and report date to be printed on the report would be more useful.

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

Adding a link in MASS to the components in the manual that explains each element would be helpful.

SAGIS Issues

The "training" was nothing more than someone reading slides - no examples. We won't know how well it works until it is available for our use.

PHA 2 – California

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1) if PIC could allow pha software to automatically upload 50058's, and automatically return the error report. This means that staff receive errors, fatal errors in particular, at the time of inputting the action, rather than a later date from a report. Errors could be fixed in 'real time' rather than retroactively say a month later.

PIC Issues

PIC has come a long way and I'm actually OK with it. There are an awful lot of errors to deal with but that's due to the complexity of the programs, I really can't blame PIC. In the HCV program at Sacramento, we were unable to submit

50058's for almost two years because HUD, in an attempt to consolidate two PHA's into one, placed us in a state where we couldn't submit 50058's. But this was HUD's fault, not related to PIC itself, as far as I know. Since then, we have been struggling to clean up over 2000 ssn related errors, but all valid errors needing correction in either our system or someone else's. In the process, we are uncovering some fraud. It may be helpful if PIC could allow other software to upload 50058's automatically, and return the errors automatically. Then vendors could create software that could provide errors, fatal errors in particular, at the time of inputting the action, rather than a later date from a report. Errors could be fixed in 'real time' rather than retroactively say a month later.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

- 1) EIV needs to provide the information in batches as opposed to individually. I know HUD is working on this, but it's very important.

EIV Issues

I think the EIV system is great.

PHA 3 – California

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Form 50058, correct Tenant Identification bugs, for example, even if correct information is submitted, if it was previously not correct in PIC, it will show as a fatal error, unless the 50058 had been flagged as 'correction'.
2. Form 50058, correct Moving to Work fatal errors. It is impossible to view the MTW data unless an agency is a MTW agency. We are getting several of these errors (Errors 5340 and 5341) each month and are unable to correct.
3. Form 50058, fix duplicate subsidy issues such so that a member will be potentially duplicate if the SSN matches, not just name and DOB.
4. Form 50058 - fix all reports such as resident characteristic reports so specific Cities can pull their own data from the system.
5. Form 50058 - eliminate needless Warning errors such as 4126 and 4128, last modified date..., which occur on almost ALL of our records submitted.
6. PIC Help should monitor and answer questions on the PIC 50058 forum more timely.
7. Form 50058 Reports, create report for SEMAP monthly monitoring.

PIC Issues

There is a very large learning curve for anyone new to PIC and the 50058 submodule. We have had excellent training by our local PIC coach, Joyce Prado,

San Francisco. However, some problems are inherent with the system and need to be corrected at the programming level.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. EIV, allow selection by Reexam month and PHA Use Only fields from the 50058. This would allow large agencies to batch their EIV requests and eliminate tedious sorting of verifications. (our agency pulls by Head of Household due to this lack of feature

SAGIS Issues

We have not had any training to date and the link to SAGIS is not active for my user account.

Support Comment

Local staff may not always be aware of the latest changes or reasons for the glitches in the system.

PHA 4 – California

Top Ten VMS Recommendations

1. Support system providing answer to questions by email. 2. Provide notice 3 months in advance of changes to VMS. 3. Confirm that the VMS system support changes prior to making the change 4. Provide regular updates to VMS manual as changes occur. 5. Provide additional space for comments. 6. Define what units should be included (i.e. should FY adjustments be included if the prior calendar year is closed to changes.

PHA 5 – California

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

Systems logs you off far too quickly Directions are less than user friendly with regard to system administration, not helpful PIC Coaches are not often well informed and therefore cannot assist agencies Not easy to move between screens instead Reports are not easy to get to Rejections are not alphabetized and it makes it difficult and more time consuming to correct Once a port out is accepted by the receiving PHA the initial PHA has no ability to fix information or

errors System is just not very user friendly Note: Changes to system are helpful, but it still has a long way to go

PHA 6 – California

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Allow online voids 2. Allow online correction of fields within the 50058 3. Do not require all actions to be submitted in sequential order by effective date 4. Stop masking SSN's 5. More training re: correction of specific PIC errors 6. Allow non-MTW agencies to view the MTW viewer

PIC Issues

We appreciate all of the improvements in the PIC system over the past few years, including the additional reports.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. Fix the problem with batch printing of EIV's 2. Fix the problem with the discrepancy report (if the last action was 13 - inspection, it shows that the last 50058 had zero income, so these people appear at the top of the discrepancy report but they a

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

Don't require the Executive Director to submit the MASS Certification.

Support Comment

I miss PIC Help. I find the quality of information from the REAC helpline is not as good. I also miss the PIC forum that PIC Help used to respond to.

PHA 7 – California

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

Recommendations: 1. Develop a hyperlink with information on how to resolve errors available in PIC 2. Live updates (or at least weekly updates) rather than monthly 3. Allow for multiple corrections or changes to tenants with alternate ID's simultaneously (i.e. correcting a birthdate, then have to wait for processing, then can go back and correct the name, wait for processing, etc...) 4. Online or

other training and support tools to detect and correct errors 5. A more user friendly website that provides instructions while navigating the system- rather than a separate module. 6. Ability to see and compare what tenants are in PIC vs. what is actually on our program 7. Create a report that covers any missing information in PIC 8. For Port move-in (4) to work consistently alleviating the need of waiting for another HA to send their PIC files. 9. To see how and what SSN, DOB, First and Last names are in PIC 10. When a new fatal error is in the works, give HA's a year to fix any issues before they are all hit in one month.

PIC Issues

1. Reliability- Sometimes we submit exact transactions and one time it's accepted , and one time it is not. PIC is system is inconsistent. 2. FSS Clients disappear from PIC report, if they are in "pending" status (these clients who had an annual re-examination, interim or new lease during that month.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

Recommendations: 1. Update information immediately or monthly if possible. 2. Provide more current information in report modules 3. Flexible ability to print EIV reports by reexam month, by city, and possibly by other criteria instead of only SSN. 4

EIV Issues

Current issue with printer-friendly feature and length of time reported to correct it.

Top Ten VMS Recommendations

1. Provide advance notification when new categories or line items are added to the on-line form. 2. Provide detailed information to explain changes to the on-line form. 3. Keep the post fiscal year open to allow Housing Authorities to revise data when new information becomes available. 4. When revisions are made to previous quarters, display the date of original submission and revised submission date on the "list of Submission" page 5. When a user clicks on a submittal month, do not change the status until the user resubmits the revised data. 6. Update the training materials to reflect the most current changes. 7. Provide webcase training sessions when new changes are implemented. 8. Increase the speed of the VMS system. 9. Included navigation buttons to go from one month to another within the quarter 10. Include pop-up text boxes that explains each line item on the VMS form and appears when the curser is placed on the name of the line item

Support Comment

In 2006 our PIH-REAC Financial Analyst told us that the "rejected" and "failure to submit" items in our REAC inbox was a HUD error and will be fixed by June 2007. We were allowed to proceed with submitting our audited Financial Data Schedules but the error has not been corrected since submittal in September 2006. It was originally approved and rejected in November 2006.

