

ALLEGHENY COUNTY HOMELESS ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
April 30, 2013, 10:00 AM
Liberty Room

Members

Jerry Drozynski, Bayer; Linda Kilderry, SVdP; Jack McGraw, ACHA; Adrienne Walnoha, CHS; Wayne Jones, The Heinz Endowments; Meg Balsamico, Penn Hills; Mary Frances Pilarski, VA; Stephanie Chiappini, OSN; Reggie Young, ACHS; George Moses, Housing Alliance; Cassandra Collinge, ACED; Joe Lagana, HCEF; Nicole Anderson, AIU; Jane Downing, The Pittsburgh Foundation

Guests

Rob Eamigh, ACDHS; Chuck Keenan, ACDHS; Judy Eakin, HEARTH; Liz Daniels Totten, City Planning; Carol Janesko, ACHD; Don Rindfuss, Veterans Place; Jesse Haywood, Gaudenzia; Ashley Mancine, SDHP; Lois Martin, Bethlehem Haven; Terri Laver, ACDHS; Steve Forrester, WPIC; Keith Giles, First Step; Marilyn Williams, First Step; Emil Pyptyk, ACDHS; Mary Jo Dickson, ACDHS; Maureen Quinn, ACED; Lisa Zimmerman, Adagio; Cyndi Haines, HUD; Joe Elliott, ACDHS; Jay Poliziani, NSCM; Kate Holko, ACDHS

Welcome

Jerry Drozynski welcomed everyone to the meeting and everyone went around and introduced themselves.

Approval of Previous Meeting Notes

The minutes from the January 2013 meeting were approved as presented.

Point-in-Time Discussion

Terri Laver passed out the official numbers from the point in time count of homeless individuals and families that was conducted in January 2013 along with a spreadsheet that compared the 2013 count with previous years. She explained the charts and noted that the numbers for the unsheltered homeless were up, but that the emergency shelter numbers were down this year primarily due to the warm weather on the date that the count was done. Ms. Laver also explained that the overall number of homeless individuals and families served under HUD's definition was up due to an expansion of beds within the Continuum of Care (CoC). The total number of homeless reported to HUD using their definition that includes the unsheltered, emergency shelter occupants, and transitional housing participants was 1492. The total number of participants (the 1492 above plus those residing in CoC sponsored permanent housing) was 3199.

Ms. Laver also explained the Unmet Need chart, which analyzes the CoC to see where the county may need to add program types and where it has sufficient capacity to meet demand. The chart showed that Allegheny County has sufficient shelter beds, but that there is a need for 60 Transitional Housing beds, 57 Safe Haven beds (although HUD no longer funds the Safe Haven program), and 448 Permanent Housing beds, including 77 units for families and 218 units for singles).

Ms. Laver also noted that during this year's point in time count, Allegheny County had a 94% occupancy rate within its CoC programs. A discussion of the point in time numbers followed. Judy Eakin asked why the county never reports any unsheltered families on the point in time count. Ms. Eakin explained that she frequently gets calls from families and refers them to shelters when her program is full, but that they inevitably call back to say that the shelters, too, are full. Some end up sleeping in their cars, but do not seem to get counted. Reggie Young responded that Allegheny County has many other options, including hotel rooms and the Office of Children, Youth, and Families (CYF) programs to assist these families with their immediate housing needs. Adrienne Walnoha, who works for Community Human Services and whose organization holds the contract for hotel/motel vouchers, explained that they use such funding as a last resort and explore other options with the family first, including using natural supports for as long as possible. Mr. Drozynski wrapped up the discussion with thoughts on data collection and the role of centralized intake to help get even more accurate numbers. He also noted that the hotel/motel voucher system was a good stop gap measure that assists families until a new shelter bed opens up.

CoC Application Update

Rob Eamigh provided an update on Allegheny County's most recent CoC funding application. He explained the new award process for this year, which HUD has broken down into three separate announcements, Tier I Renewals, Tier II renewals, and new projects. On March 8, 2013 the Tier I renewals were announced and all but one renewal project was funded. The original Tier I application did not include a total of three projects, but two of those projects were funded in Tier 1. This was a pleasant surprise and hopefully bodes well for the Tier II and new projects announcements. Mr. Eamigh said that HUD should probably make the funding announcement on the remaining Tier II project, the 10 new projects, and the Planning Grant in May.

