

Designing a Navigable Data System for a Juvenile Diversion Program: Enhancing Case Management and Research Accessibility

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Introduction

- Juvenile diversion aims to reduce youth criminal offending (recidivism) and improve community connections.¹
- Research reveals that youth who completed diversion were 32% less likely to recidivate. Conversely, youth who go to jail are significantly more likely to reoffend.¹
- Standards governing data collection for juvenile diversion programs vary across states, this project focuses on New Hampshire.²
 - RSA 169: B- 35 Juvenile Case and Court Records
 - RSA 169: D-31 Data Collection; Reporting Requirement
 - New Hampshire Juvenile Court Diversion Network Accreditation Standards
- However, without reliable data it is difficult to measure program effectiveness, as there are currently barriers to accurate data collection.
- Therefore, it is important to be aware of these common barriers.
 - Missing or incomplete data is a common theme limiting the sharing and accessibility of juvenile diversion data.³
 - Common items missing are referrals to service, demographic details, and lack of tracked outcomes.³
 - Inaccurate or incorrect information on participants commonly arises in diversion data often due to human error and miscommunications across agencies.³
- Thus, data must be managed in a way that:
 - Is protected², accessible², and accurate.³
 - Allows for future research on the program as well as contribution to state-wide research.

Goals of the Project

Strengthen UNH's Impact

This is a joint project between Dover Juvenile Diversion Program and the University of New Hampshire's Masters of Justice Studies Internship Program. This project focuses on enhancing a diversion programs' data accessibility and future research opportunities.

