



# **Measuring Fidelity of Homeless Programs: Data and Experience from VA-Funded Low Demand Housing Model Development Initiatives**

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## Session Outline

- Introduction to fidelity measurement
- Why fidelity measurement is important
- Fidelity measurement's role in the VA National Center on Homelessness' Implementation Science Framework used with housing model development initiatives
- The core values and key components of Low Demand housing programs
- Identifying the key components of your program
- What you should measure and how you should measure it
- A review of the findings from VA-funded Safe Havens and Low Demand GPD programs
- Using fidelity data to shape and improve your housing program(s) and model development initiative(s)



## What is Fidelity Measurement?

- Degree to which a program and/or intervention is administered as it was intended
- Fidelity plays an important role in guiding implementation of new model development initiatives
- Offers an objective way to monitor and provide structured feedback concerning program development and change over time
- Use of a structured, standardized fidelity scale allows comparisons between programs and facilitates mapping of processes and outcomes



## Why Fidelity Measurement Is Important

- Gathering and monitoring housing program fidelity data are critical to determining whether programs operate as intended and whether they drift away from their model's core principles over time
- Sometimes staff who have worked in traditional homeless programs want to go back to the “traditional model” and what is familiar and comfortable
- Generally associated with better outcomes
- Use of a structured, standardized fidelity scale allows comparisons between programs and facilitates mapping of processes and outcomes
- Evidence of outcomes does not inform how to implement a program



# Fidelity Measurement and the Implementation Science Framework

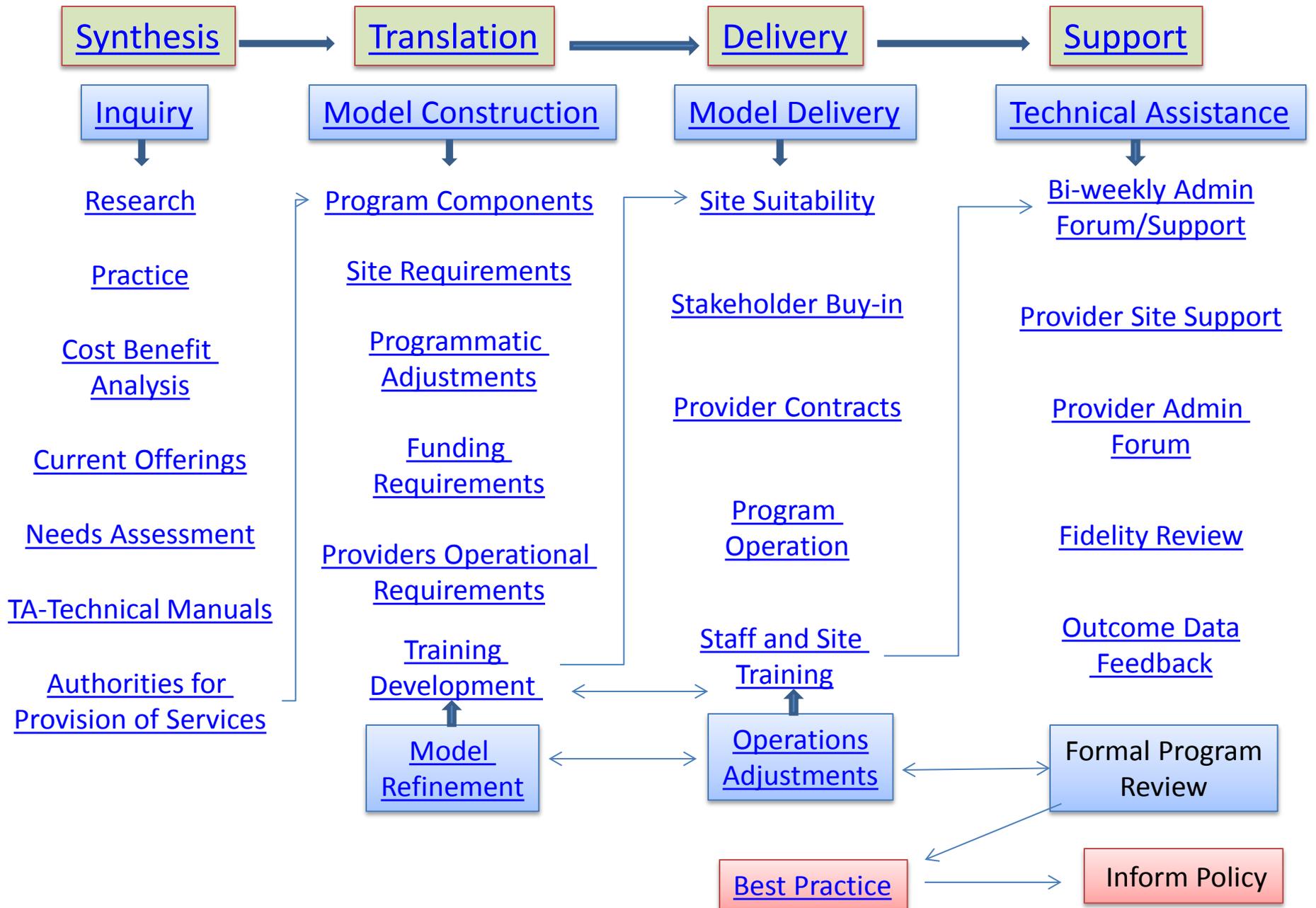
The Four Phases of Implementation:  
An Implementation Science Logic Model

