

## **Family Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 6/11/24**

*In attendance: Melissa Blisset, Square One, Will Dávila, Jennifer Dieringer, Community Legal Aid, Luray Fladd, YWCA, Victoria Martin, FRHRA, Christy O'Brien, CHD, Lizzy Ortiz, Health Services for the Homeless, Heather Roy, DTA DV unit, Stacy Parsons, North Berkshire School Housing Partnership/DESE McKinney Vento Regional Liaison; Jessica Sastre, CHD, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Carlton Smith, Way Finders, Ruth Tirado, Elizabeth Freeman Center, Rachel Trant, DCF, Janette Vigo, Way Finders, Amanda Watson, FRHRA, Melissa White, VOC and others who didn't put their names in the chat!*

**New welcome:** Christy O'Brien has joined Center for Human Development as the Senior Division Director for CHD's Division of Diversion, Shelter and Housing. Welcome, Christy!

### **Family shelter/housing updates**

- The state EA family shelter waitlists continue to be high - roughly 750 families are on the EA wait list now.
- CHD noted great concern at rising unlawful evictions - one family housed at a CHD apartment went away for the weekend and returned to find she had no access to the apartment and all of her belongings were moved out. CHD's counsel is involved as well as Community Legal Aid. Please contact Pamela if you see this happening so we can track it and plan action accordingly.
- Shelter time limits - families are anxious about the time limits and what it will mean for them (where to go?). We are standing by for more information about how this will be executed.
- CHD is receiving 23 families (largely Haitian-Creole) who will be placed in both their West Springfield and Northampton hotels. HLC is now catching up and utilizing their capacity.
- Way Finders exceeded its housing placement goals for the year (115 families!) - working hard on building relationships with landlords. Placements have risen overall for families statewide.
- Valley Opportunity Council is full - one smaller shelter for families who have experienced DV, another larger shelter.
- Franklin County RAFT update: processing applications in 20 day turn-arounds; preparing for regulatory changes in the new fiscal year (unconfirmed until budget passes).

### **Network Policy Updates**

- The Network held its annual gathering on May 31, joined by Housing Secretary Ed Augustus, 14 western MA legislators, 5 mayors and 150 others (many of you!). We received a report on homelessness in the region, advocated for our policy solutions and heard compelling and galvanizing experiences from community members. Please read and see more at our [blog update here](#).
- The Affordable Homes Act is now in the Senate and we have work to do to be heard on our priorities. Go here to get the action update!
- The FY25 budget is now in Conference Committee - go here to take action and be heard.

**Next meeting date:**

**Tuesday, July 9**

**12 noon - 1 pm**