

## **Family Services Committee Meeting - 11/19/24**

*In attendance: Loman Cabay, Olga Callirgos, Springfield Habitat, Joscelyn de Tajada, New North Citizens Council, Salasin, Anthia Elliott, BHN, Luray Fladd, Ivalisse Gonzalez, New North Citizens Council, Lynn Guertin, BHN, Nicky LaValley, Way Finders, Christy O'Brien, CHD, Lizzy Ortiz, Health Care for the Homeless, Sara Peña, Way Finders, Dorothy Prieto, Head Start, Jasmin Rojas, Way Finders, Brett Rogers, Head Start, Heather Roy, DTA-DV, Jolanta Rumierz, DCF, Jessica Sastre, CHD, Rachel Trant, DCF, Janette Vigo, Way Finders, Melissa White, VOC*

## **Report Out on Secretary Augustus meeting with the Network**

Thanks to the outreach by Rep. Aaron Saunders (Ludlow and other towns), HLC Secretary Ed Augustus met with roughly 50 Network partners (other legislators, mayors and city/town staff, EA shelter and individual shelter providers) to discuss the most pressing homelessness issues in the region. You can read about the meeting [here](#) and read our recommendations [here](#).

Pamela noted that the concerns raised in these family services meetings very much played a role in informing this conversation with the Secretary. In effect, EVERYONE showed up! Stay tuned for any follow-up steps or actions.

## **Shelter updates**

EA shelters are seeing an increase in "90 day length of stay letters" informing families that they have 90 days to vacate the shelter. Several shelter providers received as many as 13 notices at the first of the month. This is stressful! Extensions are being requested.

In some instances, families have completed all the paperwork for a move, and it's the HomeBASE payment that is being held up, creating the delay. We are pushing HLC to address this gap.

**On the rehousing front,** Janette shared that in this first quarter alone, western MA rehoused 282 families with HomeBASE. That is compared to last year's TOTAL figure of 369. Great work is happening!

**Election fall-out:** families are very worried about what will happen in January; some wondering whether they are supposed to leave the country before then. A scary time for many families.

**RAFT:** applications are still very high, over 125-150/week.

**Secure Jobs Update re: ESOL classes:** Jasmin shared the innovative program started by Way Finders' Secure Jobs program: to partner with shelters and HCC to bring HCC ESOL classes to Way Finders to make it easier for people to participate in them. The program is so successful that they have applied for additional funding be able to offer courses for the next 2 years.

**Next meeting date: Tuesday, December 10, 12 noon**