

# Allegheny County Homeless Advisory Board

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## **CoC/HAB Bi-Monthly Meeting**

March 31, 2020

Virtual Meeting

**Purpose:** The Homeless Advisory Board (HAB) is a public/private partnership formed to assist and recommend to Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh, the City of McKeesport and the Municipality of Penn Hills on public policy, programs, activities, data and all other efforts that will eliminate homelessness and improve the wellbeing of persons and families who are homeless.

### **HAB Members<sup>1</sup>**

Frank Aggazio (P)	Pete Giacalone (P)	Christy Pietryga (P)
Meg Balsamico (P)	Abigail Horn (P)	Susie Puskar (P)
Jerry Cafardi (P)	Knowledge Build Hudson (P)	Gale Schwartz (P)
Tom Cummings (P)	Joe Lagana (P)	Lea Etta Rhodes (P)
Jane Downing (P)	John Lovelace (P)	Kyona White
Laura Drogowski (P)	Jennifer McCurry (P)	Kellie Wild (P)
Annette Fetchko (P)	Michael Murray (P)	Bethany Wingerson (P)

### **Minutes**

#### **1. 2020 Performance Evaluation Tool**

As part of the annual HUD CoC Program application the CoC needs to submit a rank-order list of projects. Since 2017, the CoC used a data-driven performance evaluation tool to rank renewal projects, and each year the CoC Analysis and Planning Committee has made recommendations to update the tool. The Committee completed their recommendation and it was sent to the CoC for public comment—no comments were received.

***2020 Performance Evaluation Tool for HUD CoC Program Review and Ranking was approved.***

#### **2. COVID-19 Response/Updates**

The remainder of the meeting was used to provide updates regarding the response to COVID-19. Below is key information and resources shared through the discussion. In addition to these COVID response items, DHS's Bureau of Homeless Services noted that other homeless service and support operations are working to keep business as usual: Allegheny Link is continuing to do referrals, no homeless service programs have shut down, and all are continuing to take referrals.

**Additionally, special thanks was extended to the provider staff enabling the continuation of services. In particular, the burden being carried by emergency shelter staff was recognized and enough gratitude cannot be expressed to these staff members. In recognizing these efforts, it is of note that there is a substantial need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and DHS will welcome any connections that can help get equipment to provider agencies.**

#### **Resources/Information Links**

- DHS hosts a daily call for DHS providers and partners to discuss rapidly changing information and planning around COVID-19. Call recordings, slide decks, and notes are archived for reference (i.e., you do not need to participate live to get the information). These calls have robust information around the response and planning:  
<https://bit.ly/COVID19DHSProviders>
  - The website also contains links to a number of other sites and resources, including this [map of Allegheny County free food distribution sites](#).
- The Coronavirus Relief Bill passed on Friday and the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania is

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<sup>1</sup> (P) indicates HAB members who were present for the meeting.

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seeking information to better understand how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting low-income and housing insecure populations and the organizations that serve them, so that they may advocate for an effective use of funds to meet the needs of these populations and services. Feedback is being requested through Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> via a 5-minute, online survey: [survey link](#)

- Veterans Leadership Program is doing weekly food distribution and has a mass distribution event scheduled for April 13<sup>th</sup>. While geared towards veterans, no one will be turned away. VLP can be contacted at 412-481-8200.
- PA CareerLink system continues to post jobs:  
<https://www.pacareerlink.pa.gov/jponline/JobSeeker/SearchJobs>
  - In addition, they are working to aggregate hot jobs and will be posting them over the next week, here: <https://www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com/>
- Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh COVID-19 Resources page:  
<https://hacp.org/covid-19/>
- Local philanthropies have partnered to create the Emergency Action Fund, which will award operating grants on a rolling basis to emergency service providers and nonprofit organizations serving on the front lines of recovery. The Fund has two parts, the first distribution of which was largely focused on supporting the isolation/quarantine facilities. The second, which can start being applied for on Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, will provide fund to small and medium size organizations addressing basic needs of people affected by COVID-19: <https://pittsburghfoundation.org/emergencyactionfund>

## Updates

- Hygiene stations were set up at three camps, which include mobile bathrooms and handwashing stations
- Early and ongoing efforts have focused on identifying new facilities that would allow for sufficient isolation/quarantine for high risk individuals and those who become sick and are not able to safely quarantine at home.
  - Hotels were identified as the ideal solution as they would allow for individual rooms and bathrooms. Outreach done with hotels across the area, but many declined participation due to the individuals that would be served. However, an interested hotel has been identifying and DHS is working with them to plan necessary support, including food, security, laundry, etc.
    - Large barrier trying to work through is insurance, so DHS has been working with the County Solicitors Office to try to resolve insurance issues. This has been an identified barrier across the country, with some areas moving forward without insurance and others having the state self-insure.
    - Concurrently, DHS is gathering information from providers and HMIS to identify individuals/families that would be prioritized for these spaces. Currently the list is a little over 100 individuals. Additionally, DHS is planning the best approach to transporting individuals once the spaces are available, and likely approximately 10 people will be moved in each day.
    - In addition to planning the operational needs of the isolation/quarantine facilities, DHS is working across Offices to effectively support physical and mental health needs of the individuals.
- HUD has been flexible with program requirements, for example, not termination people from programs due to time limit in program being reached. A waiver speaking to the flexibility is expected in the coming days.

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- Another example of programmatic flexibility has been DHS's support of virtual inspections for landlords. With these inspections, landlords do the walkthrough and film the space. Additionally, document requirements are more flexibility with a focus on collecting the documentation that they are able to submit photographs of the documentation rather than hard copies needing to be in-hand. Multiple providers highlighted that they have been able to move individuals into permanent housing utilizing the virtual inspection process.
- Both the Allegheny County Housing Authority and Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh reported the buildings are being cleaned, and emergency work orders are being processed. New inspections are also moving forward, but annual inspections are being postponed for the ACHA.
- The URA launched an additional Housing Stabilization Program through the Housing Opportunity Fund. Within the first week, 500 inquiries were received, so the application process is being closed until the backlog of initial applications can be worked through.
- The URA is also collaborating with other funding partners (foundations, lenders, State, etc) around exploring emergency business assistance to support the survival of businesses.
- Medicare and CHIP disenrollment for time limit have been suspended.
- Within a few of the State and Federal relief packages have been changes to unemployment compensation (UC), including the removal of the week waiting period, allowing for self-employed for people in the "gig" economy, and increasing the UC weekly amount by \$600.
  - Of note, the UC system is experiences challenges adapting to the current needs (e.g., getting the technology needed to support the claims coming in), so there are some delays occurring.

### **Next CoC Meeting**

May 26, 2020 from 10:00am to 12:00pm

Location: TBD