PHA 8 – California

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

- 1) I prefer TASS to be separated from EIV
- 2) I need to simpler way to add or remove users, and assigning tasks to users.
- 3) I wish we didn't have to constantly update passwords and users

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

- 1) The system must have a way to print out EIV forms, separating each family from one another to make it easier to sort. However, it is not necessary to separate each family member to a page within the same family.
-

PHA 9 – California

EIV Issues

1. The EIV data is outdated, but is helpful when comparing from interim or recert to next action.
 2. The discrepancy report is confusing. Not sure how to respond or corrective actions.
-

PHA 10 – Colorado

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Find a simple way to submit data.
-

PHA 11 – Colorado

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. It is difficult to find some of the reports, because they seem to be misnamed. More user-friendly names and logical places for them would be great. 2. More on-line web trainings that could be accessed at any time. Done on power point so they could be downloaded and used over and over again. 3. We are in Region 8 and we had a wonderful PIC coach in the past, Kathryn Grosscup. She really knew the system and could assist with anything. It would be great to have that kind of assistance at the regional office again.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. Explain the threshold difference and how that is calculated. It is very confusing and I still do not understand it.

Top Ten FASS Recommendations

1. More user friendly - easier to read B.S. and statement of activities. have full statements viewable, not just a few lines at a time. One big spreadsheet would work well for input as that is what most of us are using as our internal document and from which we enter to the REAC form.

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

1. Explain what the actual goals are for each and every section. What is the target we are supposed to be aiming for? Trying to figure out what the goal is has taken too much time and it seems to be an arbitrary determination right now.

SAGIS Issues

It is unavailable at this time, so have no comment. Except it would be nice to get it very soon so we can work on the subsidy calculations.

Support Comment

The field staff for Region 8 is amazing, they are quick to respond and are eager to help. However, there are times when they do not know the answer either. The National Help Desk does not seem to be as helpful or responsive. I was unable to answer the questions above because it is not a black-and-white, yes-or-no answer. We sometimes get support and other times do not. For example, we have been trying for 6 months now to get help in submitting a correction to our operating subsidy calculation for this year and we still do not have an answer. The field office can not even get an answer or assistance from headquarters.

When things are new and changing, it seems that the field office gets it at the same time as the HAs, and then we have to learn it together. It seems to me that the field office should get some training before they have to answer calls from the end user.

PHA 12 – Colorado

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Have easier navigation.
2. Give clearer description of errors.

PIC Issues

The system is confusing. Directions are unclear and too complicated.

EIV Issues

Data is often old.

Support Comment

The help desk people don't ever seem to understand the problem. Language accents of help desk people make communication difficult because its hard to understand them. We have been given wrong information on problems. The advice given did not work and further complicated the issue.

PHA 13 – Georgia

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Put full SS#'s back into PIC reports.
2. Since HUD has verified information with the SSA, give PHA's that information.
3. Fix MTW database issues so we don't have to contact the MTW housing authority, they usually don't know how to correct the errors on their side.

Top Ten FASS Recommendations

- 1.PHA/Fiscal year/submissions automatically populate on initial page.
- 2.All fields auto populate to zero (0).
- 3.Need to enter cents (and account for them) in order to avoid rounding issues.
- 4.Simplify "saves" after each detail screen and switching back and forth from B/S and I/E.
- 5."Flags/warnings" need clearer

explanations. 6.Print option needed to print everything including "detail" pages. 7.Option to "Log Off" FASS. 8.Documentation/Help.

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

1.Where is the training material?

SAGIS Issues

As the coordinator I have been given access to SAGIS. One of my staff has access to SAGIS, but I cannot "see" SAGIS as a subsystem for her in WASS so I cannot assign her a role. My main staff person who will work in SAGIS does not have access and I have not been able to get the tech staff in WASS to understand that she needs the subsystem and I have to be able to "see" the subsystem when I go in to assign her a role. This really isn't an issue with SAGIS as I haven't gotten there yet.

Support Comment

The tech support for WASS, FASPHA, and PIC have been very good and for 90% of the time have been able to resolve our problems. Our PIC coach at the Field Office level is OK to call if I have a access issue, if I have any questions about Section 8 fatal errors she cannot help with those at all.

PHA 14 – Georgia

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Provide real time information on the status of reporting. Currently, we have to wait until the 10th of the month to see how we are doing as of the end of the previous month. For an ED, this makes it difficult to determine when intervention is necessary. 2. Allow for sorting of MTCS reports to allow for better comparison with in house records. Currently, the reports list tenants in some random order (or one I have not figured out) making it difficult to identify which records are missing. I tried downloading to excel but for whatever reason I could not make that happen. 3. Clearly identify how the reporting rates are determined. Some PHA's have reported rates in excess of 100% which indicates that some records are inaccurate although the reporting rate is good. It leads one to believe that you can manipulate the system by submitting a number of duplicate reports on records that are being accepted to make up for those that are not. 4. Make it easier to navigate between the pages. Often, when moving from one page to another one gets an error message requiring the refreshing of the page.

PIC Issues

We initially made some errors in setting up the building and entrance data for certain developments. We cannot make the correction on our own. We have sent in the request to PIC help and received some follow up emails but the problem still exists. As a result, we have to change our data base to match the incorrect PIC data base or the data will not be accepted. It has been over two years since we first made the request and we have resubmitted the request again about a month ago. We get emails saying that they will give our request proper attention. Trying to generate management reports from PIC is mind numbing. The system was not designed to assist PHA's and it shows. A consultant helped us get to the required 95% reporting by submitting an interim change on every tenant in our system. The purpose was to see what ones came back with errors so we would know where to start to make corrections. Apparently, this is the best way to identify which errors are incorrect. If the consultant is correct, that makes for a terribly inefficient and time wasting data base.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

The data in the system is too dated to be of much help. We need more timely data to confirm information. Our tenants change their situations frequently, and the old data just adds to confusion.

General Comment

Under the current setup, no one at HUD can help solve a problem. We constantly get bounced around from person to person. If we are lucky, we piece together the right combination to solve the problem. Otherwise, the problem just stays unresolved.

PHA 15 – Georgia

PIC Issues

The only issue I have is more training is needed on the EVER changing format of the 50058 form, the numerous error messages that no one can explain how to fix. We need classroom training on the error messages and the how to's to correct the system errors.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1) Update the social security increases in a more efficient manner 2) State wage information is entirely useless due to not having current information. 3) capability of income searches prior to being entered into PIC.

SAGIS Issues

I have no idea what SAGIS really is but I am sure I will soon. I have submitted my fee accountant information on time but still learning what this is all about.

