LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM REPORTING SYSTEMS

| 11/24/2008 | Collection and Analysis of Data |

NASUA
National Association of State Units on Aging

LTCOP Reporting Systems
DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

Each State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (SLTCOP) is required by the Older Americans Act to advocate for residents of nursing homes, board and care homes, assisted living facilities and similar adult care facilities. The SLTCOPs use information systems to record the facilities they visit, log complaints they receive, categorize the complaints and track the number of resolved complaints. Each state reports this data to the United States Administration on Aging (AoA), to be summarized in the National Ombudsman Reporting Systems (NORS) and is available on the AoA website.[1] The data has been collected since 1996.

A survey was conducted by the National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA) in conjunction with the National Ombudsman Resource Center (NORC) requesting specific details about the information systems used. The survey was sent to all of the states and territories, 28 states responded to the survey.

Types of Information Systems

The SLTCOP use three different types of software to collect complaint data: commercial off-the-shelf software, in-house solutions, and vendor-developed solutions that allow customization. The commercial off-the-shelf software does not offer states the ability to customize the program. In-house solutions are typically developed in the state by their own programmers, allowing the greatest flexibility for capturing information. The vendor developed solutions offer some customizing options. Of the 28 states that completed the survey, five have an in-house solution, eight use commercial off-the-shelf software, and 15 use vendor developed solutions.

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[1] To view NORS data on the Administration on Aging website, please visit: http://www.aoa.gov/about/results/index.aspx

Types of LTCOP Information Systems in the States
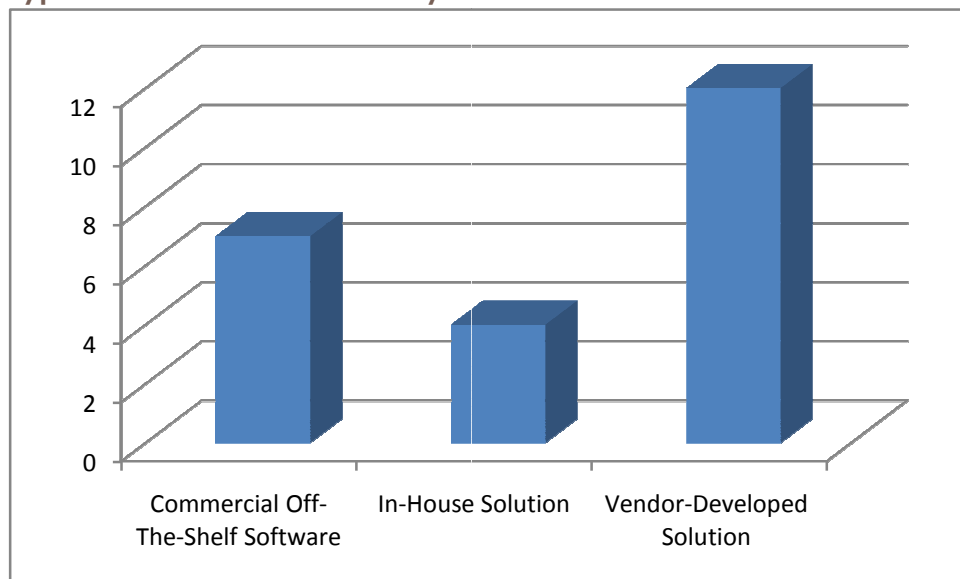
Funding Mechanisms and Costs

The states were asked questions concerning purchasing costs for ombudsman program reporting systems. State were also asked how they financed the system.

The highest cost reported was $150,000 for a commercial off-the-shelf software product without customization in California. The lowest cost reported was $500 for a vendor-developed solution with some customization in Rhode Island. Only 14 states offered figures, so no concrete conclusions can be drawn. The large variance in the implementation cost is most likely due to the size of the state and the number of software users.

