

Boston EMA Ryan White Planning Council



ASSESSMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE MECHANISM

2023-2024 Final Report

July 2024

Services, Priorities and Evaluations Committee

Planning Council Support

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Assessment of Administrative Mechanism

Background

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) requires that all Ryan White Part A Planning Councils conduct an annual assessment of the administrative mechanism (AAM) to evaluate how efficiently and rapidly grantees disburse funding to the areas of greatest need within the eligible metropolitan area (EMA).

The AAM is an annual evaluation to assess the efficiency of the grantee, Ryan White Services Division (RWSD), in disbursing the Part A funds to the agencies that are contracted to provide Part A HIV services within the Boston EMA. Methodologies include distributing a survey to Part A providers and reviewing RWSD's internal documentation.

The Boston EMA Ryan White Planning Council's role was to develop or revise the survey, provide input on the analysis of the survey results and provide recommendations to BPHC in areas where improvements were necessary. The Services, Priorities, and Evaluation Committee (SPEC) is responsible for executing the AAM. Planning Council Support (PCS) is responsible for making edits to the survey determined by SPEC, distributing the survey to all Part A recipient agencies, gathering data from BPHC, and conducting data analysis as requested by SPEC. SPEC presents their recommendations to the Council, recommendations are then voted on by the Planning Council and PCS asks RWSD to respond to the recommendations with a corrective plan of action.

Methodology

PCS sent out the provider survey in February, with a due date of March 28th, 2024. The BPHC Data Request was sent out March 29th, 2024, with a due date of April 26th, 2024. The survey included 14 questions, significantly reduced and streamlined from previous years to increase response rate and open-ended responses per SPEC recommendations. 12 questions were multiple-choice, and 2 questions were open-ended. Every multiple-choice question also had the option to leave a comment. The survey asks Part A funded providers about multiple categories of the effectiveness of BPHC's disbursement of funds including agency location and capacity, procurement, contracting and budgeting, and overall satisfaction with RWSD's administration of funds. This survey was administered via SurveyMonkey to all Part A providers. The SPEC PCS Liaison was responsible for regular follow up with Part A providers along the data collection period to ensure a high response rate.

About a month after the provider survey was distributed, PCS sent BPHC the data request. This included three sections: 1) Contracting; 2) Disbursement of Funds; and 3) Trainings. BPHC was asked to provide data on these three sections in Excel and written formats.

Presentations and updates to SPEC occurred in March, April and May committee meetings and were led by PCS and the committee chairs. March was just an update presentation on progress of data collection. April included the final provider survey results and next steps. The May presentation included the BPHC data request results and a discussion on recommendations based on the results of both the provider survey and BPHC data request.

The final results and recommendations were presented to and voted on by the Planning Council on May 9th, 2024. BPHC presented their response on June 20th, 2024.

Results

Provider Survey

There was a 75% response rate, with 24 out of 32 Part A funded agencies responding to the Provider Survey.

The first couple of questions asked are about the county the agency resides in and the number of employees and clients in those agencies. The majority of the agencies that responded were in Suffolk County. Nine agencies have less than 50 employees. There were seven agencies that selected 251-500 employees, and another seven agencies that selected more than 500 employees. The majority of agencies either see less than 200 clients or over 500 clients.

Table 1. Number of HIV clients in the last year by number of employees

Number of employees	Number of HIV Clients in the last year						Grand Total
	Less than 100	101-200	201-300	301-400	401-500	Over 500	
Less than 50 Employees	1	1	3	1		3	9
101-250 Employees					1		1
251-500 Employees	3	2	1			1	7
More than 500 Employees	1	2		1		3	7
Grand Total	5	5	4	2	1	7	24

When looking at the results by size of agency, agencies with less than 50 employees and agencies with more than 500 employees saw over 500 clients in the last year. All subsequent questions were analyzed by size of agency in order to try to understand the impact of agency capacity if there was any.

Table 2. BPHC provides potential agencies with adequate information on applying for funding.