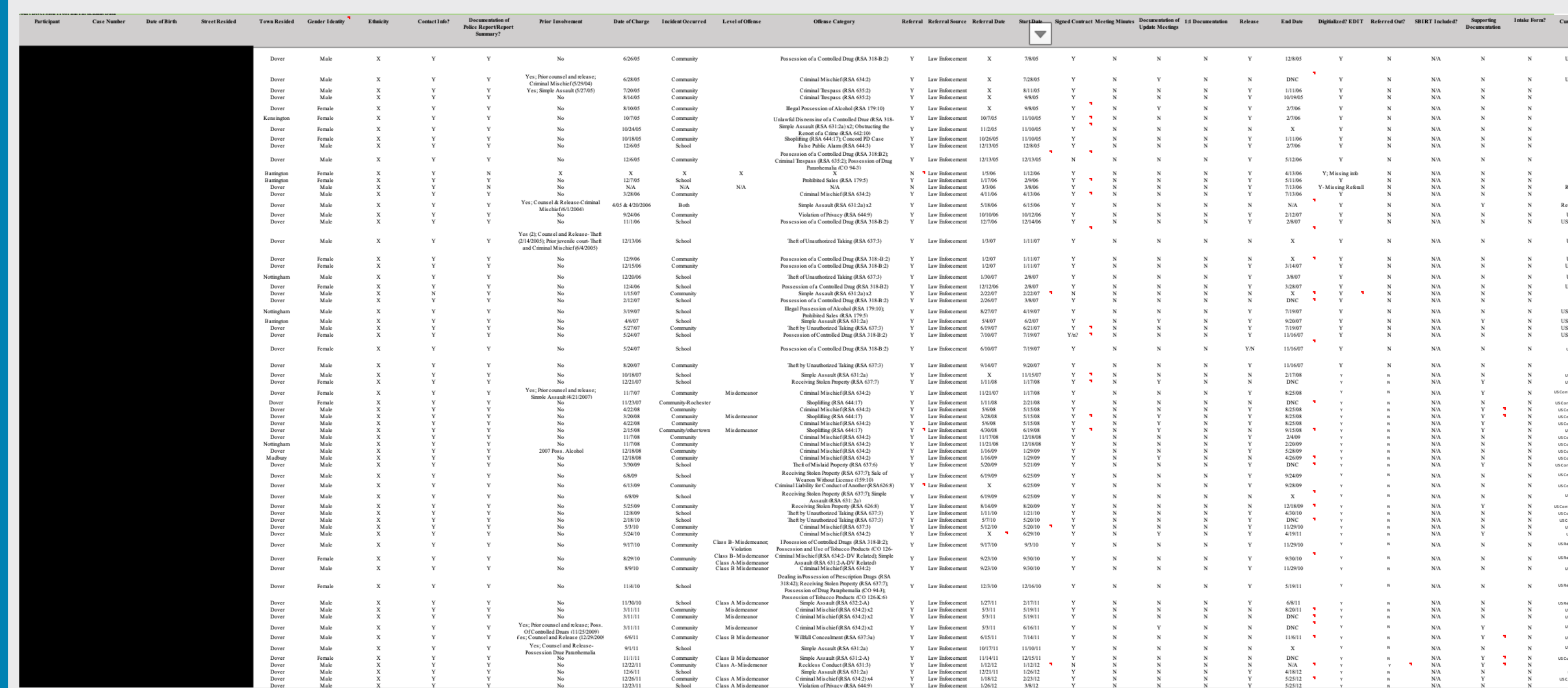
Improve Data Accessibility

Improve Dover Juvenile Diversion's ability to easily retrieve data on participants and share information across agencies with confident accuracy.

Identify and Address Data Gaps

This project focuses on identifying and addressing gaps in data collection, to enhance its utility for future research.

