

Family Services Meeting Minutes – 12/12/17

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In attendance: Christina Aliengena, NEFWC, Shelly Benoit, BHN, Yoshi Bird, YWCA, Cynthia Capella, VA, Christie Cullen, CFCE, Anthia Elliott, Safe Passage, Holly Florek, CHD, Tavar Jones, CCO, Jane Lindfors, DTA/DV unit, Luz Marciano, VA, Luis Martinez, CHD, Michelle Michaelian, BHN, Donna Nadeau, DHCD, Aisha Pizarro, YWCA, Johnie Sanders, ARISE, Pamela Schwartz, Network, TJ Steele, Springfield Partners, Janna Tetreault, Community Action, Janette Vigo, Way Finders

Data discussion:

DHCD has welcomed our request to receive monthly data reports on family homelessness to support our own review and discussion at our meetings. In addition to the data already provided via the monthly DHCD reports re: # of families entering shelter, the group is interested in the following:

- How many people request assistance?
- # of families who have identified DV as reason for homelessness
- # of families who have identified DV as part of their experience in the last 6 months (a question on the intake form), to capture underlying reason for homelessness even if DV is not most recent cause
- # of families denied due to eligibility for FEMA benefits
- # of families in Springfield shelters are from out of area

The group also expressed interest in obtaining data from other systems:

- DPH: how many families turned away from DV shelters due to lack of capacity?
- ARISE: how many families provided assistance due to denial of EA eligibility

Three County CoC Update:

Janna Tetreault reported that the CoC will be launching its coordinated entry system in January. Soldier On will have an 800 number to provide referrals across the 3 counties; all providers will be using the same assessment tool to prioritize housing placements and there will be weekly case conferencing meetings to utilize the priority list to match families/individuals with available units.

A question was raised around integrating DV shelters into the coordinated entry process. While this has been the stated goal, DV providers have not been contacted. Janna will follow-up about this.

Hampden County CoC Update (via Gerry McCafferty email):

1. For maybe 2 years we have had a semi-regular meeting—about once a quarter—about chronically homeless families, attendance from Way Finders, NEFW and CHD in attendance. We met a week or so ago and decided at that time to make this a monthly meeting to talk about chronic families—that is, to talk about specific clients and brainstorm solution. We are looking to start in January. Like we do with adults, these would be families that have been assessed with a VISPDAT and have signed a release allow this inter-agency case conferencing.

2. AHAR. The total number of people in families in emergency shelter during the year has crept up a bit—it was 3679 in FY16 and is 3889 in FY17. A little worrisome—hoping it is not a trend.

3, Last year national PIT data. The federal report is out yesterday on the 2017 PIT: <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>. Among small-city CoCs, Springfield/Hampden County is #2 in country for number of homeless people in families with children. Page 41, exhibit 3.10. Neither the state of MA or any other MA CoC is in the lists of highest for this category. Related to this, the Springfield/Hampden CoC is #10 in the country for small cities for total number of people homeless. P. 17, exhibit 1.10.

DV/EA Work Group Update:

The group sent a letter to DHCD and DPH directors regarding proposals to make more smooth the process for DV families to obtain HomeBASE. (Click [here](#) to see the memo). At the same time, Yoshi heard from Jane Doe – the statewide coalition of DV providers – that they are working on this issue as well and they agreed to be in touch as conversation unfolds.

The group also discussed local process issues that may assist Way Finders and the DV providers in effectively assisting DV families. The group will follow-up separately with Janette.

Assistance for families from Puerto Rico:

Pamela distributed [DCF's memo](#) that details MA resources available fro PR evacuees. The Family Resource Centers are the points of entry. Holyoke (Enlace de familias) has an amazing system in place – Mon-Fri from 12 pm – 2 pm providers are available to provide assistance. Click [here](#) for a list of resource centers.

The end of FEMA benefits on 1/13 was discussed. It seems inevitable that there will be a significant demand on the shelter system. Donna noted that DHCD is meeting weekly with others from across the government to map out a response strategy.

We did not have a clear sense of the numbers in Western MA,

although estimates were made of 200 families in Holyoke and 250 in Springfield. Janette Vigo will report back on more data.

Network update: Pamela reported the good news that thanks to DHCD's support, the Network will have funds to continue its work at least through the end of FY18. Special thanks to Assistant Undersecretary Jane Banks for her facilitation of this support. Thanks, too, to Donna Nadeau for her incredible support of the Network. The Network will continue to look at how it can best serve the region around next year's re-procurement of the family and individual shelter systems. Stay tuned for further information on that.

Announcements:

Lots of moves afoot!

- CHD now at 184 Mill St, Springfield – where we met today. Thanks to CHD for hosting us!
- Safe Passage just purchased a new building in Northampton that will allow them to consolidate their 3 offices.
- Way Finders just purchased the old Peter Pan Bus Terminal which will also allow them to consolidate offices, have more parking and be more centrally located with excellent access to public transportation.
- ARISE is moving up the street to 813 State Street – better located, more space.
- WomanShelter moved recently to new space at 208 Race Street in Holyoke, near Gateway City Arts.

Next meeting:

Tuesday, Jan 9, 12:30 – 2 pm, HCC, Frost Building 309 (unusual time and place to accommodate various schedules and meeting locations).