Number of employees	Adequate funding information					Grand Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
Less than 50 Employees		1*	1*	5	2	9
101-250 Employees				1		1
251-500 Employees			2	4	1	7
More than 500 Employees			1	6		7
Grand Total		1	4	16	3	24

There were a majority of agencies that said they agreed to this statement. There were a few that strongly agreed and stayed neutral, and we had one agency disagree. When looking at the results by size of agency, agencies with less than 50 employees and agencies with more than 500 employees agreed on this statement.

Comments:

Less than 50 Employees:

- *Disagree: *We are currently funded and rarely hear about new funding opportunities*
- *Neutral: *Answer should be N/A. I have not worked in Ryan White long enough to have received a notice of funding opportunity.*

Table 3. In your experience, how long does it take BPHC to finalize contracts with your agency?

Number of employees	Time to finalize contracts				Grand Total
	31-60 days	61-90 days	More than 90 days	I am not sure	
Less than 50 Employees	2		6	1	9
101-250 Employees	1				1
251-500 Employees	1	1	3	2	7
More than 500 Employees		1	6		7
Grand Total	4	2	15	3	24

15 (62.5%) agencies said it took BPHC more than 90 days to finalize contracts. There were some agencies that were able to get some contracts 31-60 days, but never 30 days or less.

Table 4. At the start of FY23, did you receive each of the following documents?

4.1 Award Letter Packet

Number of employees	No	Yes	I am not sure	Grand Total
Less than 50 Employees	1	8		9
101-250 Employees		1		1
251-500 Employees		7		7
More than 500 Employees	4	3		7
Grand Total	5	19		24

4.2 Expected Performance Measures

Number of employees	No	Yes	I am not sure	Grand Total
Less than 50 Employees		9		9
101-250 Employees		1		1
251-500 Employees		5	2	7
More than 500 Employees	3	4		7
Grand Total	3	19	2	24

4.3 Program and Reporting Requirements

Number of employees	No	Yes	I am not sure	Grand Total
Less than 50 Employees		9		9
101-250 Employees		1		1
251-500 Employees		5	2	7
More than 500 Employees	3	4		7
Grand Total	3	19	2	24

4.4 Provider Handbook

Number of employees	No	Yes	I am not sure	Grand Total
Less than 50 Employees		9		9
101-250 Employees		1		1
251-500 Employees		6	1	7
More than 500 Employees	3	4		7
Grand Total	3	20	1	24

4.5 Service Standards

Number of employees	No	Yes	I am not sure	Grand Total
Less than 50 Employees		9		9
101-250 Employees		1		1
251-500 Employees		6	1	7
More than 500 Employees	3	4		7
Grand Total	3	20	1	24

Comments:

Less than 50 Employees	<i>All "yes" answers ongoing from FY 22. Award letter rec'd 3/27/23 always comes after March 1</i>
	<i>I answered yes with the caveat that "At the start" equated to the end of March, beginning of April</i>
101-250 Employees	No comments
251-500 Employees	No comments
More than 500 Employees	<i>Always delayed.</i>
	<i>Eventually, but not at the start of the FY</i>
	<i>I usually go online to obtain the Provider Handbook and Service Standards</i>

Table 5. How satisfied are you with the accessibility and availability of the above documents and others related to your contract with BPHC?

Number of employees	Satisfaction with accessibility and availability of documents					Grand Total
	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied	
Less than 50 Employees	1*		1	6*	1	9
101-250 Employees				1		1
251-500 Employees			2	4	1	7
More than 500 Employees		1*	2	4		7
Grand Total	1	1	5	15	2	24

Most of the agencies said they were satisfied, with some neutral answers, and a couple were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Agencies with less than 50 employees resulted in more satisfied answers.

Comments:

Less than 50 Employees:

- *Very dissatisfied: *Contracts were not executed until the last quarter of FY23. Instructions on completing the packet were not provided until after the contracts were submitted back to BPHC.*
- *Satisfied: *Except for contract. Still not rec'd for FY23*

More than 500 Employees:

- *Dissatisfied: *Need to get a contract to ensure timely invoicing and to do necessary budget amendments*

Table 6. Do you feel that you had adequate technical assistance from BPHC to execute your contract and do budget revisions?

