



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

M. Scott Young , PhD

Research Assistant Professor
University of South Florida

Paul Smits, LCSW

Senior Policy Analyst
University of South Florida





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

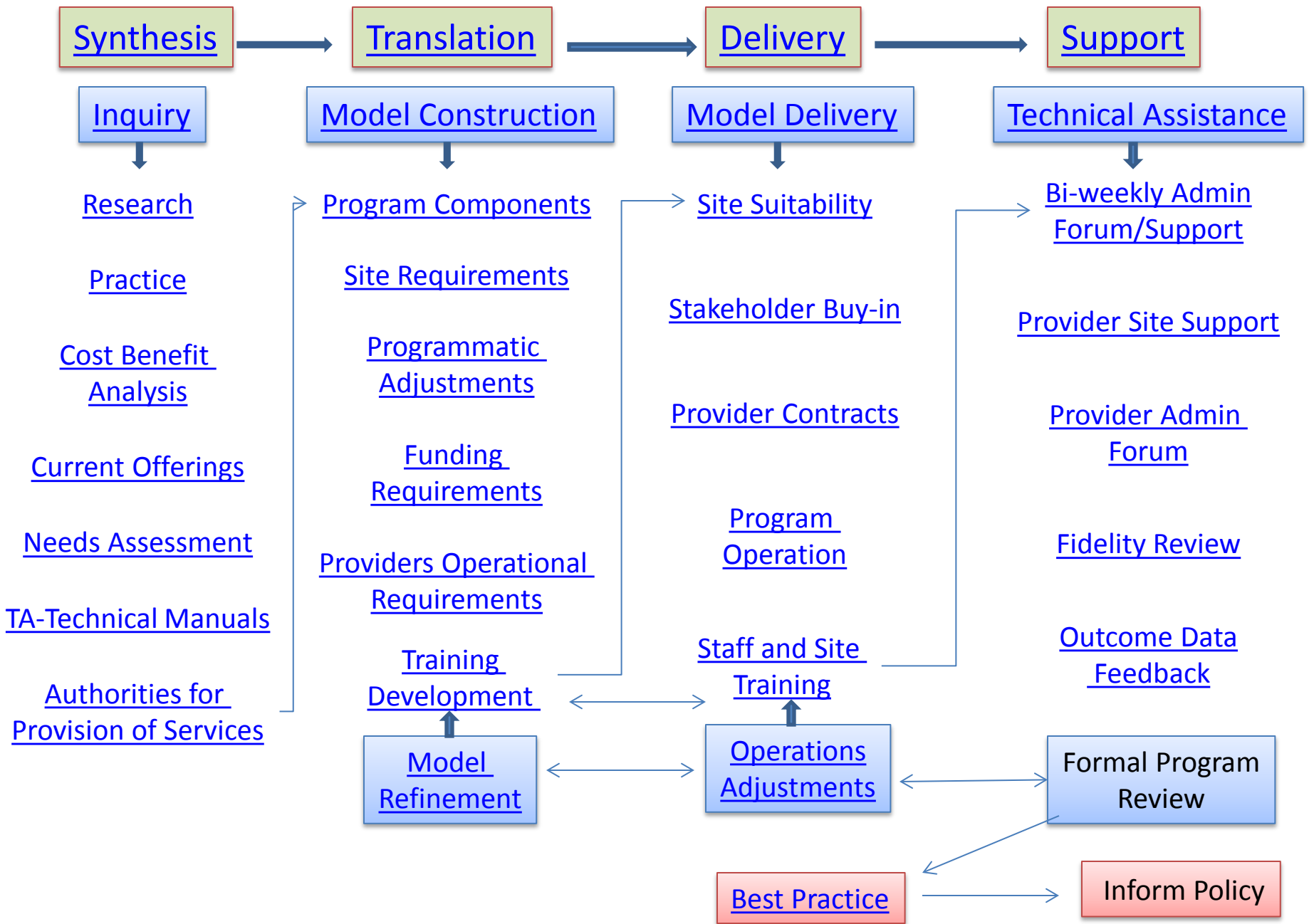
The Four Phases of Implementation:
An Implementation Science Logic Model

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
- 1st 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