Support Comment

One could call the national help desk 5 times and get 5 different answers, none of which would help you. Now they take your name and give you a number with hopes that someone will call you back to answer your question.

PHA 16 – Illinois

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. the time it takes PIC to update SS# and ALT ID # to match social security records. It is frustrating to frequently get the message SSN is invalid based on SSA numbering system when you know the number is correct. 2. I think that VMS numbers from prior quarter shouldn't dictate your current months scores. Would like to see a way for numbers to be more accurately reflected in current submissions.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. EIV information is great but it really needs to be more current. I just printed out our November re-cert clients and most of the EIV's only had wages thru 4th quarter of 2006. This isn't helpful when you need to know what has happened in 1st & 2nd quarter.

Support Comment

Leigh Shrock has been a wealth of information and offered great assistance to me every time I have called the Chicago Field Office.

PHA 17 – Illinois

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Simplify 2. Slow moving around PIC

SAGIS Issues

We have not been happy with it. We think it is a good concept but we've had many problems with it. We still don't know the schedule of submission and we've followed the instructions on how to do a new program but the "Operating subsidy" doesn't show in the program name as the instructions indicate making it impossible to even get started with the operating subsidy submission.

Support Comment

Leah Schrock is a wonderful source and very helpful

PHA 18 – Indiana

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

Make it reliable - I just printed out 3 different amounts for the same criteria (new admissions) for the same time frame using 3 different ways to obtain the information in PIC. It should be the same no matter what. Put on line annual HQS inspection date - like the on line EOP In order to keep up on all the PIC issues, housing authorities (at least Section 8 only ones like us) need more money to hire more staff to take care of all the PIC requirements. Make this survey so that we could answer all the questions above even if you don't like the answers. The answers in number 3 above would not save if I used the same category of answer more than once.

PIC Issues

Getting sanctioned for unreliable PIC data Getting lower SEMAP score based on unreliable PIC data that we can show is wrong and we can't even appeal our score since we are a high performer. PIC has helped to catch some fraud when people are getting assistance in two places, but we get flagged for future submissions when the other agency doesn't get their work done in PIC timely.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

Make it easier to print out just what we need with ease and speed and not waste several trees to print out everything that automatically will be printed if you don't take the time to pick and choose and it is unclear what page to ask for to get only what

Top Ten VMS Recommendations

It has changed several times and does not provide clear definitions of some of the items. When I completed revisions it still read as 'original submission' instead of "revision"

SAGIS Issues

How does this affect Section 8 only agencies?

Support Comment

PICHelp does not help - and one person was very rude. You get a ticket number and that is the end of it.

General Comment

With SAGIS we got warnings of it coming for over a year and we still don't use it - not sure if we are suppose to at this point as a Section 8 only agency but we don't.

PHA 19 – Kansas

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

A method to indicate a decrease in utilized vouchers since the last VMS submission has occurred due to lack of funding (we're not reissuing vouchers based on funding). As utilized vouchers decrease between VMS submissions it appears the reporting rate is below 95% although all families have been reported - this caused what should have been a high performing SEMAP score to become standard - even though 100% of families were reported. This issue has been addressed to REAC in May 2007 and as of 8/15/07 there has not been a response. A way to enter the number of utilized vouchers at the end of the reporting month rather than depending on quarterly VMS data would be useful-at this point we must file a SEMAP appeal because of this and the city officials will be notified that the agency appears to be a standard performer - which will require explanation. The system needs to recognize this issue - and account for issuance based on funding rather than on vouchers. Report generation - it would save a great deal of time if all reports for an agency were available at once rather than having to choose the report, then the agency, etc etc for each individual report.

PIC Issues

Support is very difficult to obtain.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. Income data that is more "real time", especially Social Security benefits.

EIV Issues

Difficult to get support. Persons who work for several agencies have problems gaining access to all agencies. Cannot get users set up correctly to get all necessary access.

PHA 20 – Kentucky

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. In PIC, the HAS has two #71 units. The first unit #71 is correct; the second unit #71 is incorrect. The second unit should be unit #72. PIC does not have a unit #72. We have reported this error to HUD on several occasions over several years and it still has not been corrected. All other data pertinent to the two respective apartment units are otherwise correct. 2. Uploading PIC data at the end of month can be difficult due to traffic into servers, causing 'time-outs' to occur.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. The state of KY is very slow to update income information and is often outdated vs. third party verification. 2. Cannot verify Social Security/SSI for nine months outside of Annual Recertification period, especially troublesome for new admissions

PHA 21 – Oklahoma

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. When EOP is done by accident need easier way to reinstate resident. 2. Easier way to correct ss# 's to be able to do submissions. 3. Cohesive merging of all reports to show who is in what unit instead of having multy tenants in the same units in different reports. 4. When changing "Not Reported" to "Vacancy" need better explanation for vacancy.

PHA 22 – Massachusetts

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. The reliability of the Social Security payment information is often a problem, as the client's benefits may have changed, but there is a considerable delay in reflecting that in EIV information. 2. There seems to be an inconsistency in the information

PHA 23 – Massachusetts

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Do not tell HAs to delete and reinstall the program to correct problems. For small HAs this is a very time consuming process. Someone should be able to correct problems w/out deleting. 2. Do not assume all HAs have an IT person on staff. Small HAs do not have an IT staff member. IT support should be available through PIC for those who need it. 3. Training - periodically @ least. 4. Do not tell an HA that the problem they are describing is not possible. 5. The system should be more user friendly.

PIC Issues

Since I did the last patch I have difficulty transmitting. I use the FRS system for my 50058s. I have yet to receive an answer for ticket #IM414144 or #IM411130 which was for the same problem. Until the kinks are worked out of the system I don't think HAs should be penalized for not reporting @ 95%. No matter what I do I cannot seem to score a 95.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. More timely process for updating information.

SAGIS Issues

I don't understand the SAGIS system @ all. I did apply for access and was told by email that the application was rejected because the ID is currently active. Not sure if I'm supposed to do anything else. Also my fee accountant needs access to this system, but I have no idea how to do this.

Support Comment

At times the local office has had to refer me to the national help desk for assistance. While I receive emails regarding notification of the problem, its days or weeks before anyone calls.

PHA 24 – Maryland

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

First, please note that the survey would not allow me to select a rating more than once in section 3 above. Therefore, all of the blank rows (questions b through f) should be "Fair" or "Poor". Top recommendations: 1. Quicker updates to user guides, etc. Documentation is usually outdated, poorly written, and has poor design. 2. System has improved in terms of speed, but during certain periods of the month, painfully slow. 3. Greater communication between PIC Coaches, Systems Coordinators, and Users. 4. Better trained and more hands-on, experienced Technical Support Staff. 5. Updates, revisions, notices all posted in one central location as opposed to going to different HUD, PIC, or REAC pages/screens for information pertaining to PH, HCV, PIC, SEMAP, & other related modules.