Number of employees	Adequate technical assistance with budget revisions			
	No	Yes	Skipped	Grand Total
Less than 50 Employees	2*	6*	1*	9
101-250 Employees		1		1
251-500 Employees	2*	5		7
More than 500 Employees	1*	6		7
Grand Total	5	18		24

The same number of agencies with less than 50 employees and more than 500 employees selected “yes” in feeling that they had adequate technical assistance from BPHC to execute their contract and do budget revision.

Comments:

Less than 50 Employees:

- *Skipped: *More technical assistance on preparing for site visits and developing comprehensive policies and procedures*
- *No: *I did not have the correct invoice template. I received the invoice template, then after submitting the invoice was told that there was a revised template. I am not sure if/when I was supposed to have received the updated invoice template.*
- *No: *It takes a long time to get back budget revisions.*
- *Yes: *We requested an indirect amount that took many months to finalize.*

251-500 Employees:

- *No: *Budget revision process is cumbersome and difficult.*
- *No: *The budget revisions are painful compared to other contracts and take really long to process. I manage 60+ contracts and the budget revisions are the most elaborate by far due to resumes needed job offer letters etc.*

More than 500 Employees:

- *No: *Be available and get contracts out on time.*

Table 7. Who typically trains your agency on contracting and budgeting?

Number of employees	Training organization			Grand Total
	BPHC	My own agency	Other (please specify)	
Less than 50 Employees	5	2	2*	9
101-250 Employees	1			1
251-500 Employees	2	5		7
More than 500 Employees	3	3	1*	7
Grand Total	11	10	3	24

About half of the agencies said it was BPHC, and the other half selected they received training from their own agency.

Comments:

Less than 50 Employees:

- *Other (please specify): *Both BPHC and my own agency*

- *Other (please specify): *We have a very seasoned team who has been working on BPHC contracts for over a decade.*

More than 500 Employees:

- *Other (please specify): *My agency provides me with support/assistance*

Table 8. When were you or someone from your agency last trained on contracting and budget revision?

Number of employees	Last trained on contracting and budget revision			Grand Total
	Within the last fiscal year (FY23)	1-2 years prior to FY23	3+ years prior to FY23	
Less than 50 Employees	7	2		9
101-250 Employees	1			1
251-500 Employees	6	1		7
More than 500 Employees	3	2	2	7
Grand Total	17	5	2	24

The majority of agencies were trained within the last fiscal year (which was FY23), five other agencies were trained one to two years prior to FY23, and a couple that were trained 3+ years prior to FY23.

Table 9. Please list your agency’s top three gaps in funding in regard to Ryan White Part A services if applicable.

Gap 1: 15 responses

Number of employees	Gap 1
Less than 50 Employees	<i>additional funds for salaries</i>
	<i>Capacity to provide COLA increases for staff</i>
	<i>EFA increase</i>
	<i>Housing</i>
	<i>Medical Case Management</i>
	<i>Salaries</i>
101-250 Employees	No comments
251-500 Employees	<i>Administrative costs</i>
	<i>New arrivals</i>
	<i>Not enough funds for services</i>
More than 500 Employees	<i>Food Resources</i>
	<i>Housing</i>
	<i>Retaining trained personnel d/t lack of ability to give raises and provide job security</i>
	<i>Transportation</i>

Gap 2: 13 responses

Number of employees	Gap 2
Less than 50 Employees	<i>additional funds for continuing education</i>
	<i>Food/Nutrition</i>
	<i>Increase salaries to hire competent staff</i>

	<i>Psychosocial</i>
	<i>Resources for technology upgrades for staff</i>
101-250 Employees	No comments
251-500 Employees	<i>Not enough time for Sweeps Request</i>
	<i>Occupancy</i>
More than 500 Employees	<i>Emergency assistance - utilities, rent, gas for car</i>
	<i>Housing</i>
	<i>Legal</i>
	<i>More funds are needed for medical nutrition</i>

Gap 3: 8 responses

Number of employees	Gap 3
Less than 50 Employees	<i>Additional funds for staff to travel</i>
	<i>Admin allocation</i>
	<i>Food bank home delivered meals</i>
	<i>Transportation</i>
101-250 Employees	No comments
251-500 Employees	<i>Housing services</i>
More than 500 Employees	<i>More mental health support</i>

Out of these responses, there were some common themes around housing services, food resources, and not having enough funds, whether it be for staff to travel, additional funds for salaries, and just in general not having enough funds for services.