VA NATIONAL CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS

Promoting data-driven, evidence-based solutions to end Veteran homelessness

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

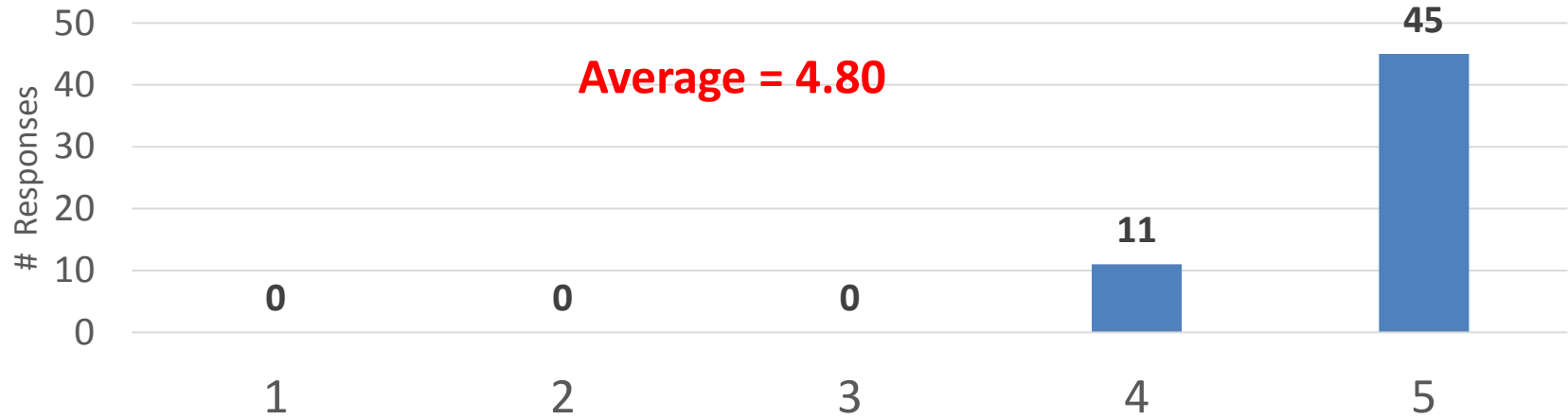
- No sites discharged Veterans for first time substance use
- Some Safe Haven and GPD programs discharged Veterans for multiple episodes of substance use
- Many Safe Haven and GPD programs mentioned that the staff utilized instances of substance use as opportunities for engagement
- Safe Haven and GPD 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

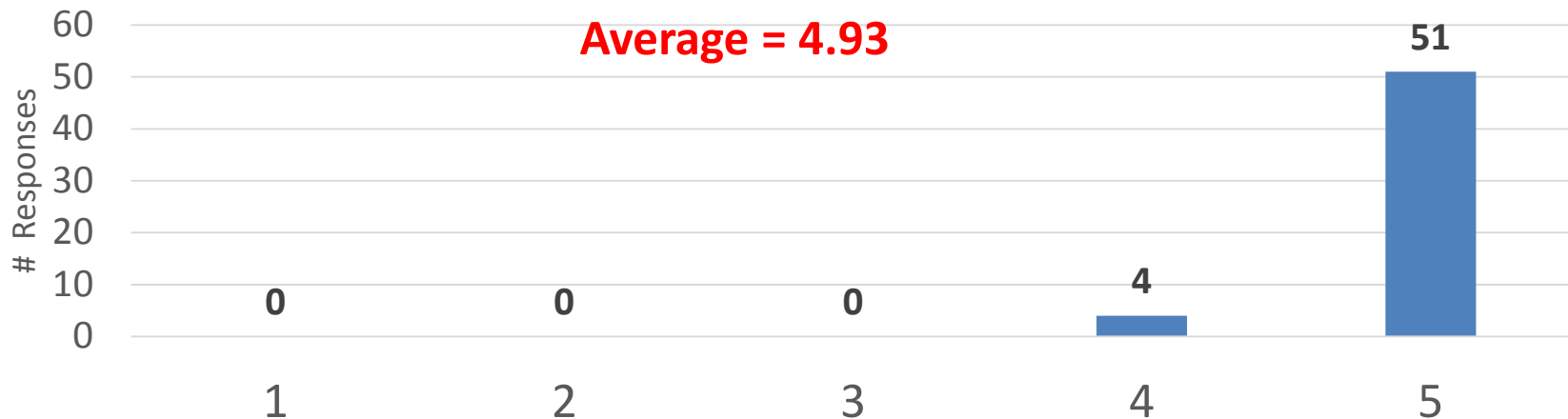
Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



