

**ALLEGHENY COUNTY HOMELESS ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
July 18, 2013, 10:00 AM**

Members

Jerry Drozynski, Bayer; Linda Kilderry, SVdP; Jack McGraw, ACHA; Adrienne Walnoha, CHS; Wayne Jones, The Heinz Endowments; Mary Frances Pilarski, VA; Reggie Young, ACHS; George Moses, Housing Alliance; Nancy Dunkis, ACED; Joe Lagana, HCEF; Nicole Anderson, AIU; Jane Downing, The Pittsburgh Foundation; Pat Fenton, ACTION-Housing; Mary Parks, Sisters Place; Charles Christian, PATF; Alicia Allen, re:solve; Matt Gergley, City of McKeesport; Laura Vincenti, Family Promise; John Lovelace, UPMC Health Plan/CCBHO; Donald Rindfuss, VLP; Kelly Owen, HEARTH; Tracey Soska, Pitt; Lenny Prewitt, Family Links; Jerry Cafardi, City of Pittsburgh; Julie DeSeyn, United Way; Jack McGraw, ACHA

Guests

Denetta Benjamin, Beth Haven; Joyce Sacco, Housing Alliance; Heather Uphold, Veterans Place; Rich Rainii, ACED; Andrea Rudek, OCD; Miranda King, Positive Health Clinic; Alta Moquette, ACDHS; Kellie Wild, EECM; Catherine Lobaugh, AIU; Jim Check, Shepherds Heart; Mary Jo Dickson, OBH; Mark Bertolet, OCR; Dave Wallace, YMCA; Cassandra Collinge, ACED; Karen Snair, AVAC; Rob Eamigh, ACDHS; Chuck Keenan, ACDHS; Don Grant, AAA; Terri Laver, ACDHS; Joan Eichner, OCD; Larry McCleod, Urban League; Mayor Mike Cherepk, McKeesport; Roseanne Majcher, AAA; Michael Yonas, ACDHS; Ashley Mancine, SDHP; Renay Trotter, Transitional Services; Amie Downs, AC County Executive Office; Rich Fitzgerald, AC County Executive; Sarah Aglio, AIU, Marc Cherna, ACDHS; Cyndi Haines, HUD; Ionna Chiotis, WPIC; Richard Morris, Urban League; Lois Martin, Beth Haven; Marilyn Williams, First Step; Joe Elliott, ACDHS; Dan Robinson, ACDHS; Lisa Zimmerman, Healthy Start House; Paul Freyder, Salvation Army; Amy Adams, CHS; Mac McMahan, CHS; Megan Neuf, Heinz Endowments; Elizabeth Totten, City Planning; Angela Reynolds, United Way; Donnie Yawn, YWCA; Aaron Gibson, YMCA; Kate Holko, ACDHS

Welcome

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

Update on 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness

Chuck Keenan presented a power point (attached) on Allegheny County's original Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, accomplishments made to date on it, and challenges as the county embarks on a new plan. The presentation highlighted the completion of several goals of this plan, including the addition of 1000 new units of housing for the homeless, the creation of a central repository for foundation and other grant funding at the Department of Human Services, an outreach and media campaign on issues facing people experiencing homelessness, many newly created prevention efforts, retaining at-risk affordable housing options, and improving access to homeless services and

mainstream services for the homeless. The overall effect of these efforts has been a reduction in the number of unsheltered persons from a high of 282 to a low of 56 in 2012.

Mr. Keenan also outlined the direction that the county may be taking to address the new face of homelessness, including the addition of new members to the HAB to replace those whose participation has declined, fully implementing the HEARTH Act and regulations locally, further development of partnerships, creation of a more consumer friendly centralized intake system, and the redesign of the county's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald thanked the group for their efforts over the years and stressed the importance of their work in ending homelessness in the county.

Consumer Voice

Amy Adams, a former consumer of homeless services in Allegheny County, told of her experiences in that system and how it has helped her to become more self-sufficient. The group thanked her for telling her story and for all of the work that she has done to get to where she is now.

Approval of Previous Meeting Notes

Mr. Drozynski noted that the minutes from the April 2013 meeting were in the packet given to everyone. He asked for any changes or corrections to them. None were offered so the minutes from the April 2013 meeting were approved as presented.

