

ALLEGHENY COUNTY HOMELESS ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
July 31, 2012, 10:00 AM
Liberty Room

Members

Jerry Drozynski, Bayer; Jane Downing, Pittsburgh Foundation; Linda Sheets, OSN; Mary Frances Pilarski, VA; Tom Cummings, URA; Nicole Anderson, AIU; Liz Daniels-Totten, City Planning; Bill Wolfe, HCEF; Reggie Young, ACDHS-OCS;

Guests

Rob Eamigh, ACDHS; Chuck Keenan, ACDHS; Kathi DeSantis, AVAC; Laura Vicenti, Family Promise; Joann Cyganovich, Sojourner House; Mary Parks, Sisters Place; Becky Labovic, CHS; Steve Forrester, WPIC; Kevin Cox, EECM; Darlene Kirkland, PCHS; Wanda Williams, ACTION-Housing; Lisa Trunick, Beth Haven; Dinetta Benjamin, Beth Haven; Frank Cuspard, Pleasant Valley; Trudy Friend, Goodwill; Jackie Abel-Stavropoulos, Goodwill; Ashley Mancine, SDHP; Kara Snyder-Keane, ACSWPA; Lisa Zimmerman, Healthy Start House; Joe Elliott, ACDHS; Rhonda Albert, Women's Center and Shelter; Lois Mafuka Martin, Beth Haven

Welcome

Jerry Drozynski welcomed everyone to the meeting.

SafeLink Presentation

Michelle Bradshaw did a presentation on the SafeLink Wireless cell phone program. She noted that individuals who are homeless and/or who receive services such as food stamps, Medicaid, LIHEAP, and housing choice vouchers are eligible to receive a free cell phone with 150 monthly minutes and texting through SafeLink. If anyone has a client that they think may be eligible for a free phone, they should call Michelle at (412) 512-8033 to apply.

Continuum of Care Regulations

Rob Eamigh did a power point presentation the new Continuum of Care regulations (attached). Mr. Eamigh highlighted changes to

- The responsibilities of the planning body (Continuum of Care) to drive the process
- Establishment of a Board to oversee the Continuum of Care
- Designating a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) lead
- Coordinate the provision of services to the homeless within the county
- Conduct an annual point in time count and gaps analysis
- Coordinate with Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) recipients
- Changes to program requirements, including the elimination of the Sfe Haven and SRO program components, designation of leasing or rental assistance projects, and a review of eligible and ineligible costs
- The need for a centralized or coordinated intake system

A general discussion and question and answer session then took place. It was noted that the new regulations require participation on the oversight board from currently or recently formerly homeless individuals and where the board should look for such members. The group also discussed the centralized intake requirement and how it may work in Allegheny County.

The group also raised a number of questions that it thought should be submitted as part of the Board's comments to HUD on the draft regulations. These included?

- Will planning fees be added to the pro rata need or will it be taken from the existing funding?
- In terms of choosing between leasing or rental assistance, what should a provider choose if they co-sign leases with program participants?
- Are tenant phone, garbage, and internet costs re-imbursable? There seems to be no mention of these in the list of eligible costs.
- Can Allegheny County use the data warehouse to generate leverage through analysis of homeless participants' use of other DHS provided services?
- Why were the SRO and Safe Haven program components eliminated?

New ESG Program Update

Liz Daniels Totten gave an update on the start of the new Emergency Solutions Grant program. She explained that the new rental assistance program, very similar to the previous Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP), would begin on September 1, 2012. City Planning and the Allegheny County Economic Development Department funded Community Human Services and Operation Safety Net to administer the new ESG rental assistance program, which will work through 211 to act as a pre-screening agency for the program. PA 211 Southwest will take initial calls, pre-screen potential applicants for eligibility, maintain a waiting list of eligible clients, and refer them on to CHS or OSN. Ms. Totten explained that basic eligibility for the ESG rental assistance program is family income below 30% of area median income and being homeless or at risk of homelessness, including facing an imminent eviction. The program is able to pay for up to six months of rental or utility assistance, including arrearages.

A general discussion then followed along with some questions. Joann Cyganovich asked if applicants had to have income in order to be eligible for the program and Ms. Totten replied that participants must be able to sustain housing after the program ends, so they should have income. The group also asked City Planning and ACED to develop a brochure that outlines the program and its requirements.

Primary Care Facilities Update

Mr. Eamigh gave a brief update on the status of the Primary Care facilities that will be closing or changing operators. Mr. Eamigh explained the initial request for proposal process that his office undertook to find a new operator for Open Arms, Sankofa, the homeless shelter, and the Bridge and Penn Free Bridge housing programs. DHS could find no provider willing to operate all of the programs, so it approached a provider to

operate only the Sankofa and Open Arms facilities, allowing Primary Care to close the shelter and Bridge and Penn Free Bridge programs. Mr. Eamigh noted that the shelter is no longer accepting new homeless families and will close as soon as the remaining families secure new housing options. Due to the proposed state budget cuts, the Bridge and Penn Free Bridge Programs may close as well. Once details are finalized, Mr. Eamigh will let the group and the homeless provider network know when Sankofa and Open Arms will transfer to a new owner/manager.

Announcements

Stand Down is August 11, 2012 at Shepherds Heart Church.

The AIDS Coalition of Southwestern PA Housing Committee will be hosting an open house at the Union Project at 2:00 on August 9, 2012.

Open Discussion

None.

Next Meeting

The next Homeless Advisory Board meeting will be on October 30, 2012 at 10:00 AM Liberty Room, Lower Level, Human Services Building, One Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh.