

Veterans Committee Minutes – 1/29/19

n attendance: Kate Bavelock, 3 county CoC, Steve Connor, Veterans Services, Craig Deroaway, SoldierOn, Erin Forbush, ServiceNet, Mike Hagmaier, SoldierOn, Phyllis Lutsky, HUD/VASH, Gerry McCafferty (via phone), Hampden CoC, Katie Miernecki, ServiceNet, Jesus Pereira, Holyoke VSO, Pamela Schwartz, Network, Jim Seney, VAMC, Kate Sweetser-Owens, HUD/VASH, Sue White, HUD/VASH, Allie Wilson-Pierce, HUD/VASH

Reviewed current status:

Three County CoC is in transition with leadership moving to Community Action (HMIS and Coordinated Entry contract will move by 2/1; the remainder beginning by 6/1). There were a lot of setbacks in the creation of data systems but now work is underway with the consultant Green River (Gerry reported the great success Hampden CoC has had using Green River to create by-name lists, including pulling from HMIS)

Goals

One of our goals is not losing track of veterans as they travel across both CoC's so we can provide as much continual service as possible. This requires data sharing and that capacity is possible!

Another goal is to ensure all systems (VA/Soldier On/community) are on the same page around prioritization of units. Right now veterans in GPD beds are not on the by-name list – there was concern that the numbers in GPD would bog down real movement on the list; Gerry shared their experience of NOT talking about each veteran at each meeting but that having them all on the same list allows for comparing across the system who has the highest needs.

If both on-the-street veterans and Soldier On veterans share a list, it would allow the region to have a global view of the challenge and to cross-reference on needs and services. Assessments could be done only on those veterans in GPD who are chronic, have the highest acuity and/or cycle in and out of homelessness. This way the region could work from one list.

Housing unit prioritization

In terms of prioritization of units, Soldier On shared that they are awaiting clarification on whether it is allowable to shift their wait lists from first-come first-serve to acuity-based (in relation to funding based on agreed upon tenant selection plans). Gerry noted that HUD readily gave approval for this kind of switch but there is not yet clarity on the state level.

Meanwhile, Sue and Steve will continue the work of ensuring veterans' paperwork and other procedures are in order for when the presumed approval for the shift comes.

Tracking vacancies in non-HUD funded properties:The group discussed the challenge of engaging non-HUD funded property managers in the coordinated entry process (frequently openings are discovered later than necessary). Gerry pointed out that the Green River data system allows for quick identification of vacancies and tracking of occupancy – this requires getting housing orgs to use this tool. We need DHCD's help to make this happen.

Next steps

- stand by (and support as needed) Community Action's hires and acquisition of Green River software ASAP
- HUD/VASH will start screening processes so ready to go when get approval to prioritize based on acuity
- Pamela will reach out to DHCD Assistant Undersecretary Jane Banks to meet (with CoC leads) to discuss how DHCD

can better support the prioritization process (clear mandate to funded entities to adopt tenant selection plans on that basis).

Announcements

- In addition to VSO coverage in Housing Court on Mondays in Northampton, now VSOs are in Springfield Housing Court on Thursdays – providing support when veteran identified
- Good news! 2 non-VA eligible veterans who have been homeless for 5-10 years were recently housed! One at Soldier On's housing in Agawam, another through a Springfield mainstream voucher. A huge team effort – congratulations everyone!

Next meeting date: Thursday, March 14, 9:30 am – 11 am, Frost Building, Room 309, HCC