SAGIS Issues

1. Notices & announcements are sent to E.D. or other PHA users (not sure how this is determined), but Systems Coordinators are not notified at all. Worse still, notices were often sent out FAR in advance of systems being ready for anything. For instance, we're told to get the user access ready, but functionality is not ready in REAC. We're told to refer to the rollout "schedule" and there is no schedule available on the designated web page, etc., etc. 2. Corresponding with the SAGIS e-mail address has been extremely frustrating. No response for days or weeks. No means of speaking with anyone by phone; no other e-mail address is provided. Dead ends all the way.

Support Comment

Phones go unanswered; not sure who to contact; call gets forwarded from one department/representative to another; some HUD staff has been curt, short, and rude at times; unwilling to help and certainly unsympathetic.

PHA 25- Maryland

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

Please urge HUD to go back to 14 months for HQS date. When it was changed to 12 it created more work because now you have to submit an extra 50058 record with a code 13 (HQS), rather than just submitting it with the annual recertification record, as was our past practice.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

We really need EIV information to be more up-to-date

Top Ten FASS Recommendations

The system was down several days in mid-August Saving work entered takes too much time It needs a printer friendly version

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

Instructions with examples should be a menu choice on every page

MASS Issues

MASS has gotten easier to complete because it has not changed in several years

Top Ten VMS Recommendations

Clarify whether an expense or a revenue figure is being asked for. The FSS Coordinator Fee box is one that comes to mind.

SAGIS Issues

HUD training consists of reading PowerPoint slides to the audience. This technique invites in-attention rather than positive learning. Our staff avoid HUD-offered training whenever possible.

General Comment

If WASS is supposed to be a coordinated security module, why must we remember a separate user name and password for LOCCS? The recent HUD training on UIV/EIV did not acknowledge that the changes being discussed were in a PROPOSED rule, which was great!

PHA 26 – Maine

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

I believe there is a problem with the PIC program in that REAC_TAC can interpret how reports work in ways that HUD Field officers cannot . I spoke with two individuals HUD who agree with me but their only suggestion was for me to try REAC_TAC (yet) again. For example, the PIC FSS Report updated as of March 31, 2007 incorrectly indicated this PHA had ten (10) families enrolled in FSS - three (3)with an Escrow Balance. We actually had 19 families enrolled and eight (8) with Escrow Balance. I worked with Raghmani Bonasue in Technical Assistance and she was able to confirm the ones missing from the report by bringing each one up individually Viewer. She then said the reason some were not on the report was because those FSS families had a rent change with an effective date AFTER March 31st. I told her that didn't make sense because when our field office pulled those figures for SEMAP they would not be correct. Ragma told me to get all 19 families on the FSS report I had to VOID each one of those submissions made after March 31st; submit a new action with a date prior to March 31, 2007 and upload them. I voided and submitted nine records to get the report to show all 19 families. REAC_TAC knows how these reports can be effected by rent changes but HUD Field Staff does not. It was fortunate that I had explained this situation to our Field Officer at HUD Boston. When it came time to pull the SEMAP reports she remembered our conversation about this problem. She contacted me and was then able to see exactly how many families we had on FSS by using a list of names I gave her and then confirming it by looking each person up in Viewer.

PIC Issues

It takes far too long for REAC_TAC to respond to emails. By the time they get back to me I've already contacted other PHAs to ask how they resolved a situation.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

Information is not always current but this is getting better. It would be extremely helpful to be able to access TANF benefit information.

EIV Issues

When the 'scissors' don't work, reports for all families run together and it is far too time consuming to have to cut these reports apart.

PHA 27 – Minnesota

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

#1 - online void #2 - online corrections of other errors #3 - submitting a 50058 with the SAME effective date of a currently accepted 50058 should be automatically accepted without needing to mark it as a correction. #4 - too many fatal errors. Many of those errors should be important errors, but they shouldn't cause rejection of a Move in, EOP or Other Change Of Unit Cert unless the correct household/unit cant be identified. These errors then cascade to other errors, since the unit isn't vacant, which can take weeks to fix, or can't be fixed at all in some cases. #5 – Correcting names and social security numbers should be easier. We often can't tell what the REAL error is - First name, last name, SSN, birthdate. We also have cases where apparently the social security department has the incorrect data, and we are stuck for months until it can be fixed on their end. #6 - Setting up new users or changing user access is terrible. The system refreshes the screen several times for each change in access, and there isn't a simple way to see what access people already have. All security for a login should be done on ONE screen - show the person's name and ID, and give us a nice big form with all the possible roles, showing if they have that role or not, and let us pick all they roles they should or shouldn't have, and then press submit. If the web site is slow it can take me 20 minutes to set up a user, when it should take me 2. The current setup also makes it harder to review and audit the security settings.

PIC Issues

Resident Characteristics Report has ongoing data problems. Many are probably due to geocoding problems - 9% of our public housing units and 30% of our HCV units have 'geocoding income data not available', making the data mostly worthless. 'New Move Ins in the last 12 Months' is always underreported, probably due to later 50058s being submitted? Often the Resident Characteristics reports are cut off on the right side when we print them. We are concerned about losing data when the switch to AMPS is completed. We have AMPs that consist of 3 hi-rises, and we would still want to be able to report on the separate buildings instead of the combined AMP. With the PIC data, it is hard to separate family data from single-person households, especially if a project contains both a hi-rise and family units. It would be nice to be able to run separate reports for families vs elderly, regardless of project or AMP.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

#1 - More current data. As of 8/2007, the only information available is from 4th quarter of 2006, over 8 months old. Also, being able to data on new residents

quickly would be helpful. #2 - Assistance or guidance for helping families who have identity

Top Ten VMS Recommendations

1 - It would be very helpful if you could click on the description of a field, and a box would pop up with the complete definition of what is supposed to be entered in the field.

SAGIS Issues

We have been given access to SAGIS, but there is nothing there when we access it.

Support Comment

We usually get adequate notice of and information about changes, but it could be better.

PHA 28 – Minnesota

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. The fatal errors regarding social security numbers and discrepancy flags attached to the file are very confusing. I would recommend to make this process easier to correct. 2. The process of separately reporting the reason why public housing units are vacant could possibly be incorporated into the 50058 itself.

PIC Issues

The staff time required to submit 50058's, fix fatal errors, and contacting other agencies regarding port-outs and port-ins is very time consuming; especially for a small agency with limited staff.

EIV Issues

Information is often very old and not reliable. However, it is useful to have it so we can compare it with what we have verified by a third party source.

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

Scoring should be provided to HRA in more expedient time period. Instructions not always clear, should be more specific.

