

Youth and Young Adult Services Meeting - 4/13/22

In attendance: Olivia Bernstein, MHA, Ellen Broadhurst, social worker, Shaundell Diaz, 3 County CoC, Emily English, Gandara Center, Pam Fitzpatrick, CHD, Jennifer Gonzalez-Morales, Holyoke Public Schools/DESE liaison, Kritzia Garcia, Gandara, Teri Koopman, Three County Coc, Stacy Parsons, North Berkshire schools/DESE liaison; Kim Puffer, Domus, Phil Ringwood, DIAL/SELF, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Jennifer Sunderland, Springfield Public Schools, Mark Watkins, Gandara Center, Tasia Williams STCC

Discussion Topics:

How do we engage YYA when challenges arise and "housing first" principles are in play: While the majority of YYA being served are finding success in the programs, there are a few who continue to struggle. What happens when the "2 year mark" is up and they are not ready to be housed on their own; when their mental health or other issues stand in their way? How do we assist and support staff to avoid burn-out (sometimes the hard work goes unrewarded). How do we support them in obtaining more income (SSI and SNAP benefits do not cover rent in an unsubsidized apartment). How do we help sustain their stability?

Some ideas:

- getting YYA mobile vouchers is key; finding ways to tie them into the housing authority where they can have a more permanent connection and subsidy
- creating a smoother transition from the young adult to adult system; how do we build a transition to the coordinated entry system that doesn't have them start "at the bottom of the list" - can we revisit the eligibility criteria to create a smoother shift - will follow-up with CoCs on this point

We also discussed the "spend-down" pressures as the initial 2 year contracts with HUD come to a close (July for Hampden; Sept. for 3 County). There are very clear limits on how the money can be spent - only within currently funded line-items - but it's also possible to shift funds among providers. Further discussion will take place among YHDP partners but ideas are welcome - contact Kat (Hampden) or Teri (3 County) with any thoughts.

Good news on housing youth and young adults!

In Hampden: 5 YYA leased up their own apartments this month.

In 3 County: 4 YYA were housed this week alone; 26 total so far

Fully staffed at MHA for the first time!

Getting increased number of self-referrals to programs - an indicator of the word getting out there

FY23 Budget Update

The House Ways and Means Committee is about to release its FY23 budget, which will be followed by the filing and co-sponsoring of amendments. Here are the Network's [FY23 budget priorities](#) as a point of reference. Rep. Farley-Bouvier noted the importance in our advocacy of listing all amendment numbers and sponsors. The Network will utilize its blog for advocacy

updates ([subscribe here!](#)) and will be in touch with legislators as this information becomes clear.

Other Network News:

- Be sure to [register](#) for the [Network's Annual Event](#) - we are at over 300 people registered - please join us!
- Congrats on the Network's award from the Mass Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA) for May 5 - [go here](#) for more details.

Next meeting: Wednesday, June 15, 9:30 -10:30 am