Synthesis  
System

Translation  
System

Delivery  
System

Support  
System





# Program Fidelity Evaluation of VA Low Demand Housing Programs

- Safe Haven programs
- Low Demand Grant and Per Diem programs



## Identifying the Key Components of Your Program

- Determine the components of your model that are essential
- Review the literature and research to determine the components that are effective
- Use your program's logic model to build on the theoretical linkages between activities and outcomes



# The Key Dimensions of Low Demand Fidelity

- Characteristics of Veterans served
- Physical characteristics of your facility
- Staffing
- Outreach services
- Targeting and eligibility
- Approach to substance use
- Service provided to residents
- Coordination with other services
- Program rules and explanations
- Program entry and exit procedures



# What You Should Measure and How You Should Measure It

- Prioritize the key components of your model
- Describe the components in measurable terms
- Develop your survey instrument
- Select methods of fidelity assessment



## What Most Fidelity Models Measure

- Adherence: Delivery of key program components as planned
  - Includes program content, methods, and activities
- Quality of Delivery: The manner by which services are delivered
  - Preparedness, use of examples, enthusiasm, interaction style, respectfulness
- Program Differentiation: Unique features based on local multi-site adaptation



## Fidelity Assessment Methods

- Site visits
- Structured observation
- Surveys
- Interviews with staff and clients
- Review of program records, materials, and data
- Surveys



# VA Low Demand Housing Programs

- **VA Contracted Safe Haven Programs**

A Health Care for Homeless Veteran program that contracts with community based providers for Safe Haven care

- **VA Grant and Per Diem Low Demand Transitional Supportive Housing Programs**

A Grant and Per Diem program that provides per diem payments to community based providers to implement and provide Low Demand supportive transitional housing



## Core Values and Key Components of Low Demand Housing Programs

- **Do not** require sobriety or compliance with treatment as a condition of admission or continued stay
- Demands are kept to a minimum
- Environment of care is as non-intrusive as possible
- Rules focus on staff and resident safety



## Core Values and Key Components of Low Demand Housing Programs (Cont.)

- Client episodes of intoxication, substance use, compliance problems, and rule infractions are seen as opportunities for client engagement, but NOT to discharge or impose sanctions
- Clients are engaged in harm reduction strategies with a primary focus of attaining and maintaining their housing
  - Housing plan versus treatment plan
- Model is based on acceptance that not all mental health and substance use problems can "be fixed"



# **A Review of Findings From VA-Funded Safe Havens and Low Demand GPD Programs**

## **Safe Haven Programs**

- 25 programs
- 465 operating beds

## **Low Demand GPD Programs**

- 60 programs, 55 responding
- 1,085 operating beds



# Logistics of the VA-Funded Low Demand Fidelity Assessments

- Conducted annually
- 1<sup>st</sup> review scheduled approximately 6 months after program start date
- Completed by GPD Liaison and Program Manager in collaboration with program staff
- Survey is based on honor system



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# Implementation of Key Aspects of the Model