Coordinated Intake Update

Linda Kilderry passed out notes from the last Coordinated Intake work group meeting. The goal of the group was to ensure that the process of trying to access the homeless system was easy and that consumers were not sent to multiple places when trying to find an appropriate program. 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.

Ms. Kilderry further explained that the keys to success identified by the work group are to have accurate information on each program and their eligibility requirements and to have up to date information on vacancies within the continuum. The group has started to develop a set of questions to be asked at the coordinated intake center. Also, the work group went through the newly issued HMIS standards to see what information HUD will be requiring as part of the enrollment process. Finally, Ms. Kilderry noted that the group hopes to be able to use the data received by the centralized intake center to conduct a

gaps analysis and a needs assessment that will drive decisions on funding and the types of programs that are needed to fill in unmet needs.

Julie DeSeyn asked if the group has considered using 211 to serve as the centralized intake center. Ms. Kilderry responded that staff from 211 have been present at the meetings, but that the operator of the center has not been discussed as of yet.

HMIS Update

Mr. Keenan informed the board of new data standards that HUD has released for Homeless Management Information Systems. He discussed a little about the standards, including the fact that HUD has changed the responses to every question currently in the database. This will require DHS to rewrite every “screen” in HMIS and, because of this undertaking, it has decided to take this opportunity to move the system to a new platform. This platform has already been developed and is currently being used in the Children, Youth, and Families Office to track data in the child welfare system. Currently, DHS has been meeting internally to review the usability and functionality of the current application, but it will soon be asking for input from the users of the system.

Adrienne Walnoha asked about how data would be reported for victims of domestic violence. A long discussion ensued with the end result being a request for a legal opinion from the Law Department or HUD. Mr. Keenan will keep the board apprised of any opinions that he receives on this issue.

Initiatives to Serve Children Experiencing Homelessness

Mr. Keenan updated the board on a few initiatives that the county will be undertaking to assist children who are experiencing homelessness. He noted that the Department of Human Services has allocated about \$250,000 in Human Services Development Block Grant funding for these initiatives. The block grant funding will be used to hire up to three case managers and a resource coordinator to work with families and providers in the homeless system. These staff will focus on assisting children and families who have witnessed trauma, who need help in securing supportive services, developmental screenings, enrollment in school or head start, and other needs identified by the family. Mary Parks commented that some providers already provide these services in their programs, while others do not. Michael Yonas noted that he and other staff at DHS will be doing an “environmental scan” of the services offered across all of the homeless providers so that DHS can develop a baseline set of standards for the care of consumers in these programs. Mr. Keenan summed up that DHS will be offering some of these services to a targeted set of providers based on the number of consumers that they see.

ESG Update

Cassandra Collinge provided an update on the Emergency Solutions Grant program. She reported that the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing program has begun and hundreds of clients are currently being served. Ms. Collinge noted that HUD has placed a large focus on rapid re-housing through this grant, requiring that 40% of the total grant be spent on this activity. She also noted that the entire ESG grant has been cut by 25% in this fiscal year, meaning that some programs that were traditionally funded by ESG may

be impacted. Ms. Collinge said that she expects her office and City Planning to announce this year's grants within the next 30 days.

Lois Martin asked Ms. Collinge how she expected to address the 25% funding cut, to which she replied that they are still discussing whether to make across the board cuts or to eliminate funding to programs entirely. The board had a long discussion about HUD's funding priorities and how they are impacting programs locally. The group ended the discussion by requesting the board take a long look at all funding coming into the continuum and to advocate nationally on HUD's policy priorities. This will be added to next quarter's HAB meeting agenda at the board's request.

Announcements

Mary Frances Pilarski announced that Stand Down is scheduled for August 10 at 8:00 AM at Shepherd's Heart.

Kelly Owen announced that HEARTH still has vacant units available in their transitional housing program for families. HEARTH is currently holding two wheelchair accessible apartments open for any homeless family that needs those features.

Open Discussion

None.

Next Meeting

The next Homeless Advisory Board meeting will be on October 29, 2013 at 10:00 AM Liberty Room, Lower Level, Human Services Building, One Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh.