

## **Family Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 1/14/25**

*Approximately 30 shelter and community providers and state agency representatives*

### **Family shelter updates:**

- Noted experiences with families who are not eligible for EA and have nowhere to go. Trouble-shooting as best as possible - temporary hotel funds, private dollars - but these are not sustainable solutions.
- Gov. Healey's policy of shelter inspection: not a problem for this region; shelters already conduct regular inspections
- Gov. Healey's policy of CORI checks for all family shelter guests: HLC's request for shelter providers to obtain CORI authorizations from its guests has been stressful and demanding.
- Gov. Healey's policy to close hotels serving as family shelter: CHD reported that as of now, their Northampton hotel shelter is slated to close 8/31; West Springfield's hotel shelter on 12/31. ServiceNet reported that its hotel shelter in Greenfield is slated to close on 2/28. They have recently housed 20 families out of shelter, now down to occupancy of 15 families and have identified units for about half, continuing the search for the other half. HomeBASE is the primary vehicle for rehousing.
- Way Finders reported that it has already met its housing placement goals for FY25.

Discussion of the stress on the family shelter system. Comments included:

- this is not a migrant problem; it is a lack of affordable housing across the region and state combined with a lack of livable wages
- the criminal incident at the Revere shelter that garnered intense media attention is a one-off - not an indicator of a problem in the shelter-system statewide
- we need to get out front on stopping the criminalization of homelessness

### **The Network's FY26 budget and legislative priorities:**

Pamela described the work underway via its [Steering Committee](#) to determine its FY26 budget priorities and legislative priorities for the new Legislative Session (bill filing deadline of 1/17).

Pamela provided an overview of the [budget and legislative cycle here](#). And the discussion began with a quick look at last year's [FY25 budget priorities](#) and the last session's [legislative priorities](#). Pamela explained that she is collecting feedback from all committees regarding members' priorities and reviewed the feedback collected thus far.

This group validated the priorities already articulated in previous committees: RAFT, MRVP, access to counsel and supportive housing on the budget side. On the legislation, members expressed support for rent control, access to counsel (also a bill, as well as a budget line-item), transfer fee for affordable housing and tenant opportunity to purchase act. Concern was also expressed for DV funding and for stopping renters' fees since they are proving a serious obstacle to housing search. Support was also expressed for prioritizing legislation that would prohibit the criminalization of homelessness.

Pamela will bring this feedback to the Steering Committee. Please stay tuned on more information as the budget and legislative seasons get underway. Gov. Healey will be introducing her FY26 budget on Jan. 22.

**Other announcements:**

- Head Start & Early Learning Programs We offer quality early education and care and services to support expectant parents and children birth to five in Franklin, Hampshire, and Western Hampden Counties at low or no cost to families. Visit HSELP/CAPV for all program options. To apply online <http://goengage.app> For a referral form (which gives clients priority) Downloadable Referral Form. Fax or email completed referrals to [hselpenrollment@communityaction.us](mailto:hselpenrollment@communityaction.us) or 413-387-1224 Please call 413-387-1250 Or email questions to [hselpenrollment@communityaction.us](mailto:hselpenrollment@communityaction.us)
- Way Finders Fair Housing Program - trainings are available, contact Ramona Rivera 413-523-3209 [rivera@wayfinders.org](mailto:rivera@wayfinders.org)

**Next meeting date:** Tues., Feb. 11, 12 noon - 1 pm