# Admission Sobriety Requirements

## Safe Haven Programs

- No sites had admission sobriety requirements

## Low Demand GPD Programs

- 93% reported No admission sobriety requirements
- 7% reported admission sobriety requirements\*

\*Some GPD Low Demand programs that reported sobriety requirements indicated that their requirements were related to the issue of safety or admission of clients who needed detox



## Discharge for Substance Use

### Safe Haven Programs

- No sites discharged Veterans for first time substance use

### Low Demand GPD Programs

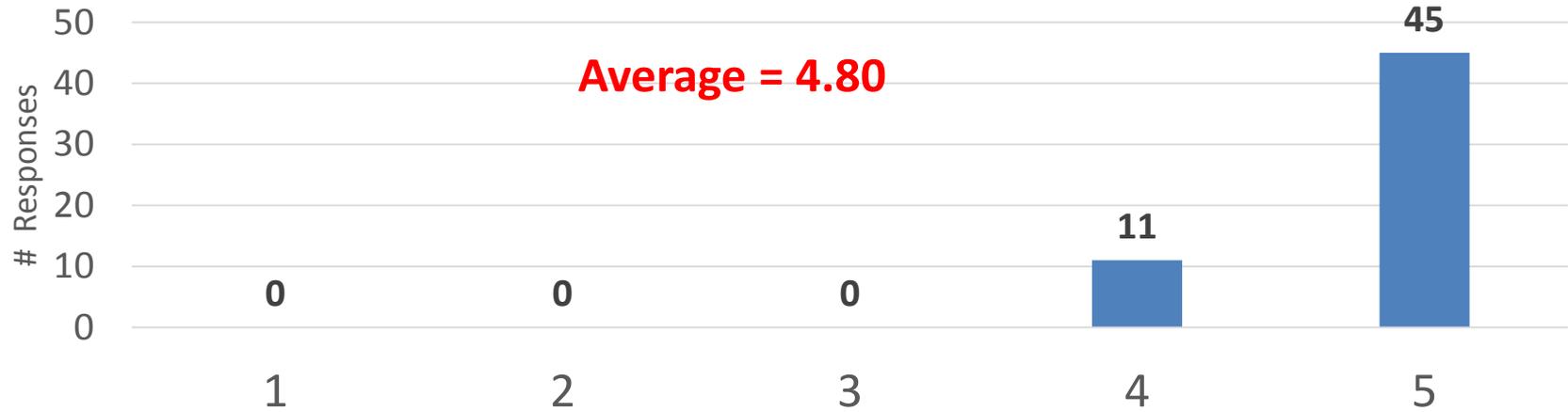
- No sites discharged Veterans for first time substance use
- Some Safe Haven and GPD programs discharged Veterans for multiple episodes of substance use
- Many Safe Haven and GPD programs mentioned that the staff utilized instances of substance use as opportunities for engagement
- Safe Haven and GPD programs indicated that implementation of this key aspect of the model was difficult for staff who had practiced traditional model recovery programs



# **Additional Data from Low Demand GPD Programs regarding Alcohol and Drug Treatment, Sobriety/Abstaining, Intoxication, and Possession**

# Admission: Substance Abuse Tx Requirements

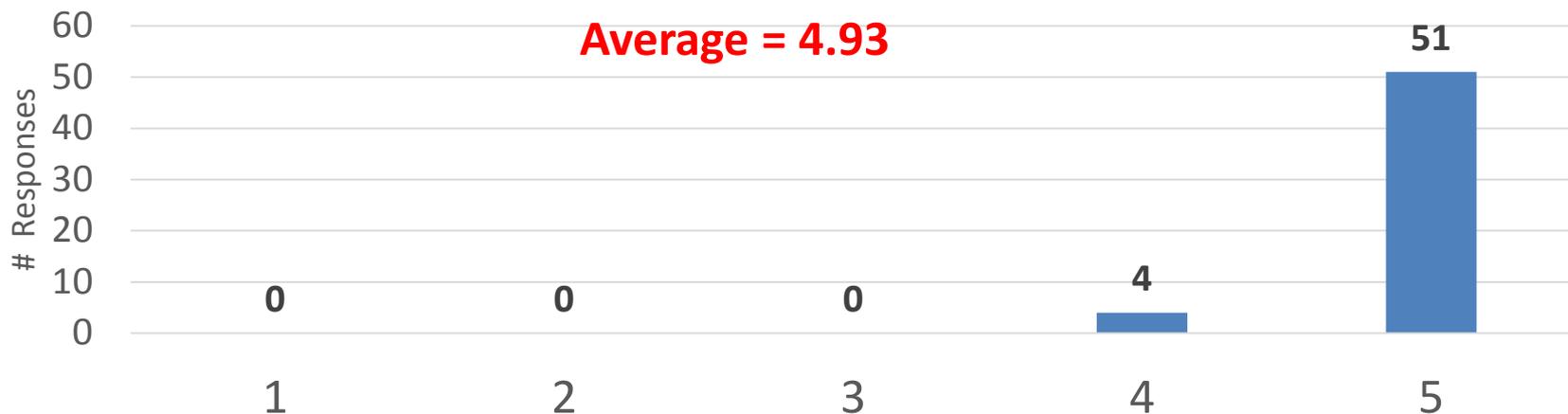
## Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



