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Integrating Local Government, Non-Profit and Social Service Agency Data to Understand Systems and Outcomes in a Large, Southeastern U.S. City

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Introduction

A central undercurrent between policymakers not being able to make totally informed decisions and non-profit leaders lacking knowledge to most effectively craft their services is the lack of data integration among organizations and across sectors.

Objectives and Approach

We have 40+ data sharing agreements with local governmental agencies (school district, sheriff's office, DSS, Veteran Services, homeless services) and many local non-profit agencies. On an individual project basis, we integrate historical and longitudinally deposited data across datasets in order to research the effects of community initiatives and non-profits to understand the population they are serving and the outcomes associated with their services.

Many agencies lack the capacity for data cleanliness and structure, so we scrub and deposit their data on relational database on a secure server for future integration and investigation.

Results

We highlight two projects:

- We completed a project for a local non-governmental, non-profit housing organization integrating data from 20+ data sharing agreements to investigate familial, individual, and childhood outcomes pre- and post- obtaining homeownership through this organization. This allowed the organization an in-depth, historical view of the effects that stable housing had on the recipients and their families, as well as how to tailor services for new families.
- We integrate data from the school system, homeless information management systems, and non-profit service providers to understand the effects that family homelessness has on educational outcomes. This endeavor provided the community a report of the scope of local

family homelessness as well as educational outcomes of the students.

Conclusion/Implications

Through the integration of seemingly disparate local governmental and social service provider datasets, we equip researchers, non-profit leaders, and policymakers to understand the effects of initiatives and redesign systems and/or reallocate resources.