

Individual Services Committee Meeting - 4/23/24

In attendance: John Baker, Mercy Medical, Keleigh BenEzra, CSO Franklin County; Keith Benoit, City of Northampton, Amy Cahillane, City of Greenfield, Lynn Conway, Eliot Services, Jake Ferrera, AISS, Luray Fladd, YWCA, Rick Hart, Friends of Hampshire County Homeless, Janice Humason, CSO Springfield, Mark Jachym, Springfield CTC, Andy Klatka, Eliot Services, Heather Larsen, DMH, Becky Lockwood, Salasin Project, Emily Matney, CHD Triage/Outreach, Tim McCarthy, Craig's Doors, Gilad Meron, Northampton Resilience Hub, Lizzy Ortiz, Health Services for the Homeless, Lorie Ann Pastrana, CHD Motel 6, Ariana Ploran, West Springfield Mental Health Coordinator, Krystall Randall, Friends of the Homeless Hampshire County, Pedro Rodriguez, CSO, Christina Ruest, CSO, Jess Salvias, Eliot Services, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Jei Staples, Craig's Doors, Edgar Vaskanya, CSO

Shelter/Encampment/Housing Updates:

CSO Springfield - typically full to capacity - occasional openings, esp. for women, but they all fill very quickly. A few housing placements have occurred in their low threshold housing (LTH) program, but still not taking referrals because of the wait list that currently exists.

CSO Northampton - closed cot shelter location, all guests have moved into Grove Street shelter (32 people - 3 individuals moved to Greenfield shelter to meet the Northampton contracted number of 35 beds). No capacity for additional guests. The permanent site at Industrial Drive is under renovation and will hopefully be completed by this summer. Advocacy needed to reinstate PVRTA bus stop at shelter site - Keleigh will keep us posted about if/how partners can assist.

CSO Greenfield - at capacity with many more seeking shelter than site can provide

Craig's Doors - at capacity at both sites (congregate and Hadley); providing survival gear to people they can't accommodate; low threshold program full, not accepting referrals at this time as they get up to speed with their new program; developing excellent relationship with CRESS, the alternative policing org for Amherst.

CHD Holyoke Motel 6 - full to capacity - prioritizing high need referrals

CHD Outreach: big uptick in people asking for tents - distributed 15 just yesterday

Encampments and other news:

Springfield: It was noted that some members of the Springfield PD are intervening with encampments and discarding tents and personal possessions. Meetings are being held to a range of effect (some useful, for others not so much as best practices are not being followed).

Northampton: some neighbors objected to an encampment they could see from their backyards. The Northampton Department of Community Care (DCC) offered to hold a meeting to discuss their services until it became clear that neighbors had spread the word to their larger community and the larger issues of "the city's policies and response to allow encampments" was being raised. DCC postponed the meeting until they could include other service partners and mayoral staff as well.

Westfield: It was noted that Westfield suffered 6 overdoses in 7 days. The Westfield police captain went on a media tour talking up the effectiveness of access to Narcan and the best practice of the harm reduction model. See [WWLP's coverage here](#).

Northampton Resilience Hub Update:

Thanks to Gilad Meron, the Hub Coordinator, for this update on the Resilience Hub. It will be a community resource center that offers coordinated services and support for vulnerable

individuals (e.g., showers, lockers, food, housing and other referrals) as well as an emergency response site in the face of a climate event. It will also be the offices for the Northampton DCC. It will be located at the Old Baptist Church on Main Street in Northampton, aiming for opening late 2025. Currently seeking input through public meetings, scheduled for May 1 and June 5, 6 pm at Edwards Church in Northampton. Also, on June 8, the Hub architects are seeking input on design.

HLC's Needs Assessment on Individual Homelessness: The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities released a [report on individual homelessness statewide](#) with findings and recommendations. We reviewed it briefly on the screen. Pamela highly recommends a read through, suggesting the significance of our lead state agency naming that despite the increase in shelter capacity, it is not meeting the need and permanent supportive housing is a more cost-effective solution, among many other relevant points. Check it out [here](#)!

Budget and Policy Updates:

The MA House of Representatives is beginning its budget debate on April 24 (tomorrow!). Please weigh in in support of housing/homelessness amendments. [Go here](#) for this one-minute action.

The US Supreme Court heard arguments on criminalizing homelessness on Monday, April 22. [Please go here](#) to read more on this important case that has great significance for our efforts statewide and nationally.

[The Network's Annual Gathering on May 31](#): Please join us! [Register here!](#)

Next meeting date: Tuesday, May 21, 1 pm