	1	2	3	4	5
<b>ADMISSION SUBSTANCE ABUSE Tx</b> Veterans can enter housing without participating in SA Tx	<b>Never</b> admitted unless participated <b>(0% of time)</b>	<b>Rarely</b> provided housing unless participated <b>(1%-33% of time)</b>	<b>Sometimes</b> provided housing only if participated <b>(34%-65% of time)</b>	<b>Often</b> provided housing without having participated <b>(66%-99% of time)</b>	<b>Always</b> provided housing regardless of whether participated <b>(100% of time)</b>

# Admission: Sobriety from Alcohol

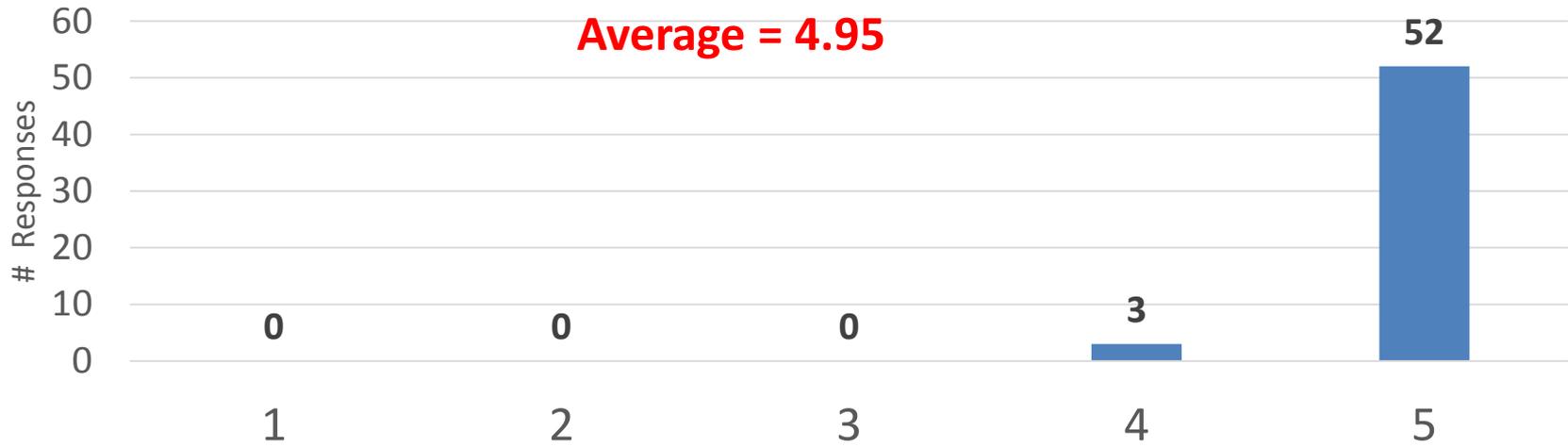
## Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



	1	2	3	4	5
<b>ADMISSION ALCOHOL</b> Not required to be clean and sober from alcohol to enter program	Required to have not used alcohol for <b>60+ days</b> regardless of SUD status	Required to have not used alcohol for <b>30 – 59 days</b>	Required to have not used alcohol for <b>1 – 30 days</b>	Required to have not used alcohol upon entry to program, but <b>no specified duration</b>	<b>No restrictions</b> on entry because of sobriety from alcohol