VMS Issues

Our PHA is still unclear on what to report as total HAP expenses for each month. Currently, we are not including HAP expenses for units leased up after the first of the month. We hope this is correct because VMS data is used as a basis for establishing

SAGIS Issues

Information and training on SAGIS is very limited. The only training we have received is a web-cast PowerPoint presentation. This does not allow for individual questions to be answered. Also, we are not able to access SAGIS at this time until a schedule is posted by HUD. This does not allow us to get acquainted with this new system to submit our operating subsidy at the ANP level.

PHA 29 – Minnesota

PIC Issues

Most of our entries into the PIC system are done by an outside agency. A road map to all required reports would be helpful.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

This system has been changed so often that I have not bothered to study the latest program. Please let me know when you get to your final user friendly version.

FASS Issues

FASS is not used by our Authority personnel, but by accountants/auditors.

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

Why bother to have a space for submitting questions, when there is no response after two inquiries in a week about the same problem.

Support Comment

Folks - Any single person office such as this one cannot possibly efficiently use your #%\$&#@ systems. Your continuing efforts to micro monitor everything that happens in this office has doubled my required hours over the past several

years. Cut backs in the allowed travel for the Mpls office prevents their staff from coming out to give hands on training. If your systems were so good to start, , you wouldn't have to be "upgrading" as often as you do. I'm sure your local experts have told you that your current systems are on the cutting edge of technology (again), but it has taken the human element out of managing housing. I have only been doing this since 1971. I consider your present systems a disaster. You should be ashamed! George O'Brien

PHA 30 – Minnesota

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Training - walk thru each module; application of reports 2. Improve the speed - I was told in the past that when the system is running too slow to log off and try to get on a different server - doesn't seem like a "solution" to the speed.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. More current info 2. Seems as if each time you log onto the system there is some kind of upgrade - either test better before releasing something or better communicate the upgrades. If you don't log on to read the message of the upcoming upgrades you

FASS Issues

FYI - our auditors submit all the data to this system - the CDA just views it.

Top Ten VMS Recommendations

1. Improve printing of reports 2. Security seems questionable. Sometimes, strangers from other agencies appear on our access. 3. Reminders to submit data come out before system is ready to receive data and they are too frequent.

SAGIS Issues

Even though we have access, we are not permitted to enter data and time is running short.

Support Comment

Field Office Staff are friendly and try to help but do not seem to get training or adequate information from the National Office to help. National Office staff are generally rude and condescending. They are most interested in creating ticket

numbers but then there is little follow up on their end as to any progress made or what the resolution is.

PHA 31 – Missouri

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

HIPPA Compliance to retrieve full resident social security numbers for PIC users that have more than read only access. Provide a list of PIC contacts for HA names and phone numbers.

Top Ten FASS Recommendations

Reformat such at Net Reserves from operations can be accounted for separately from Reserve generated from HAP and other funds due to HAP (fraud recovery interest on HAP etc.)

Top Ten VMS Recommendations

Eliminate duplication by combining VMS and REAC systems.

PHA 32 – Missouri

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

Question 3 radio buttons not working. Answers are: 3a: poor 3b: poor 3c: good 3d: good 3e: poor 3f: poor 3g: poor 3h: poor 1) Fixing PIC errors on the 50058's. Fixing errors on the 50058's is less than understandable. It is confusing and many times redundant. In fact, the error reports received from PIC in many instances are not comprehensible. The HCV errors are much harder to fix than the Public Housing errors because of portability and having to rely on another PHA to do their port-in or port-out. I am at a loss as to why the PIC system has to be accessed and units changed to "vacant" in the Development Module before a new move-in will be taken in that particular public housing unit even though an action code "6" was submitted to move out the previous tenant. Why can't the PIC system automatically change the unit to vacant? I would like to see an action code such as "99" to correct all errors at once on any particular 50058. As it is now, errors must be fixed in order, therefore if errors were not fixed on previous submittals and HA must correct the oldest error first submit the 50058 then the next oldest must be fixed then submit again and so on. Some type of correct-all action code would make the process to fix errors much simpler. Thereby, a PHA could correct all errors on a particular 50058 with only one submittal.

SAGIS Issues

PIH Notice 2007-21, states "HUD will provide to PHAs during June and July, 2007. SAGIS support is available for PHAs at their local HUD field offices. Starting June 18, 2007, additional support, such as user manuals, technical references and web-base training, can be downloaded from HUD's SAGIS web page..." Our local Field Office was contacted and we were told no training would be conducted as far as they knew and no one at the Field Office had been trained to provide technical assistance. We have downloaded the power point concerning SAGIS and found it basically useless. The training manual on the SAGIS website was more useful to some degree. Using the manual we did set up our operating subsidy form and our calculation of utilities expense level form. However, in using the forms we notice that information that was supposed to be pulled from one line or page to the next was not pulled and the dropdown boxes were not prepopulated with any information as described in the manual. Therefore, our forms can not be used as they are now because of issuing information that should have automatically been prepopulated or will not move from one line or page to the next.

PHA 33 – Missouri

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. PIC Coach more available for questions or other qualified people on staff at local HUD office to contact with PIC questions. 2. Delinquency Report data not coinciding with current Housing Authority data, which results in under reporting rate. Provide VMS Data Monthly?? 3. Also issues with this document. The top section won't let you fill in the same answer box for different questions.

PIC Issues

1. We often have issues with Social Security Number problems as well as duplicate numbers and tenants in the system. 2. We submit 50058's and the HQS date of inspection doesn't show up correctly in the HQS Delinquency Report.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. Would like to see TANF in system as well as court-ordered child support. 2. Would like more current data.

Support Comment

1. Not enough help with PIC issues.
-

PHA 34 – Mississippi

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Another PHA should not be allowed to accept an assisted tenant until the 1st PHA has submitted an EOP - Port Out.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. Update EIV quicker once a "fail" has been resubmitted correctly.
2. Need more current income information. 15 month old information leads to excessive and inaccurate discrepancy reporting.

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

1. Do away with the MASS certification.
2. Allow HA's to submit MASS data via the PIC system monthly.
3. Remove the requirement for board approval.
4. Require only that the board chairman and the executive director sign off on the certification.

MASS Issues

MASS currently requires board approval prior to submitting. I think that in the future that the Ex. Dir. should be able to make the certification with the signature of the board chairman. This is done for SEMAP certifications. Then the board could choose

PHA 35 – North Dakota

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

3. ability to search nationwide if client was on a program before
4. ability to manipulate data better such as search for all preschoolers or those just in high school
1. ability to understand errors to make corrections easier- we have many times just "punched buttons" to get 50058 accepted. Some error messages do not make sense. Have called regional office near deadlines for PIC/REAC verifications to get help in correcting problems. This is not a system for person off the street to grasp. Training has become a necessity. Not everyone picks it up

fast. 2. Understanding backup systems and loss of data is a FEAR though not happened. but with new staff??

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

It is too late in reporting information. Nice if only 1 qtr behind rather than 2 qtrs EIV Issues once in a while we have false positives with incorrect SS# reported by employers. In this area, and I suppose others, there is an underground economy that is unverifiable.