Of the states that responded to the survey, only Illinois reported using civil monetary penalties (CMPs) to fund their reporting system, although many other states reported interest in pursuing that approach. CMPs are fines placed on nursing homes that do not comply with the federal quality of care set by Medicare and Medicaid.[2]

Satisfaction with Current Information Systems

The survey included questions about state satisfaction with their reporting systems. The majority of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied, including 46.4 percent reporting mostly satisfied with their current information system and 14.3 percent completely satisfied. Somewhat satisfied SLTCOP comprised 39.3 percent of respondents. 3.6 percent are not satisfied.

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[2] For more information on Civil Monetary Penalties:
http://www.dswresourcecenter.org/index.php/dsw/funding_sources/state_funding/civil_monetary_penalties

SLTCOP Satisfaction with Current System

Legend:
- Mostly Satisified
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Completely Satisfied
- Not Satisfied
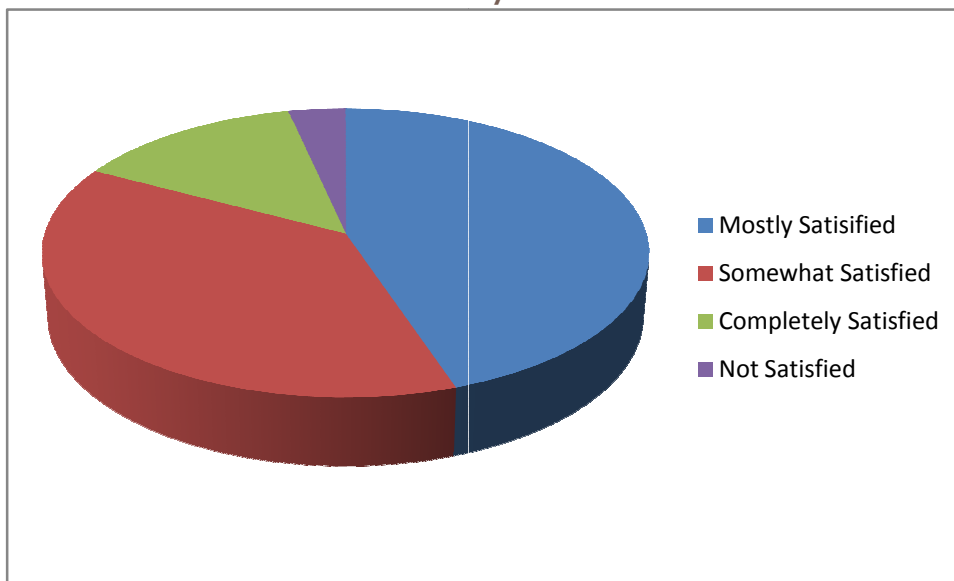
Of the respondents that expressed complete satisfaction, one has an in-house solution, and the others have a vendor developed solution that allows for customizing. The respondent who was not satisfied with their system has off-the-shelf software that does not allow for customization.

Issues and Considerations

The SLTCO were asked to explain any issues or frustrations they were experiencing with their software.

The majority of issues identified related to the user-friendliness of the software. Respondents noted not enough options exist for creating customized reports that were needed. Several respondents expressed frustration with the amount of time it took ombudsman staff to enter data, especially given the time constraints an ombudsman already faces. Respondents also commented that their staff had to enter the same data several times, and it was difficult to correct mistakes.

Several respondents also noted problems with exporting data from their state system into the Ombudsman Reporting Tool (ORT).[3] One significant complaint is the lack of training associated with the available software.

Conclusion

The majority of respondents reported that they were mostly or completely satisfied with their complaint handling software systems.   The most popular system is the vendor-developed solution that allows for customization. Amongst the users of all three of the available systems, the greatest issue was the lack of ease of use.

NASUA will continue to monitor State Long Term Care Ombudsman Reporting Systems and provide periodic updates. If you have questions or concerns, please contact NASUA.

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[3]For more information on the National Ombudsman Reporting System and the Ombudsman Reporting Tool: http://www.aoa.gov/prof/agingnet/NAPIS/NORS/nors.aspx

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