# Admission: Sobriety from Drugs

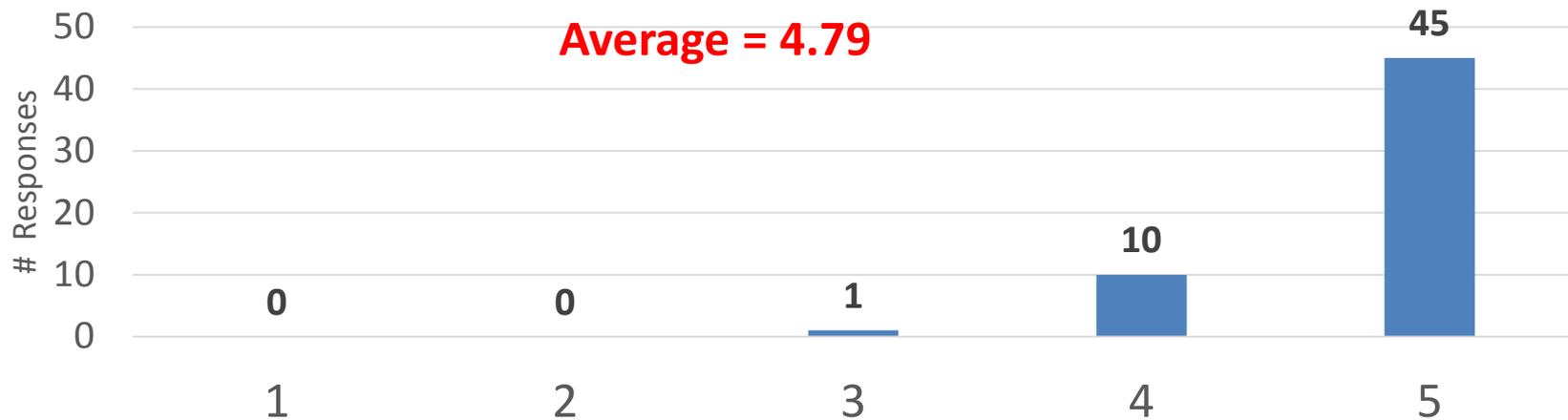
## Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



	1	2	3	4	5
<b>ADMISSION DRUGS</b>	Required to have been clean from drugs for <b>60+ days</b>	Required to have been clean from drugs for <b>30 – 59 days</b>	Required to have been clean from drugs for <b>1 – 30 days</b>	Required to have been clean from drugs, but <b>no specified duration</b>	<b>No restrictions</b> on entry for lack of abstaining from drugs
Not required to be clean and sober from drugs to enter program					

# Tenure in Housing: Alcohol Intoxication

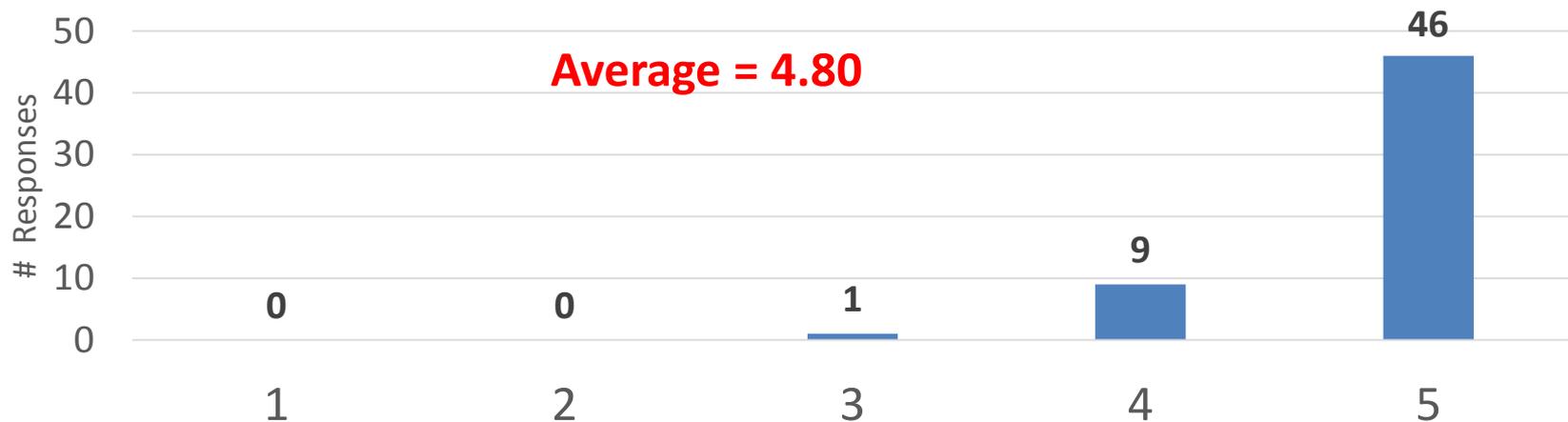
## Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