VMS Issues

We contract out this now as well out of convenience sake.

SAGIS Issues

Say what and when? Last I heard it was not ready and in pilot testing.

Support Comment

Sometimes I cannot understand the enunciation of the support techs. And I am used to working with folks of foreign languages and poor English pronunciation. Some are very adept at understanding and grasping the problem. Those few are specialized techs like on FRS software. Others are new? looking in manuals or asking a supervisor. Getting back in 2 or 3 days is not acceptable. Sometimes VERY frustrating to convey the problem to the support person. They get it incorrectly in their head what I am calling about and cannot get it out of theirs.

PHA 36 – North Dakota

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

Better explanation of error messages and how to resolve them

PIC Issues

I have a elderly lady who is drawing Social Security under her deceased husband. PIC rejects it because neither her Social Security number or his works with PIC. Some people draw Social Security number with a code letter at the end of the Social Security number and this cannot be entered into PIC.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

Information is old - at least 6 months old.

Support Comment

HUD personnel take a long time to return e-mails and telephone calls. Staff changes frequently at HUD so you get a different response with each new staff member.

PHA 37 – New Jersey

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

with fatal error #5326 when the name does match what social security has there should be a way to bypass to be able to enter the person when we know the information is correct

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

The only problem I have with MASS is the adjustment module. The directions do not give the proper sequence to complete.

PHA 38 – Ohio

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1) Form50058 > Tenant ID Management > Reports Possible Dup Tenant Report - provide ability to run report with options to select Public Housing only, HCV only, or all. Tenant ID Management Report - provide ability to run report with options to select Public Housing only, HCV only, or all. AID Report - provide ability to run report with options to select Public Housing only, HCV only, or all. *** Currently the way the reports display is very time consuming to determine program that the client is participating to determine department to resolve. 2) AdHoc > MTCS Ability to run AdHoc report to report household member information when requested. Currently report only displays information for member 01 when member information is selected. 3) Processing of submitted 50058's - consistent processing of files. Some days files process immediately with other days files are not processed until overnight. I understand number of files being submitted determines response time, however there is a wide swing in this response at times.

PIC Issues

1) Form50058 > Reports > SEMAP > FSS FSS Report - not properly reporting clients. For OH006 the report screen shows 241 families with a page count of 1 to 13. However, system only display details for the first 10 pages. We manually cross checked clients reported on PIC's report against in house system to identify differences. Then went to PIC and reviewed identified clients missing on PIC report and FSS records exist in PIC for the clients NOT reported. 2) Form50058 > Tenant ID Management > Reports Tenant ID Report - Report does not bring back data. "Invalid tenant Id information cannot be found for the requested search criteria". Invalid Tenant ID Report - expand to provide options of Public Housing only, HCV only, or all.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1) Information is too old. Needs to be current and not six months, by this time clients information has changed. 2) New admissions need to be available.

Top Ten FASS Recommendations

1) More flexibility in the reporting.

Top Ten VMS Recommendations

1) Too much detail is requested. 2) Calculator feature could be added , to total up the data as entered. 3) Instructions never clear, fields ever-changing. 4) Nowhere to put retroactive amounts.5) Doesn't print very nicely.

Support Comment

1) HUD Help Desk - we seem to have issues when reporting to national help desk or e-mail to REAC. Responses are not always helpful or resolve is not obtained. At times feel the issue is discounted at help desk.

PHA 39 – OHIO

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Quicker response time. 2. Stop getting kicked out every few minutes. 3. Quicker turn around time for files. Currently the turn time on files is up to 1 day, depending on the time of month. 4. Put all rejections for one person together on error report. 5. Be consistent with SSN problems . ie. Potentially invalid - what is that? The certificate processes. 6. Problems with SSN, names, birth date, sometimes they are rejected even though we have information directly from local SSA office. 7. Notify PHA prior to EOP processing because someone else has

housed the resident. 8. Need more explanation regarding police officer units and otherwise occupied units. 9. Eliminate the need to select which program you are sending the file for. 10. Eliminate the need to agree to the privacy act statement and compliance notice EVERY time a file is submitted or a report is run. Have this occur once every other month, or not at all after the initial acceptance.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. Information needs to be within at least 2 months. 2. Ability to print multiple reports at one time - by recertification month.

Top Ten FASS Recommendations

1. Beginning 7/2008 financial data must be submitted by AMP. The 60 days to file will NOT be enough time to submit the unaudited draft. 2. During peak hours, the system is very slow. To get a quick response you must work at 5:00-6:00AM EST. 3. After entering data into a line you cannot get to the next line by tapping enter, you must use the mouse to move. 4. For line items which require "details" you must save your previous work or it is lost. It seems that by going to "details" would not require going to "save" first.

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

1. Frequently have to save information prior to moving to a different tab. 2. Filling out the form on-line takes a long time. 3. Fillable forms would make things a lot easier, agencies could download the forms and input the information and then

Top Ten VMS Recommendations

1. Better direction/information on what should be reported and where to report it in VMS. 2. When changes or updates are made, give directions of changes before implementing so we can capture the data they want.

SAGIS Issues

We have not yet been able to access this system. HUD does not have it up and running while at the same time they will expect the operating subsidy forms to be completed on a very short notice. This will be especially difficult as the subsidy must be completed for each AMP. Need more information on use and requirements for SAGIS.

Support Comment

1. Not enough advance notice of changes. 2. Not enough detailed explanation of changes. 3 When contacting field office, they are not always informed of changes and have little information they can give to answer questions. 4. Questions are not answered in a timely manner by HUD field staff. 5. Send an e-mail to frequent users to notify them of upcoming changes to software.

PHA 40 – Ohio

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

Need more detailed explanation of the reason for rejection and how to resolve. Need to speed it up.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

Change the length of time (quarterly) for certifying users to once a year. We don't have a great turnover in this area.

SAGIS Issues

More training materials and informational information should be mailed and emailed to HA to keep everyone informed and to make sure they are up to date with changes and requirements.

PHA 41 – Oklahoma

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Would like to be aware of the current Ticket # that PIC is processing. The reason for this is that it may just take a few minutes for PIC to process a submission, or it may take hours. The end-user could benefit by being able to see the Ticket # that is currently being processed to get a relative feel for how long it will take to get to our ticket #. To be honest, I don't have a lot of complaints in PIC. I wouldn't add anything over and above my one request.

PHA 42 – Oklahoma

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Training from HUD 2. Better PIC help resolving problems.

PIC Issues

1. No training from HUD 2. Format of name suffix (Jr.) causes fatal errors. 3. Units cannot be sorted numerically. 4. Same name & birthday duplicate error flags, for tenants with different SSN, cannot be resolved quickly due to both Housing Authorities needing to sign off as 'OK'. 5. Trouble getting through to the PIC Helpline and calls are not returned in a timely manner.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. Eliminate duplicate income listings.