Additional Comments:

Less than 50 employees:

- *Additional MCM staff [are] needed to provide quality services. We are funded for a half-time psychosocial support person, and we have a need for a full-time person. With the rise in food prices, our clients have a great need [for] grocery gift cards or vouchers.*
- *We eventually received an indirect allocation however it took many months.*
- *Many clients are experiencing food stamp cuts, and with the amount of funding we receive it is difficult to meet the need.*
- *Level funding results in a loss each year due to other rising costs. It is difficult to give any type of raise when there are no increases.*

Table 10. How satisfied are you with BPHC’s communication about changes with contracting or budget revisions?

Number of employees	Satisfaction with communication with changes with contracting/budget revisions					
	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Grand Total
Less than 50 Employees	1*		2	5	1	9
101-250 Employees				1		1
251-500 Employees		2*	4	1		7
More than 500 Employees		2*	2	3		7
Grand Total	1	4	8	10	1	24

There were many agencies that were satisfied with BPHC’s communications, but almost the same number of agencies feeling neutral, with a handful of agencies that said they were dissatisfied.

Comments:

Less than 50 Employees:

- *Very dissatisfied: *Contract is sent out very late.*

251-500 Employees:

- *Dissatisfied: *Everything always feels last minute and due immediately. Often when we send things to the stated email, we are told they haven't been received and to send them to a different email*
- *Dissatisfied: *submitted a budget revision at end of October and got approved in February. To long of a gap in my opinion because then other variables have occurred, and the revision is now stale and needs to be revised*

More than 500 Employees:

- *Dissatisfied: *no communication about contract delays*
- *Dissatisfied: *process is extremely slow*

Table 11. Overall, how satisfied are you with BPHC’s administration of Part A funds?

Number of Employees	Overall Satisfaction					
	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Grand Total
Less than 50 Employees		1*	1	5	2	9
101-250 Employees				1		1
251-500 Employees			2	5		7
More than 500 Employees		2*	1	4		7
Grand Total	0	3	4	15	2	24

Many agencies said they were satisfied, with some agencies either responding neutrally or dissatisfied.

Comments:

Less than 50 Employees:

- *Dissatisfied: *They have been slow to pay and slow to respond to inquiries*

More than 500 Employees:

- *Dissatisfied: *Contracting takes forever. Often receive contract right before FY is about to end*
- *Dissatisfied: *No cost-of-living adjustments; no ability to carry over funding year-to-ye*

Comments: Is there any other feedback you'd like to share about your experience working with BPHC's Ryan White Services Division?

Less than 50 Employees	I submit an invoice and do not hear back. It has been months since my invoice was submitted and I am waiting for it to be approved before entering data in EHB. There is a tremendous amount of work that needs to be accomplished for such little amount of money. Communication is poor and confusing.
	just got my final contract on February 12 for the FY ending February 29
	Ryan White services are critical to the populations we serve.

	The services funded by BPHC have helped us help so many clients and the support network. It would be helpful if the BPHC team would be open to feedback on how the contracts are administered.
	Very happy with the Contract Management, CQM staff, and Fiscal staff. I am also understanding of the staffing struggles that are impacting BPHC and all agencies.
	We appreciate all of the information about the site visit and what was expected as well as excellent communication and expectation during the site visit. Thank you. However, we were confused about what fiscal items were being requested prior to the site visit, and what was expected during the site visit. Also, the fiscal site visit took 3+ hours separately from the program/admin site visit which we did not realize.
	We appreciate the long-standing collaboration and support. We could not serve our patients well without Part A services! Thank you for your continued commitment.
101-250 Employees	No comments
251-500 Employees	Our monthly check-ins with our Ryan White Contract Manager do not feel particularly productive or helpful. The person is nice but does not always seem fully knowledgeable about everything. When we have questions, we don't always feel confident in the answers/responses.
More than 500 Employees	Roxy Dai is a terrific Contract Manager! We like her very much and she is good at what she does.