	1	2	3	4	5
<b>TENURE IN HOUSING: ALCOHOL INTOXICATION</b>	Veterans evicted if caught being under influence of alcohol <b>once</b>	Veterans evicted if caught being under influence of alcohol <b>2 times</b>	Veterans evicted if caught being under influence of alcohol <b>3 times</b>	Veterans evicted if caught being under influence of alcohol <b>4 or more times</b>	Veterans <b>never</b> evicted due to their being under influence of alcohol
Clean and sober from alcohol					

# Tenure in Housing: Drug Intoxication

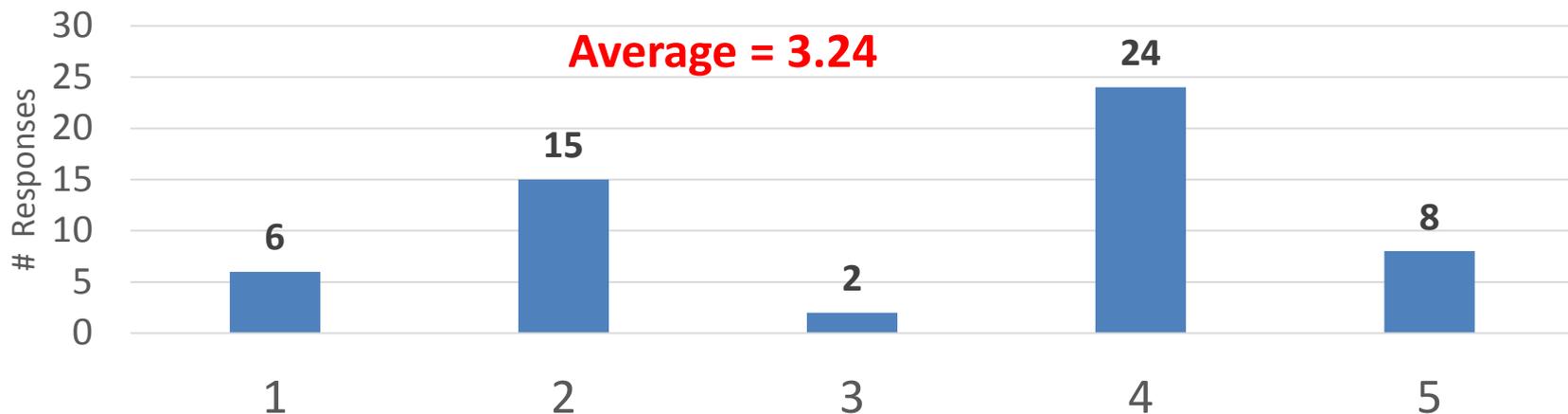
## Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



	1	2	3	4	5
<b>TENURE IN HOUSING: DRUG INTOXICATION</b> Clean and sober from drugs	Veterans evicted if caught being under influence of drugs <b>once</b>	Veterans evicted if caught being under influence of drugs <b>2 times</b>	Veterans evicted if caught being under influence of drugs <b>3 times</b>	Veterans evicted if caught being under influence of drugs <b>4 or more times</b>	Veterans <b>never</b> evicted if caught under influence of drugs