Mr. Eamigh also updated the group on the next grant cycle, which should start soon. He noted that letters of intent on all renewal and new projects will be coming out in the spring. Mr. Drozynski congratulated the county on a good application and reiterated the good news that it received in March.

Coordinated Intake Update

Linda Kilderry passed out notes from the last Coordinated Intake work group meeting. She noted that the group has decided to do a hybrid version of a "no wrong door" and centralized system to address consumer access to the homeless system. She explained that the work group is proposing to have consumers enter the homeless system through any number of doors (including providers, the Department of Human Services, 211, or any other referral source), but that if the initial door is closed or otherwise unavailable, the consumer will be referred to a centralized intake and assessment center. The idea is to allow a consumer to enter a program if it is open and appropriate for him or her, but that if it is not, he or she will be asked to call a central number to get a targeted referral based on his or her circumstances, needs, and housing barriers.

Mr. Keenan noted that the group is updating the Homeless Advisory Board on this methodology, but it is also seeking feedback from the Board on whether or not this is an appropriate process for the community. The group does not want to go down a path that the Board does not support. There was more discussion on the process, but the Board did decide to endorse this methodology and asked to be updated on the work as it progresses.

Homeless Advisory Board Membership

Mr. Keenan discussed the need to replace some Homeless Advisory Board members who have not participated in meetings or who have asked to resign. To that end, he noted that the county is seeking nominations from the community to serve on the Board and he passed out nomination forms so that people in attendance could nominate themselves or refer another person for membership. Mr. Keenan said that nominees must have an interest in serving and will be asked to commit to attending at least 75% of the Board meetings in the year. He also noted that the county is looking for people who would be good for the Board, but who may not know about it.

Planning for the July 30 HAB Meeting

Mr. Keenan explained to the Board that he has been approached by members of the community to try to do a big event for the July 30 HAB meeting to celebrate the accomplishments of the group and to officially end the county's first Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. The desire of this group is to raise the awareness of homelessness in the county, so they felt that a large event at the next HAB meeting, with a focus on past accomplishments and the new face of homelessness (with new priorities), would be a proper vehicle to do this. New members to the Board could also be announced as a way of "re-invigorating" the Board.

Mr. Keenan is looking for ideas on how to accomplish this. The group suggested the involvement of local political leaders. The inclusion of consumers who can give testimonials was also suggested as part of this agenda. Others suggested that the Veterans Administration be present, since the VA has a plan to end homelessness among vets within the next three years. Many members of the board offered to assist with planning the event.

ESG Program Update

Cassandra Collinge gave an update on the Emergency Solutions Grant program. She reported that the new Rapid Re-housing program is now operational and that the ESG providers are looking for ways to link the short-term rental assistance program with transitional and bridge housing programs to assist those participants with the transition costs (security deposits and first month's rent) of getting out of the program and into their own apartment. Ms. Collinge also noted that applications for Fiscal Year 2013 are in, so funding decisions on those applications will be announced in the future.

HAP Budget

Mr. Keenan announced that the county may have some funding available for shelter, bridge, or case management funded through the State Homeless Assistance Program due to the closure of a few HAP funded programs and the potential shift of funding into these

types of programs due to the state Human Services Block Grant proposal. If anyone is interested in starting or expanding a bridge, shelter, or case management program in Fiscal Year 2013-14, they should contact him for an application packet.

Announcements

Mary Frances Pilarski announced the VA CHALENG event that is scheduled for May 21 at 9:00 AM at the VFW in Sharpsburg. She also passed out a flyer for the event.

Cyndi Haines announced the restructuring and closures of HUD field offices. She noted that the Pittsburgh Multi-family Division will be consolidated with the New York and Boston offices, so employees in Pittsburgh will be asked to relocate there. They are waiting for further announcements on the Community Planning and Development, Public Housing, and Fair Housing Divisions.

Ms. Laver announced that there are 10 slots still available for CPR training on May 16. Let her know if you are interested.

Lisa Zimmerman announced that Healthy Start House has two staff positions open and that they are now a part of Goodwill.

Judy Eakin announced that HEARTH will be opening the doors to their new facility in Shaler on May 22. This new facility will have two wheelchair accessible apartments available as well.

Open Discussion

None.

Next Meeting

The next Homeless Advisory Board meeting will be on July 30, 2013 at 10:00 AM Liberty Room, Lower Level, Human Services Building, One Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh.