



AGENCY Software

www.agency-software.org

(253) 245-3801

AGENCY Software Overview and Information

Overview

AGENCY Software is a Free Software data system created by and for non-profit organizations, and especially suitable for homeless, housing and social service agencies. Five organizations in Seattle are using or in the process of implementing the software, and AGENCY is currently tracking and facilitating the delivery of care and services to over 3,000 homeless, formerly-homeless and/or chemically-dependent persons.

AGENCY is designed to be flexible and adaptable for a wide variety of situations and requirements. It has been used for to facilitate emergency shelter operations, manage housing programs, track rent charges due and paid, case management, volunteers, and staff and operational issues.

AGENCY is intended to bring everyone in an organization literally on the same page, and to deliver the information that staff need across a variety of organizational levels. AGENCY simultaneously facilitates service delivery, contract compliance and reporting, and management and supervisory oversight and accountability. AGENCY is also designed to allow a team of multiple staff members to deliver care to a single client in a coordinated fashion.

At various times, AGENCY has also been adapted to serve as fundraising and volunteer management software, as a home billing system, and was used to manage data for a nationally-recognized research project whose significant findings on harm-reduction for homeless chronic alcoholics were published in the Journal of the American Medical Association and named a “top 5 most influential” research article by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Philosophy and Goals

AGENCY is both software and a project intending to create community among non-profits. AGENCY is 100% Free Software, which provides benefits for both price and freedom. AGENCY can be downloaded from the internet, and any organization using AGENCY has full rights to use and modify the software. There is no vendor lock-in, and so organizations are in full control of their data system.

This also means that organizations using AGENCY incur no licensing fees, per-user fees, ongoing or annual fees. The only costs involved are for a server (either provide your own, or hosting service is available for a nominal monthly fee), and for time and technical expertise needed first to tailor AGENCY to fit your organization's needs, and for any improvements your organization wishes to make. This technical expertise can come from your own staff or volunteers, a hired consultant, or a combination of both. Ken Tanzer, the original creator of AGENCY, offers consulting services and has worked with all the organizations currently using the software.

The project believes that the Free Software model offers significant advantages that are particularly well-suited to the non-profit sector. Rather than paying vendors over and over for the same software, it is much better to have a collectively-developed and maintained project where the improvements made by one organization can be available to others as well, and where the cost of future improvements can be shared among multiple organizations. The benefits of cost-sharing are already being realized, but will increase sharply as the number of organizations using AGENCY goes up.

AGENCY seeks to become a community of organizations, to facilitate cost-sharing, support each other, and provide a forum for the discussion and development of best practices regarding computer systems and data management. An initial meeting of AGENCY users was held in the summer of 2013, and more events are planned for 2014.

Current Users of AGENCY

AGENCY is currently being used as follows:

- At **Plymouth Housing Group (PHG)**, AGENCY has been used since 2009 to keep information on all residents and housing stock, case management, and a variety of related information. A self-serve system was recently added to allow residents to check in their own guests.
- In November 2013, a separate copy of AGENCY began managing PHG's administration of the **Shelter Plus Care program for King County**, which provides rental assistance and services to families throughout King County.
- **Recovery Cafe** began using AGENCY in 2010, and keeps track of all people entering their facility, program registrations, enrollments in recovery circles and classes, attendance and related information.
- Since 2013, **Evergreen Treatment Services** has been using AGENCY for its REACH program. The software is used for program registrations and intakes, case management notes and data, and a variety of related information. Data is electronically exported and transmitted to the Health Care for the Homeless Network based at the Seattle/King County Department of Public Health.

- In 2013 **Compass Housing Alliance** deployed AGENCY with the start-up of Nyer Urness House. It is currently being tested there for keeping information on residents and for the log system, with plans to expand to other buildings in 2014.
- **Transitional Resources** is currently developing an AGENCY implementation for its housing program to track housing stock and residents, services delivered and work orders.
- AGENCY was originally created as CHASERS, the data system used at **Downtown Emergency Service Center**. CHASERS is still in use, and serves as DESC's primary system for tracking a wide variety of client, housing and service information.
- Other organizations are currently evaluating and considering the implementation of AGENCY.

Getting involved

There are many ways to get involved with AGENCY. In addition to organizations wishing to use AGENCY, here are some things we're looking for:

- Volunteers who would be willing to assist in areas such as documentation, programming, graphic design and website design.
- Professional consultants who would like to work with organizations to deploy AGENCY
- People who are willing to support AGENCY through financial contributions. We believe this project should particularly appeal to the philanthropic sector because of the benefits to multiple organizations, and because foundations often end up financing the purchase of expensive proprietary software systems.

For More Information

The AGENCY homepage is at www.agency-software.org, and includes links to a demo version as well as the mailing list. If you have specific or general questions about AGENCY, you are highly encouraged to submit them to the mailing list (agency-general@lists.sourceforge.net), as they are likely of interest to others as well. Alternatively, inquiries can be sent to info@agency-software.org, or by calling (253) 245-3801.