# Tenure in Housing: Alcohol Possession

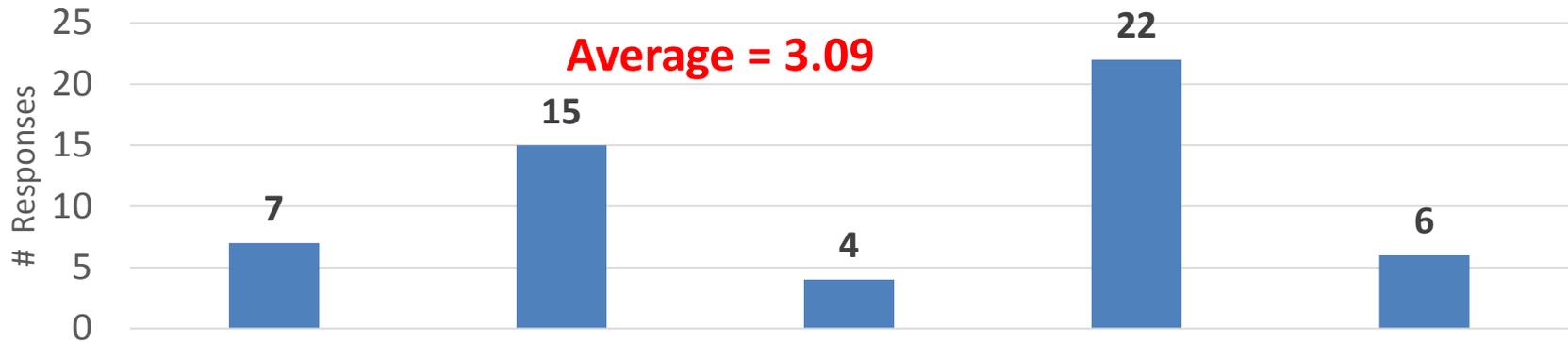
## Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



	1	2	3	4	5
<b>TENURE IN HOUSING: ALCOHOL POSSESSION</b> Alcohol allowed on premises	Evicted if <b>ever found</b> to be in possession in program housing	Evicted if caught on <b>multiple occasions</b> possessing in program housing	Evicted if ever caught <b>possessing and sharing</b> in program housing	Evicted if caught <b>multiple times posses and sharing</b> in program housing	<b>Never</b> evicted for possessing or sharing in program housing

# Tenure in Housing: Drug Possession

## Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



	1	2	3	4	5
<b>TENURE IN HOUSING: DRUG POSSESSION</b> Illegal drugs or drugs not prescribed	Evicted if <b>ever caught</b> possessing drugs in housing	Evicted if caught <b>multiple times</b> possessing drugs in housing	Evicted if caught possessing <b>and sharing</b> drugs or in housing	Evicted if caught <b>multiple times possessing and sharing</b> drugs or in housing	<b>Never</b> evicted for possessing or sharing drugs in housing

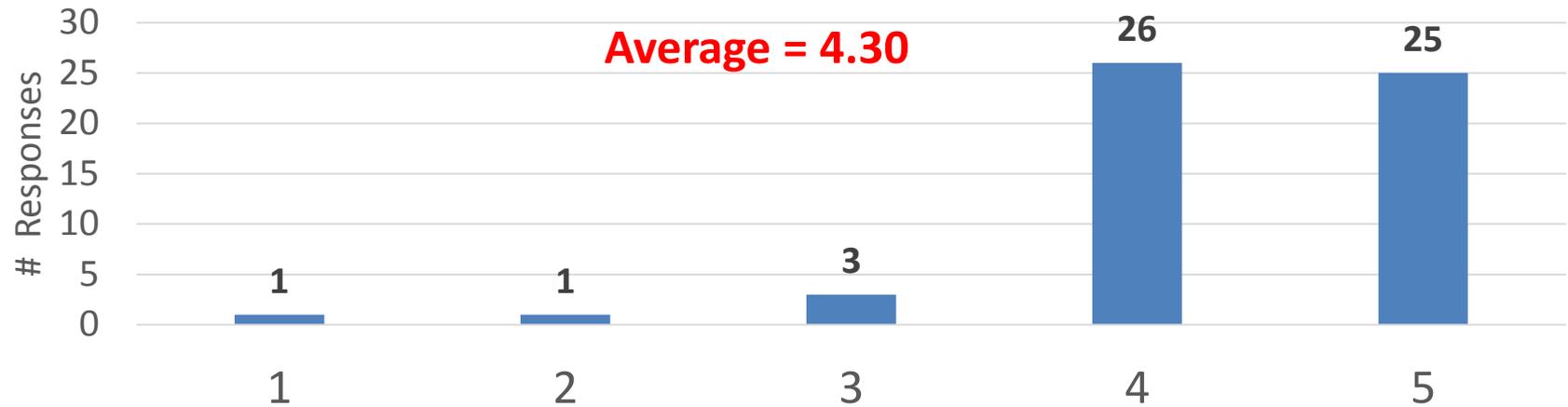


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# **Quality, Safety, and Differentiation Issues**