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

Admission: Sobriety from Alcohol

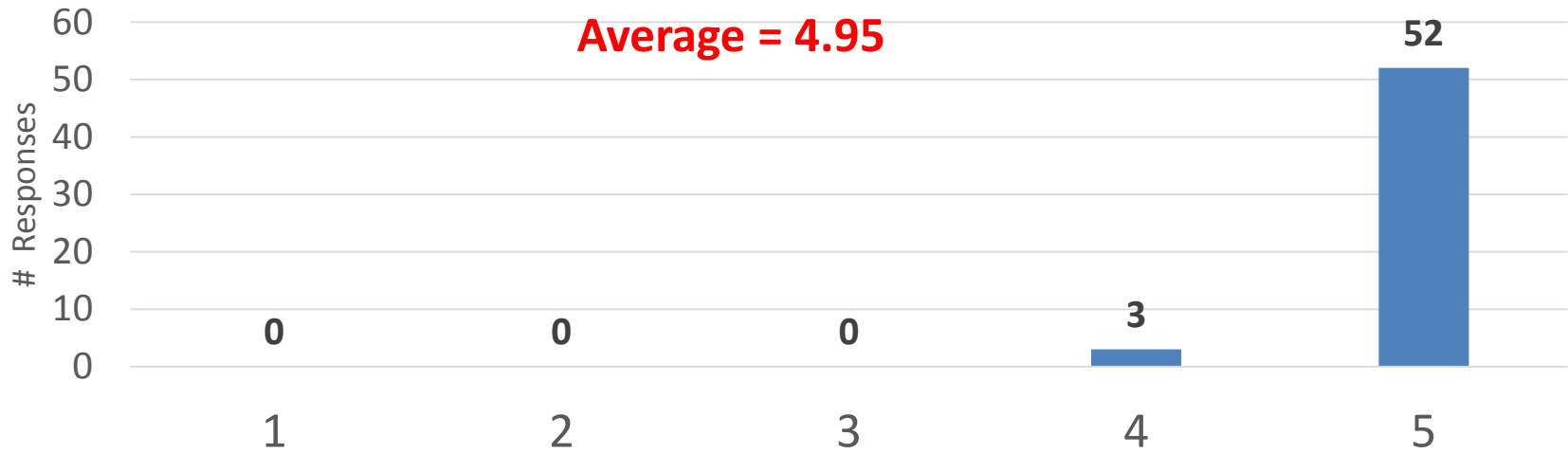
Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



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

Admission: Sobriety from Drugs

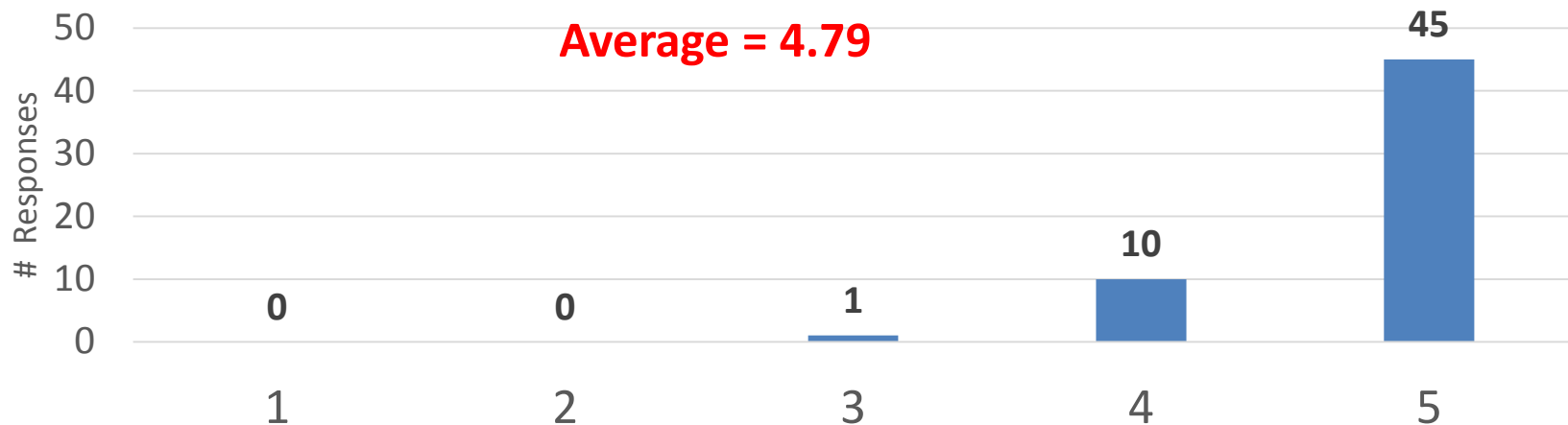
Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



	1	2	3	4	5
ADMISSION DRUGS	Required to have been clean from drugs for 60+ days	Required to have been clean from drugs for 30 – 59 days	Required to have been clean from drugs for 1 – 30 days	Required to have been clean from drugs, but no specified duration	No restrictions 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

