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Data Quality Assurance & Compliance Checklist

Who should use this checklist?

This checklist is intended for refugee service providers who are involved in collecting, using, and managing data for reporting and compliance. They may be monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff, direct service providers, or others, depending on the structure of their organization. The checklist can be used by an individual or a team to allocate responsibilities and help their organization adhere to compliance and quality assurance standards.

Why is it important to dedicate time to compliance and quality assurance?

Data quality assurance standards, whether required by funders or simply recommended as best practice, are intended to guide you in collecting high-quality, useful data in an ethical way. Collecting high-quality data gives you the reliable information you need to be confident that you are serving eligible clients effectively. Ideally, the data will also help you and other stakeholders, such as funders and community members, learn about the impact of your programming. To ensure clients' rights and privacy are protected, it is crucial to follow ethical data collection and storage procedures during this process. Finally, meeting funder requirements related to data quality and reporting increases the likelihood of securing additional funding in the future.

How can this checklist help you achieve these goals?

This checklist can help you to:

- Identify staffing needs and prepare staff for data-related tasks by equipping them with the knowledge and skills they need
- Establish a set of steps, systems, and standards to reference when completing data-related tasks
- Prepare for monitoring visits and demonstrate program compliance
- Streamline data processes to reduce error and burden, providing more opportunity for staff to learn from the data

Keep in mind that this checklist is a general list of data quality and compliance-related tasks. You can and should adapt it to your organizational context. You may use this checklist as a Word document, or you can print copies to distribute to team members. You may use the Additional Resources page at the end to quickly and easily access the resources linked throughout the checklist.

Action Item		Staff Member(s) Responsible
Planning Phase		
We review our proposal, grant agreement, and other project documents to identify the data we need to collect and familiarize ourselves with program requirements.	☐	
If we did not do so during the proposal phase, we develop project planning documents, such as a logframe and a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan.	☐	
We develop a data collection plan—including key information such as what data will be collected, when, how, and by whom.	☐	
We train staff members in our data quality assurance practices, data collection tasks, and other data-related responsibilities relevant to their roles.	☐	
We clearly document our data quality assurance practices for future reference and easy updating.	☐	
Data Collection Phase		
We obtain and securely document client consent for data collection activities.	☐	
We use a template for recording case notes and other program documentation to ensure consistency and completeness.	☐	
We document client eligibility for each service provided and the reasons for ineligibility for any services not provided.	☐	
Staff with data collection responsibilities consistently enter the needed data into the appropriate spreadsheet or database and review it for completeness and accuracy before relevant internal deadlines.	☐	
We build time into team meeting agendas to discuss questions and challenges related to data collection.	☐	
Data Storage and Auditing Phase		
We develop tools such as checklists, standard operating procedures, conditional formatting to highlight data entry issues, and templates to facilitate a smooth and consistent data cleaning process.	☐	
We use encryption, password protection, and/or access limitations as appropriate to prevent unauthorized access to client or other sensitive data.	☐	

We build data cleaning and auditing tasks into our workflow, such as by blocking out time in our calendars for specific data-related work, to ensure that all required data is entered by the relevant deadline.	☐	
We conduct spot checks of case notes to ensure that clients are receiving services for which they are eligible and that notes contain sufficient detail on clients' cases.	☐	
We implement our data auditing process on a consistent schedule and document the results to allow us to identify any recurring issues.	☐	
Reporting Phase		
We adhere to funder requirements regarding the format, content, and submission timeline of reports.	☐	
We ensure that all data audits are complete before developing reports to maximize the quality of reported data.	☐	

Quick-Reference List of Linked Resources

Note: the resources below are all linked in the body of the checklist. You may prefer to use this one-page list of those resources for easy reference.

Planning Phase

- Switchboard Shorts: From Getting the Data You Need, to Getting the Data You Want
- eLearning Course: Introduction to Logical Frameworks
- Tool: M&E Plan Template and Checklist
- Template: Data Collection Planning Worksheet
- Blog Post: When's that Report Due Again? How to Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Workplan
- Blog Post: Three Ways to Preserve Institutional Knowledge for Successful Change Management in Resettlement

Data Collection Phase

- Template: Sample Informed Consent Form
- Template: Case Note Template

Data Storage and Auditing Phase

- Tool: Sample Data Quality Assurance Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Tool: Preparing for Data Analysis
- Tip Sheet: 4 Practical Tips for Improving Data Quality in Case Management Programs, with Case Study

Reporting Phase

- Guide: Developing Strong Program Reports

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