

Tableau makes DHS data more visual and interactive

The Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation (DARE) is continuing to expand its use of software that improves reporting of data both to the public and Department of Human Services (DHS) staff by making information interactive, more visual and easier to navigate.

Called [Tableau Software](#), the product facilitates analysis of data as well as user-friendly reporting via a dashboard. Dashboards break data into easy-to-see and navigate components, which in turn can be explored in a click or two to filter information and examine the specifics that make up the report.

Megan Good, DARE analyst, said the software will allow program office personnel the ability to see and consider data in a timelier manner and customize their view of the data. Reports prepared in Tableau are accessed online via a web browser. "People will be able to explore the data dynamics of their program in a more thorough way than they have been before," she said.

DARE has been introducing the use of Tableau since the summer as a tool that supplements current reporting methods. Megan said she expects to schedule Lunch and Learn sessions in 2016 to demonstrate Tableau to DHS staff.

DHS units currently using Tableau dashboards include homeless services and Information, Referral and Emergency Services (IRES). The recent incorporation of new information systems for each allowed a good starting point for using Tableau, which interfaces with other software to easily tap data. Other applications with which Tableau will be used include the Synergy case management system, the Key Information Data System (KIDS), and the Client Information and Payment System (CIPS). Data are secure and confidential.

Licensing requirements mean that a limited number of staff members will be able to produce the Tableau reports, but all DHS staff members will be able to view internal reports. Public reports will be viewable but limited to what is appropriate according to confidentiality requirements. An example of a public-facing Tableau dashboard is [a recent report](#) completed by DARE analysts using crime data compiled by the City of Pittsburgh. The report demonstrates how data can be narrowed by clicking on various portions of it. For example, the report initially trends for crimes cleared by arrests for 2005-15. By clicking on "October," data are narrowed to crimes cleared in that month.

"Tableau allows you to see trends but if you want or need to, you can drill down to more specific levels," said Amy McCarty, DARE analyst who is also working on the Tableau rollout.