EIV Issues

1. When tenants work at a local franchise, duplicate EIV listings occur from the parent company and the local company.

Top Ten FASS Recommendations

1. Do away with it. 2. Use the same accounts as HUD does. 3. Allow dollars and CENTS to be entered. Every other accounting program that I have ever seen uses dollars and cents. Hours have been spent trying to plug a dollar here and a dollar there to balance these reports.

FASS Issues

1. No training. 2. Inflexible rules created by unknown entities. 3. Additional requirements added every year without any notice or training.

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

1. Do away with it. 2. Provide training. 3. Revise indicators to what is actually important. Benchmarks should be revised by doing in-depth analysis of well run Housing Authorities that score poorly and poorly run HAs that score well.

MASS Issues

1. Financial indicators do not reflect reality. 2. Unit turnaround time is much too low.

SAGIS Issues

1. PowerPoint won't do it. We need real training with real people that know what will be required. 2. Too much is changing at once. This year, budgets are being

required for each AMP group and a totally new way to submit, SAGIS. 3. We should be given plenty of time to collect new, required data. This year, a rent roll for the entire year is required, by AMP group. Because we divided our Scattered Site units into different AMP groups, we had to create new worksheets listing every rent for every Scattered Site unit for the entire 2004 reporting year. Same applies to utilities and utility allowances. Prior to this, it was a one month snap shot for the entire Low Rent program.

Support Comment

1. Field office staff generally knows less about HUD's on-line systems than I do.
 2. Entire systems and changes are implemented without any advanced warnings or input for Housing Authority staff. Once systems are in place, major changes cannot be made. When HUD is still in the 'thinking' stages, Housing Authorities should be asked for their input.
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PHA 43 – Tennessee

SAGIS Issues

Piss poor systems, cumbersome, NOT USER FRIENDLY. Poor print out of documents and reports.

Support Comment

If it were not for the Memphis Hub PIC Coach we would be dead in the water!

General Comment

The HELP DESK is a MAJOR hindrance!

PHA 44 – Texas

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Leave it alone! if it ain't broke, don't try to fix it.!!!

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. Put it in plain English for understanding

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

1. PHA's with only 50 or lower units, should NOT have to do a MASS report. 2. Takes up too much valuable time

MASS Issues

1. Understanding the whole process!

SAGIS Issues

Like I said, "If it ain't broke, don't mess it up.". Why can't they leave the system just like it is. Why do they have to keep changing,changing,changing everything. Don't they have anything better to do than screw up the systmes.?????????????

Support Comment

D.C. was contacted about our problems and did NOT help us until about a month later. By then the Field Office was calling trying tohelp us and couldn't figure out the problem either.

PHA 45 – Texas

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

Add questions required for MASS to PIC (offer info, make ready days, etc.). It would be much easier to provide this with each new lease, not to mention the reduction in paperwork.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

More training on where the info comes from and how to use it.

EIV Issues

Information provided is not current enough to be helpful to a PHA until after a tenant has been house for a year. In addition, system is very confusing regarding thresholds, etc.

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

Combine MASS and PIC systems.

MASS Issues

It is very time consuming and confusing.

SAGIS Issues

If looks very promising and hopefully will be a great improvement.

Support Comment

They are very helpful and supportive. They do a great job!

PHA 46 – Virginia

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

(1) Restore the full SSN, DOB, and first name display. This lack of information has resulted in unacceptable increase burden hours for users to troubleshoot errors and obtain useful reports. (2) Permit correction of SSN, DOB, and name discrepancies on line by selected HA personnel (PIC Security administrators, perhaps) rather than the two-three day process that currently exists. HA's would note such changes in the client's local file with supporting documentation. (3) Eliminate HUD field office approval of corrections to public housing unit address and other non-client related fields. Also eliminate this oversight for HA's who must temporarily take units off-line due to catastrophic reasons, such as a fire. This is unnecessary oversight and prevents quick correction of inaccurate data. (4) Improve the cooperation with software vendors by providing increased leadtimes for software revisions to meet new PIC or HUD reporting requirements. (5) Increase the activity level of members of the Organization for the Advancement of Technology in Housing Authorities (OATHA) in future PIC planning to include forums with the actual programmers of the PIC software. (6) Better and more frequent training sessions on PIC for HA personnel and HUD field office personnel. (7) Allow on-line correction of HQS initial inspection dates in the current record side. This will immensely aid those HA's with unresolved vendor software issues that is inputting incorrect dates in the 50058's. HA's would maintain certification of the accurate date of initial inspection in the client's local file. (8) Allow view and print access to all clients in the PIC database to select HA personnel (Security Administrators). This would be a very useful tool for HA's to resolve and/or pursue possible fraud

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

(1) Restore the full SSN, DOB, and first name display. This lack of information has resulted in unacceptable increase burden hours for users to evaluate and resolve potential fraud situations. (2) Speak to whatever authority responsible but require So

EIV Issues

(1) The quarterly certification of users; change to every six months and eliminate HUD field office approval. The HA identified security officer should have the authority to certify all HA users; the Executive Director of each agency should certify the security officer. The current security procedure is unnecessary, onerous, and over-regulated.

SAGIS Issues

The planning for this system was terrible. HA's were given short notice in late 2006 to certify a user for the system. The first web-based training in the fall of 2006 was short on details and generally a waste of time. There have been several SAGIS notices between the fall of 2006 and summer of 2007 that also created a false emergency reaction by HA's. For future new systems, HUD should not involve HA's until the system is at least in a reasonable beta state and in state where comprehensive training or insight can be provided. As for the functionality, who knows since no one has any data to view at the present time.

Support Comment

The PIC system has the best notification and help desk personnel. HUD does not adequately inform or train HUD field office personnel and HA personnel. Too often, both HUD field office personnel and HA personnel are left to resolve issues by the hit or miss method. It is perceived that this problem has gotten increasingly worse as HUD increasingly contracts out the management and support of their systems. It is also noted that this is not a HUD unique situation and has become prevalent in many federal agencies who have the misconception that cost savings are generated by wholesale contacting out of services. HUD needs a stronger COTR contingent for their contracts and force contractors to toe the line on support and services or penalize contractors accordingly.

PHA 47 – Washington

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Allow for on line correction to HQS annual inspection date data 2. Allow for on line correction to HQS initial inspection data-system currently puts annual

inspection in field after the first annual insp is completed, instead of leaving initial inspection date intact. 3. Allow for on line port out/port in information to be submitted or corrected 4 Provide a report to show which clients are ports out, using pha data to match against local database to show PIC credited ports out the Housing Authority used in their lease up data. 5. Provide that SSN errors are warnings, not fatal errors, especially when the error is not a real error 6. Provide an avenue to show/certify that data is correct as presented to PIC, removing the fatal error flag and allowing data to be processed. 7. Make any change in the client's data one that flows up to PIC whether an annual/interim has been completed or not, such as HQS annual inspections, FSS progress reports, eliminating T screening daily events. 8. Use PHA use only fields in all reports available from PIC, not just ad hocs 9. Make it easy to determine who is in both PIC and local databases, using PHA use only fields, instead of initials, and last four of the social security numbers, which makes it difficult to match clients.

