

Individual Services Committee Minutes - 9/24/24

In attendance: John Baker, ESG Street Outreach, Tara Bates, Baystate Health, Keleigh BenEzra, CSO, Ivy Burgos, ESG Street Outreach, Natalie Burtzos, Three County CoC, Amy Cahillane, Greenfield, Michelle Carr, Eliot Services, Lynn Conway, Eliot Services, Shaundell Diaz, Three County CoC, Chelsea Isom, Hampden County CoC, Mark Jachym, CSO, Rachel Katz, CSO, Kathy Keeser, Louison House, Charlie Knight, consumer, Rich Krzanowski, CSO, Luray Fladd, YWCA of Western MA, Kim Fontaine, Eliot Services, Erin Forbush, ServiceNet, Jen Glover, LifePath, Andy Klatka, Eliot Services, Josh Levin, DMH, Daimarie Marquez, CHD, Gerry McCafferty, Hampden CoC/Springfield, Gilad Meron, Resilience Hub/CAPV, Lizzy Ortiz, C3 - Health care for the Homeless,

Outreach updates

Eliot Services: Andy Klatka, regional manager, provided an overview of Eliot Services' work and eligibility criteria: 12 people work across the 4 western counties in two teams, Hampden and Three County; most work under a federal PATH contract; staff covers roughly 30 different sites, embedded in meal programs, drop-in centers, shelters, etc. Eligibility criteria for services include: homeless, 18 or older, evidence of mental health issue - priority are people who are unaffiliated, unsheltered, at highest risk - the work is engagement focused (slow, steady, intentional). This is in contrast to being a quick referral or intervention service - that is not their work. They cannot be community assessors for coordinated entry; they assess after meeting their criteria - they do not take calls and meet a person unless they know (or have a basis for assuming) eligibility.

Hampden CoC: Gerry provided an update on Built for Zero's recent efforts to support all CoC's outreach work. They zero in on 4 steps: (1) map where outreach is currently happening; (2) coordinate to avoid duplication; (3) document policies; (4) assess whether you need more (clearly here the answer is yes!). The Hampden CoC is bringing in new resources (hired 2 new outreach workers last year to specifically focus on the unsheltered population; city is currently adding some additional staff; bringing back HOPE team - a collaboration between BHN and the police dept. to provide support in a trauma informed way to connect people to services, 2 shifts/week, 4 hours at a time).

Center for Human Development (CHD) Street Outreach and Triage Programs:

Provided the following data:

Total individuals served: 154

18-24 yr olds: 10

55 and over: 30

chronically homeless: 41

Placements: 14 in shelter; 3 in transitional housing, 4 rentals (no subsidy), 5 reconnected with family.

Concerns:

- Shelter availability has been very scarce everywhere. Very concerned about the winter months.

- The City of Holyoke has requested that CHD no longer provide people with tents. Discussion on this topic: The City is reacting to the rise in numbers and growth in encampments (one was recently dismantled). City officials believe Holyoke is carrying too much of the burden relative to other communities. Providers are deeply concerned that they are not able to provide people with these last-resort supplies. We discussed reaching out to City officials to have a dialogue about this and to provide additional information. We will work with and through CHD, the main provider in the city. Pamela will follow-up.

Shelter Updates:

- All shelters are full.
- Westfield's Samaritan Inn has expanded from 32 to 43 beds and has moved to a lower barrier model. Mayor is noting the possible need for additional intervention (with congregations, e.g.) to support a community response for coldest nights.
- Springfield's Taylor St. Rescue Mission has adopted extremely restrictive rules, requiring sobriety, applications, maximum 60 day stay, then out for a year.
- CSO in all locations (Springfield, Northampton and Greenfield) is in the process of renovation/expansion in shelter and housing and is unable to expand winter capacity (will maintain what they have).
- CSO Northampton is in the process of developing a new shelter (which will have plenty of overflow space once completed) but will only be finished by January at the earliest - which leaves a 2 month winter weather gap (and their current operating shelter at Grove Street is full). The City will be reaching out to local churches to step forward (and utilize state funds that will be available). The city is also working with partners to resolve a large encampment that cannot be sustained.
- Easthampton is working to create a warming center for its unsheltered population. So far there is difficulty in engaging faith institutions (they are already facing demands that are difficult to meet). More discussion to come.
- Craig's Doors will be seeking state funds to expand its congregate site capacity.
- Pittsfield is working on securing a warming center site; they are in need of a state emergency order to allow for some building code exemptions. This issue is being taken up by other communities as well and the HLC Secretary will hopefully address it statewide.
- The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities will be releasing an RFP soon to help pay for additional winter shelter capacity for at least \$4 million and hopefully up to \$12 million. The bigger challenge is siting and staff.
- CSO Medical Respite in Northampton can only accept people who are leaving the hospital with a medical condition - but it can be a short one (e.g., colonoscopy).

Be sure to stay connected to the Network blog for regional advocacy and resource updates: <http://westernmasshousingfirst.org>.

Next meeting date: **Tuesday, Oct. 22, 1 pm**