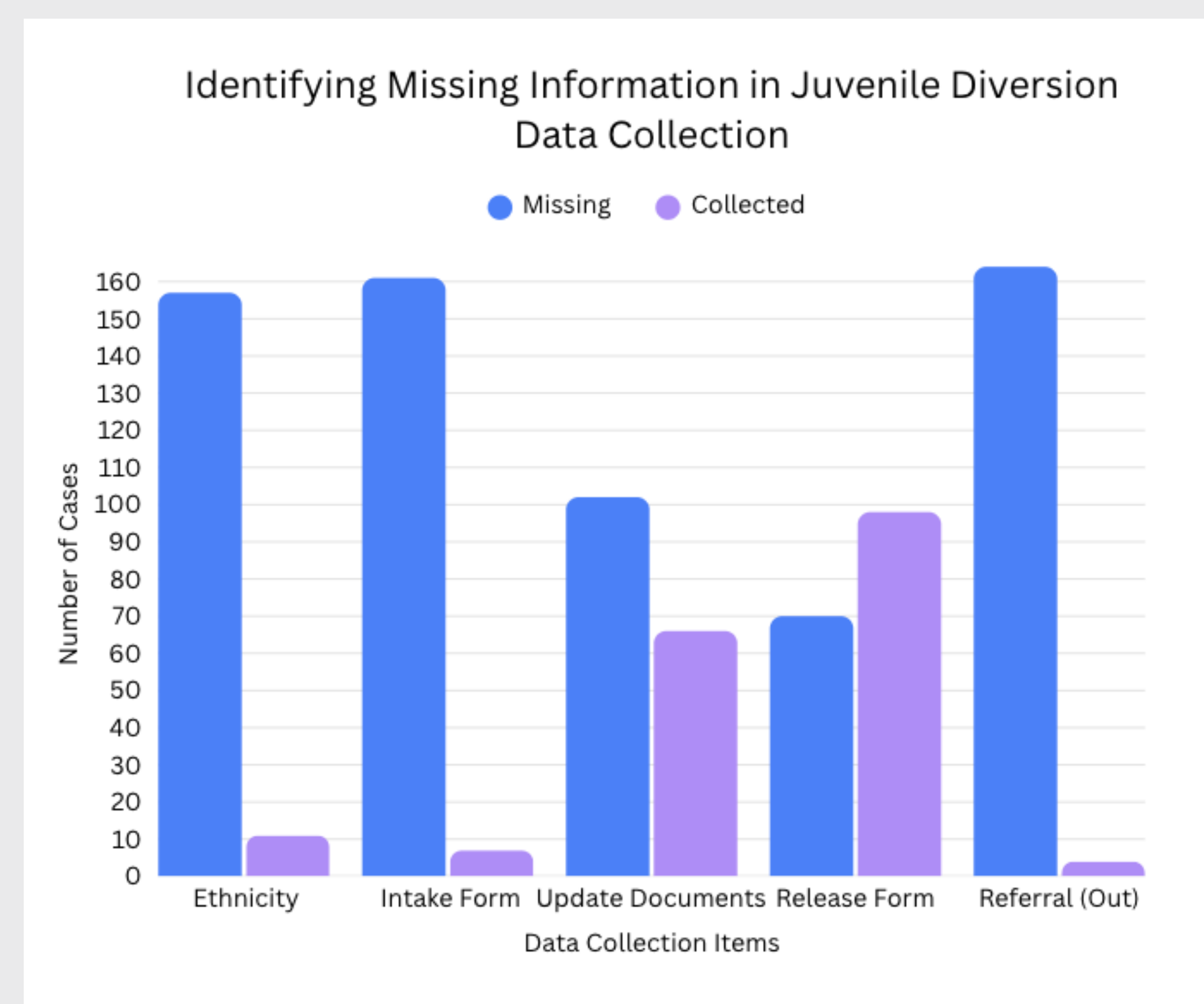
Figure 1. Master Data Collection



Items collected: Participant name*, case number*, date of birth*, residence*, gender identity, race/ethnicity, contact information, prior offenses, date of charge, location of incidence, offense category, referral source, date of referral, completion status, end date.

Additionally, this master excel sheet tracks the presence of relevant documents in case files including contracts, updates, meeting minutes, SBIRT screenings, contact information, intake forms, 1:1 documentation, and other supporting documents.

Figure 2. Missing Items



References

- Mueller-Smith, M., and Schnepel, T. K. (2021). Diversion in the criminal justice system. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 88(2), 883-936. <https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdaa030>
- New Hampshire Juvenile Court Diversion Network (2025). Accreditation. <https://nhcourtdiversion.org/accreditation/>
- Aalsma, C. M., Schwartz, K., Haight, A.K., Jarjoura, R., & Dir, L.A. (2019). Applying an electronic health records data quality framework across service sectors: A case study of juvenile justice system data. *The Journal for Electronic Health Data and Methods*, 7 (1): 26, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.5534/egems.258>

Steps Taken

- Review and documentation of current data management system in place by identifying methods of collection and the accessibility of these methods.
- Developed a tool for recording and tracking data collection on 168 juvenile diversion cases from 2005-2026.
- Documentation of missing information and inaccuracies across collection methods.
- Digitization of records to maintain consistency.
- Account for what is currently missed in case management.

Deliverables

- At the conclusion of this project, Dover Juvenile Diversion will receive an in-depth review of previous methods of data collection and a new data management system.
- Staff will be provided with a proposal that informs data collection, to enhance accessibility and research opportunity. Hopefully, this proposal will lead to the funding of an administrative position to oversee these operations.

Discussion

- Review of data collection on Dover Juvenile Diversion participants from 2005-2026 (n=168) suggests that this data shared similarities with previous findings.
- Common missing information present in data
 - 157 out of 168 cases (93%) did not have information on ethnicity or race.
 - 164 of 168 cases (98%) did not record if youth were referred out of the program.
 - 70 of 168 cases (42%) did not have a release form regardless of completion status.
- Of the records examined 14 did not have case numbers. Additionally, after 2021 case number format became inconsistent compared to prior methods. Both missing and inconsistent case numbers would make a review of data across agencies difficult.
- To effectively serve juvenile participants of diversion, the program itself must have accurate, accessible data.
- Recommendations for this program are to streamline data collection by formalizing record keeping. This may include hiring of an administrative role to maintain record-keeping and analyze data to improve the efficacy of the program.