PIC Issues

Our biggest problem, because one month's data can skew our SEMAP scores, is that initial inspection data being overlaid with the annual inspection, making the initial inspection a "PA" when of course it wasn't. Since we have to T screen inspections to upload to PIC, there is no way of knowing that the contract is in its initial year, posing a problem for initial HQS inspection problems. The second biggest problem, because it affects every data upload we attempt, is social security mismatches that really are not mismatched - the Social Security database has not been updated or corrected when a client has changed names, or some other event, and received a new social security card. It has become cumbersome to manage the alt ids that are being assigned in order to get the clients into PIC, but now they are unavailable through EIV. A definite flaw. It is difficult enough to manage our our database without trying to monitor Social Security's database! Ports out and in are a daily work-around, and PIC data correction and uploading takes entirely too much staff time. While I recognize the tremendous task of communicating with so many different systems, if you are going to do this, then give us a tool to make it less time consuming and expensive, and recognize when your system has failed to correctly identify data. It is particularly irksome to lose points because the PIC system administrators fails to recognize its own flaws, and hold us accountable to PIC data, not necessarily correct data.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. Describe what the data is on the form. 2. Make the EIV data available for any family member, not just the Head of Household 3. Make data available to anyone authorized, even if the family is not in your housing authority - fraud investigation. 4. Co

EIV Issues

The EIV program is very helpful; but information should be available on any social security number, not just Head of Household. Some things cannot be made easier by the field office. they are always helpful in fixing a port problem, and in trying to find ways to simplify systems or processes.

PHA 48 – Wisconsin

SAGIS Issues

1. SAGIS is not up and running yet 2. down loading the training material is way too complicated--doesn't need to be

PHA 49 – Wisconsin

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

Easier access to reports. More detailed reports regarding your own properties.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

Current data; data is usually out dated Would be great to include new clients; ie. when they first are put into a housing unit instead of waiting for documentation.

EIV Issues

same as above. We rarely use it due to old data

Support Comment

With so many systems to keep tract of. HUD/REAC should be notifying PHAs via email of upcoming changes and events. It takes time to access it area to confirm any and all changes. Additionally, training needs to take place well in advance of the change. Not after the fact. For small PHAs training should be held in at least each state and centrally located would be best.

PHA 50 – Wisconsin

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

The system really does not save a lot of time. We still do third party verifications because most tenants do not stay at a job long enough to use an average of quarterly income. New Hire information is sometimes incorrect. The person may have been

Top Ten VMS Recommendations

I find validation requests very frustrating. We have had several of them. Example: we received the emailed notification of February 16, at 3:20 p.m. The response was to be in by February 20 at 5:00 p.m. Our FMC was not available immediately because the office was closed due to a Federal holiday. After all the hassle, everything we had reported on VMS reports was correct from the start.

SAGIS Issues

Information regarding this program has been minimal at best.

Support Comment

If we did not have the field office that we do, we would be in serious trouble. Directions from HUD staff are sometimes incomplete or wrong. Field office staff is much better at getting us through problems with any of the HUD computer programs, registering for on-line administrative rights, etc. Field office is often neglected in training opportunities because of budget shortages. Turn around time for assistance from field office is almost always less than 24 hours. These positive comments are acknowledging the staff located in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin HUD offices.

PHA 51 – Wisconsin

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Error messages are unclear. Please state the problem more specifically.
2. When PIC can't match 50058 data with Social Security numbers an error message shows and we have to guess what the error is. Can PIC show the Social Security data it has, for example names is mis-spelled or spelled differently than in Social Security.
3. When a 50058 is submitted with and End of Participation code, why doesn't PIC mark the unit vacant?
4. It is difficult to navigate within the screens. Tab labels are inconsistent between programs and not clear. Each page seems to have different buttons and labels which makes it easier to make mistakes and harder to find which field to open.
5. There should be instructions

about which fields/codes will effect reporting scores, i.e. "searching" counts as unreported in PIC. 6. PIC should uses the same data when calculating percentages. Why, for example is VMS data from the past quarter is used to compare to the most recent month for % reported?

PIC Issues

IF the PIC modules were more user friendly we wouldn't have to sent staff to training on how to understand the program. That would leave more money to spend on the property. For small Housing Authorities there may not be funds to send staff to PIC training.

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

1. password, security and credentials make access difficult. Recertification is too frequent.

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

1. There are terms in the MASS report which are can be misunderstood. NAHRO, HUD and other trainers provide training to explain how to complete the report. An online module should be available so that HAs don't have to spend money and time at training.

Support Comment

1. We always have access problems. Either passwords don't work or the user ID isn't assigned properly. The security has too many levels, "assign an ID to a function then assign the function to the PHA". IF all PHAs had IT departments maybe this would be logical but to those of us who aren't techies just getting access to use and submit reports is challenging.
2. Most reports are submitted annually, (MASS, FASS, RASS, SEMAP)and PIC/WASS changes more often than that. When the annual reports are due the screens and fields are unfamiliar and the training materials are usually outdated. The on-line training needs to keep up with the system changes.

PHA 52 – Wisconsin

Top Ten PIC Recommendations

1. Too many components. All info should be derived from 50058 submissions.
2. Clearer instructions about patch downloading.
3. Navigation is definitely an issue.

This includes non clarity about where to go to do what. It took me years to find the occupancy report to submit. 4. I sent for a HELP issue in December. Got my first reply in March and then just got another one in July. Had fixed the problem- a patch downloading thing by then. Please fix the HELP desk. There is a simpler procedure out there and with our resources, we should be able to find it.

PIC Issues

There are much simpler and more straight forward types of systems available- and if there aren't you could develop one. There are just too many components to deal with for my small agency. It must be a nightmare for large agencies. AI- Once you submit an end of participation for a unit- it should automatically read "vacant". Instead you have to go to PIC and declare it vacant. If you forget then it reads "unreported". In reality it has been reported. I have had no vacant units for years, but did not declare one vacant 4 years ago. It is now occupied- has been, but still reads unreported. Just try to figure out which one it is. If it is full it is full, if it is empty it is empty. Data should be dependent on 50058's. That is just one stupid example. ES

Top Ten EIV Recommendations

The information needs to be more up to date. We need to be able to get information on applicants also.

EIV Issues

Over all, helpful.

Top Ten FASS Recommendations

A bit bulky- Could give same info with less overall effort.

Top Ten MASS Recommendations

Generally OK to use. Would like to download first in one format so that answers could be penciled in and then submitted on line.

SAGIS Issues

Not clear on who does what and when.