Some major themes found in these Assessment of Administrative Mechanism results:

- Contracting and reimbursement is still an issue and very slow
- Still having issues with costs of living between both clients and providers
- Agencies list Housing Services as one of the top gaps in funding.
- There was not a significant difference of results between agency sizes. Agencies with less than 50 employees and agencies with more than 500 agencies responded similarly.

BPHC Data

Section 1 – Contracting

How long did it take to finalize Part A contracts in FY23 once the full award was received?

Full Award Date	4/13/23
Contract Sent to Subrecipient	11/13/23
Average Length of Time to Finalize Contracts	70 Days
Average Days to Fully Execute Contracts Post Returned from Subrecipients	42 Days

BPHC's Fiscal Team noted: Please note that in FY23, our contract documents went through an extensive editing process post the HRSA findings/TA recommendations which included Grants, Finance, Legal and Exec. Offices. All of which affected when contracts were ready to be submitted to our subrecipients.

Additional information from sample size:

Sample Size	36
Standard Deviation	34
Minimum	12

Maximum	167
Median	70.5

Number of Days to Finalize Part A Contracts	
6	<31 days
30	>31 days

Standard deviation looks at how the data is dispersed compared with the average, and because the average is 70 days and the standard deviation is 34 days, since the numbers are far apart, it shows that the data is varied and the number of days it took to finalize part A contracts after the full award was received is spread out and there are many contracts with differing length of days to finalize the contracts, having many outliers.

There were six Part A contracts that took less than 31 days to finalize, and 30 Part A contracts that took more than 31 days (none exactly 31 days).

How long did it take to finalize the most recent round of budget revisions in FY23?

Fiscal no longer tracks this data. RWSD should have the process data (which is done via Microsoft List); no more date tracking. Revisions are now done in scheduled meetings between Client Services and Fiscal.

Section 2 – Disbursement of Funds

On average, how quickly were invoices paid in FY23?

The average turnaround time was 31 days.

Average	31 days	
Sample Size	821	
Standard Deviation	36 days	
Minimum	1 day	
Maximum	375 days	
Median	21 days	
Number of Days for Invoice Payment		
588	72%	Less than 31 days
212	26%	More than 31 days
21	3%	31 days exact

How dispersed the data is in relation to the average mean is 36, showing a close to the average, shows that the days it took for invoices to be paid in FY23 were mostly around the same duration.

There were 588 invoices that took less than 31 days to be paid, 212 invoices that took more than 31 days to be paid, and 21 invoices that took exactly 31 days to be paid.

Section 3 – Trainings

Did RWSD provide training to agencies on how to correctly fill out an invoice?

Yes, During the annual provider meeting that is recorded and sent out to the agencies. The last session was held May 1st and 2nd, 2024. All 31 agencies are required to attend the provider meeting and were in attendance during the last session.

Did RWSD provide training to agencies on how to do budget revision?

Yes, During the annual provider meeting that is recorded and sent out to the agencies. The last session was held May 1st and 2nd, 2024. All 31 agencies are required to attend the provider meeting and were in attendance during the last session.

Additionally, agencies were told to expect contracts within 45 days, as a result of technical assistance from HRSA.

Recommendations

SPEC’s recommendations to BPHC:

Requesting BPHC to have a mitigation strategy for when there are outliers in the data, specifically with contracting and invoicing, and if there is one, share with Council more detailed information on how this mitigation plan is used and context for such varied data.

This recommendation was made particularly because of the data and how they were various lengths of time for contracting and invoicing, varying from few days to very long variations.

BPHC’s response:

Current Mitigation Plan: BPHC are unable to provide specific agencies who are out of compliance, but they are able to provide analysis on trackers to the council throughout the year. The RWSD SPEC Liaison could provide updates on a quarterly basis to SPEC. Key details in these updates may include how many agencies have been issued a letter, response rate, and any improvement/barriers.

This was presented to the Planning Council on June 20th, 2024 and will begin to be implemented next term beginning in September 2024.