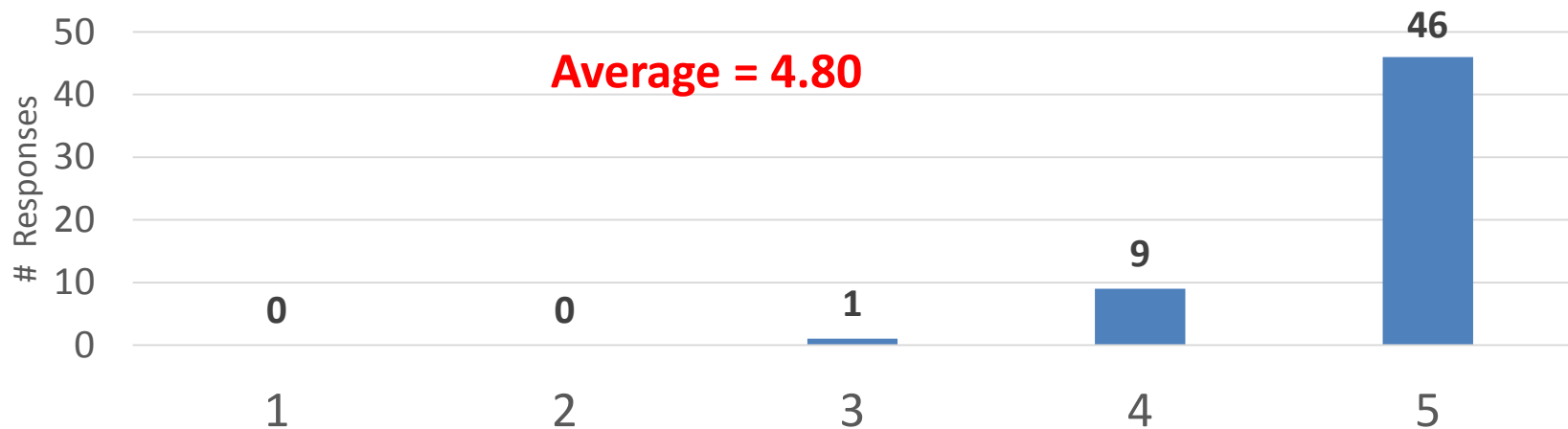
Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



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

Tenure in Housing: Drug Intoxication

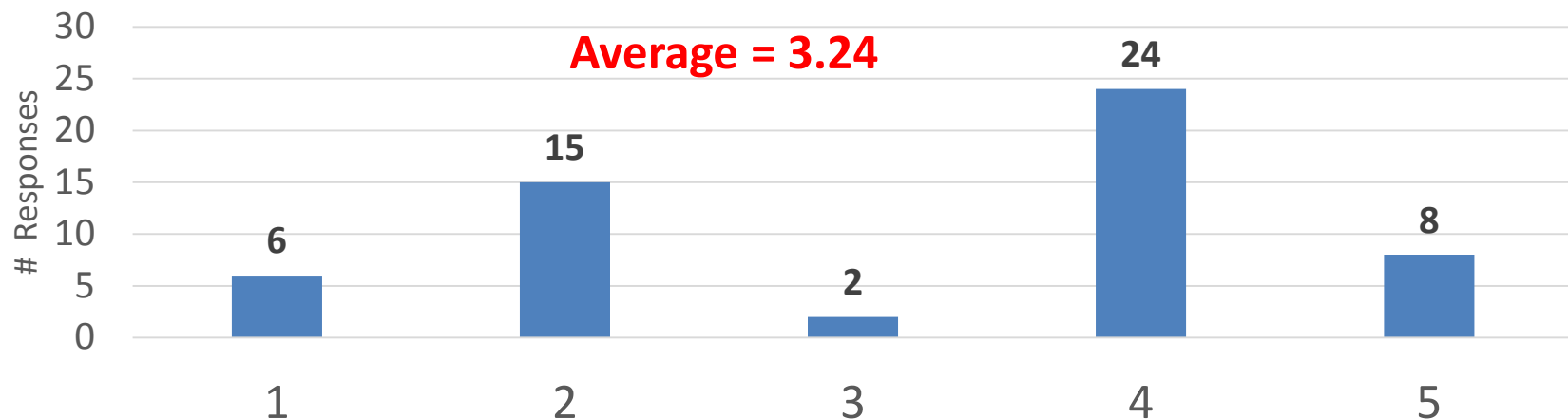
Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