# Staff Perceptions of Safe Environment: Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



	1	2	3	4	5
<b>SAFE ENVIRONMENT</b> Staff feel their work and what they are asked to do is in a safe environment	Staff feel work environment is safe <b>almost never</b>	Staff feel work environment is safe <b>some of the time</b>	Staff feel work environment is safe about <b>half the time</b>	Staff feel work environment is safe <b>most of the time</b>	Staff feel work environment is safe <b>all of the time</b>



# Use of Safe Rooms and Sober Lounges

(Low Demand Program Tools that Promote Safety and Resident Retention)

## Safe Haven Programs

- 72% reported using Safe Rooms or Sober Lounges

## Low Demand GPD Programs

- 80% reported using Safe Rooms or Sober Lounges

\*Fidelity comments revealed that many programs saw Safe Rooms and Sober Lounges as a critical aspect of their safety program



# Use of Curfew

## Safe Haven Programs

- 77% reported using curfews

## GPD Low Demand Programs

- 75% reported using curfews

\*Many Low Demand programs reported that they have curfews but do not use them to impose negative sanctions



# Use of Bag Checks

## Safe Haven Programs

- 84% reported using bag checks

## Low Demand GPD Programs

- 63% reported using bag checks



# Use of Chores

Motivating Residents to Take an Active Role in Maintaining their Home through Chores is Considered an Important Aspect of the Low Demand Model

## Safe Haven Programs

- 100% reported using chores to engage residents

## Low Demand GPD Programs

- 98% reported using chores to engage residents



# Alcohol and Drug Testing

Drug and Alcohol Testing in Low Demand Programs is often Discouraged unless it is Used in a Non-Punitive Manner or to Assess Residents when There is Concern that their Level of Intoxication or Impairment has Become Dangerous or Life Threatening

## Safe Haven Programs

- 61% reported conducting drug and alcohol testing

## GPD Low Demand Programs

- 62% reported conducting drug and alcohol testing



# Targeting and Outreach

## Safe Haven Programs Reported That

- 48% of referrals came from VA programs and staff
- 52% of referrals came from community programs or program outreach

## GPD Low Demand Programs Reported That

- 58% of referrals came from VA programs and staff
- 42% of referrals came from community programs or program outreach



# Staffing

Due to the Demands of Caring for Clients in Early Recovery,  
Adequate Staffing is Considered Very Important in Low  
Demand Models

- All programs reported having 24 hour staff presence
- All programs reported having on-site case management services
- Programs reported that Case Managers had a leadership role in model implementation



## Overall Findings

- High degree of implementation of key components of the Low Demand model
- Evidence that Low Demand and harm reduction approaches were being used
- Many comments were provided that showed that respondents had a strong working knowledge of the Low Demand model



## Program Variation was Expected

- Though all sites share a common target population, it was anticipated that they would vary on how they implement the Low Demand model
- Program modifications are sometimes implemented in response to different populations and/or settings
- We wanted to capture this variability and ensure that service providers knew that this was not an audit



## Results of the Assessment

- Shared individually with each site
- Trends are shared on Technical Assistance calls
- Results are used to foster and guide discussion among different sites
- Opportunity on the instrument to provide feedback



## Using Fidelity Data to Shape and Improve Your Housing Program(s) and Model Development Initiative(s)

- The sharing of fidelity data allows program managers to see how they compare with their counterparts across the country
- Differentiation is to be expected and demonstrates programs adjusting to local needs and conditions
- Findings can help foster and guide discussion among different sites



## Using Fidelity Data (Cont.)

- Differentiation that violates core program model values and the logic model should be addressed
- Use of some open-ended questions on the survey instrument is recommended and provides an avenue for providers to ask questions and raise operational issues for which they need assistance
- The survey process can also facilitate sharing of best practices



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# Questions? / Discussion