

Family Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 4/9/24

In attendance: Melissa Blisset, Square One, Tana Bloom, FCRHRA, Jen Dieringer, CLA, Anthia Elliott, BHN, Luray Fladd, YWCA, Erin Forbush, ServiceNet, Ivelisse Gonzalez, New North Citizens Council, Joscelyn González, New North Citizens Council, Dora Lambertus, BHN, Victoria Martin, FCRHRA, Matt Montanaro, ServiceNet, Lizzy Ortiz, Community Care Cooperative, Health Services for the Homeless, Sara Peña, Way Finders, Stacy Parsons, North Berkshire Housing Partnership and DESE, Brett Rogers, HCS Head Start, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Carlton Smith, Way Finders, Jodi Smith, Way Finders, Sahira Torres-Vazquez, Springfield Public Schools, Amanda Watson, FCRHRA

Shelter Updates

- The housing search challenges continue across the board.
- Way Finders is having some success working with long-staying families who have received Section 8 vouchers
- CHD is now taking over management of EA shelters that had been managed by the National Guard (e.g., families in Knights Inn in Hadley have moved to Quality Inn in Northampton, 26 families, now under CHD supervision - community has been very receptive and supportive)
- Finding immigration support services (for the immigration process) has been challenging. Jen Dieringer of CLA noted that Central West Justice Center provides full representation for immigrants seeking resources - email jdieringer@cla-ma.org for additional information.

RAFT Updates

- Way Finders: receiving roughly 530 applications/week; averaging 120-150 walk-ins each day, including about a dozen requests for assistance with shut-offs daily
- Franklin County: demand is similar; bracing for utility applications with the end of the moratorium; processing applications in an average of 22 days

FY25 Budget and Policy Updates

- The House Ways and Means Committee is releasing its FY25 budget proposal on April 10. MA Coalition for the Homeless organized a [one minute action alert](#) to urge legislators to adequately fund housing and homelessness priorities. Please take the minute [here](#)! Amendments will be filed by this Friday and the budget will be debated the week of 4/22. Be sure you're [subscribed to the Network](#) blog to stay connected to next action steps.
- The FY24 supplemental budget is in Conference Committee where the differences between the House and Senate budgets will be resolved. In the balance are time limits on shelter and the total funding amount. We'll stay tuned.
- The Affordable Homes Act just had a hearing in the Bonding Committee. Next stop is House Ways and Means Committee. Stay tuned for actions on our priorities.

The Network Annual Gathering - May 31!

Be sure to join us on Friday, May 31 at Holyoke Community College for an inspiring gathering of Network partners, legislators and mayors from across the four western counties. [Register here!](#)

Additional announcements:

- National Low Income Housing Coalition is offering a webinar series on "Our Homes, Our Votes" - a training on how to engage with the electoral process in a non-partisan way that centers the need for more affordable housing. [Check it out here](#). The series begins April 15.
- Holyoke Springfield Chicopee Head Start is enrolling for the Fall! Please reach out at www.hcsheadstart.org or 413-417-7779

Next meeting date: Tues., May 14, 12 noon