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

Tenure in Housing: Alcohol Possession

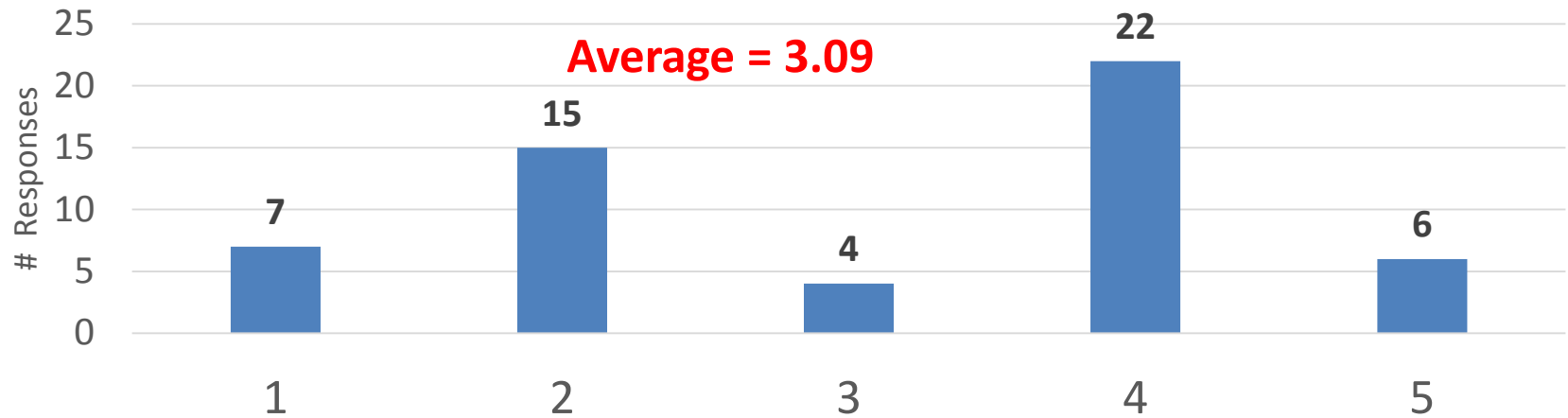
Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



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

Tenure in Housing: Drug Possession

Item Response Frequencies and Average Score



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

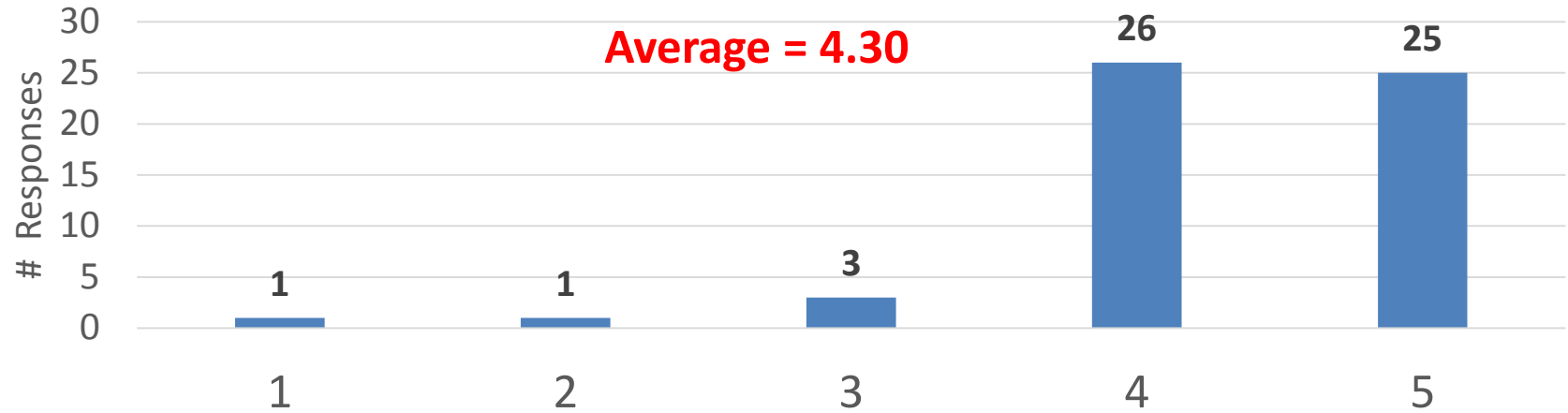


VA NATIONAL CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS

Promoting data-driven, evidence-based solutions to end Veteran homelessness

Quality, Safety, and Differentiation Issues

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



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



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



VA NATIONAL CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS

Promoting data-driven, evidence-based solutions to end Veteran homelessness

Questions? / Discussion