

## **Individual Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 6/18/24**

*In attendance: roughly 30 shelter and housing and community providers*

### **Cooling sites:**

With the heat wave upon us, we reviewed the cooling site information that was available:

**Springfield:** See [listing here](#)

**Holyoke:** See [listing here](#)

**Northampton:** See [listing here](#)

**Amherst:** See [listing here](#)

**Greenfield:** See [listing here](#)

**Pittsfield** - See [listing here](#)

### Shelter updates:

- CSO's medical respite shelter in Northampton opened. Capacity for 10 and 8 people currently reside. Mark Jachym just started in this position last week. Welcome, Mark! Please contact him if there are referrals from hospitals or other medical sites. mark.jachym@csoinc.org.
- Springfield Friends of the Homeless - continuing to operate at 130 beds, 45 for women. When beds are open, they fill immediately. Seeing good housing outcomes vis-a-vis their low-threshold housing program - 3 housing placements directly from shelter
- Northampton/Greenfield Friends of the Homeless - also full and working with reduced capacity in Northampton now that the cot shelter is closed (until the new site opens)
- noting an increase in migrant population (roughly 5 or 6 across the region) - mostly Haitian, speaking French Creole, and seeking out translation services

### Encampment updates:

- Springfield has a new encampment of about 25 people - while people have been rehoused from a prior encampment, new people are coming in, many from the Boston area, many in search of fentanyl.
- CHD is working on encampments in Holyoke - the challenge is great given the lack of any available housing
- Significant discussion of the impact of xylazine (also called "tranq"), a veterinary tranquilizer that is now contaminating the fentanyl supply and causing wounds that are frequently going untreated (to read more about xylazine, see this [Masslive article here](#)). There was discussion about where to receive treatment, e.g., Baystate Wound Care, 413-794-8640; possibly Tapestry's mobile van; Baystate ED (Dr. Soares).

### **Advocacy possibility:**

We discussed the possibility of organizing a Network meeting with BSAS and HLC point people to raise awareness of the challenges noted above and advocate for more low-threshold housing funds for this region. Pamela will follow-up with Gerry and others to discuss more and will circle back.

**Hopeful news:** in about a month, CHD is expected to open up approx. 23 more units of low threshold housing in Springfield. We'll stay tuned!

### **Training Updates**

- Gerry reported on the just completed 2 day Housing First Training - 60 people participated, trainers from Corporation for Supportive Housing, got great feedback.
- Gerry noted the lunch and learn series - coming up next week is Mark Jachym presenting on harm reduction methods - [register here](#)
- Other upcoming trainings re: Community Legal Aid (6/20) and Fair Housing (6/27) - learn more and [register here](#)

Also noted that the Three County CoC (Shaundell!) has led the creation of a library of all recorded trainings. This will be very useful to all new staff entering this work. Shaundell also noted that Racial Equity Partners in concert with MHSA and 3 CoCs will develop racial equity trainings that will be available in this library. Great work, Shaundell!

### **Network Budget and Policy Updates**

Both the Affordable Homes Act and the FY25 state budget are entering the end game for the final push for our advocacy. Read all about what you can do here: <https://www.westernmasshousingfirst.org/advocacy/2024/three-minutes-three-things-impact/>

**Next meeting date: Tuesday, July 23, 1 pm**