Allegheny County Homeless Advisory Board

CoC Bi-Monthly Meeting
July 27, 2021; 10:00AM to 12:00PM
Microsoft Teams 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[1]

Nicole Anderson
Breanna Benjamin (P)
Damian Butler-Buccilli (P)
Jane Downing (P)
Laura Drogowski
Stuart Fisk (P)
Pete Giacalone (P)

Knowledge Build Hudson (P)
Anna Kudrav (P)
Joe Lagana (P)
John Lovelace (P)
Jennifer McCurry
Susie Puskar (P)
Christy Pietryga (P)

Diana Reichenbach
Lea Etta Rhodes (P)
Cynthia Shields (P)
Katie Stohlberg (P)
Gale Schwartz (P)
Kyona White (P)
Bethany Wingerson (P)

In addition to the below notes, the [meeting recording can be accessed here](#).

Minutes

1. **Welcome—Gale Schwartz**
   Gale Schwartz welcomed all HAB members and CoC participants.

   May 2021 Meeting Minutes were approved by the HAB

2. *Allegheny County CoC Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*
   The meeting slides are available in Appendix A. Jessica Fleming, Homeless Data and Performance Outcomes Manager, DHS, first provided an overview of the Allegheny County CoC in terms of need and capacity. Jane Downing, Senior Program Officer, The Pittsburgh Foundation, then briefly reviewed the process used to develop the Allegheny County CoC Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. The meeting discussion then moved through the 6 Strategic Initiatives outlined in the Plan. The slides provide the Plan Goals within each of the initiatives, and then provide accomplishments and considerations related to that initiative as collected through a CoC survey. With each initiative, the HAB discussed additional considerations, including potential opportunities and/or focus areas. In addition to the items presented in the slides, the below points of discussion were raised.

   Provide access to year-round low barrier emergency shelter
   - Shelter flow is connected to access of affordable housing; Second Ave Commons will have SROs available
   - Continue building on the training and operationalize of trauma informed care and services within the shelter system
   - Examine data on who is specifically coming into shelters to understand appropriate service and support array (e.g., first time homelessness)—caveat regarding the last year of data and what trends during the pandemic will and will not continue longer term (e.g., impact of eviction moratorium)
   - The SROs that will be available in Second Avenue Commons not only provide affordable housing space, but do so in a way that enables continuity of community for people who use the shelter and then move into the SRO—are there additional opportunities to support continuity of community and consider potential

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[1] (P) indicates HAB members who were present for the meeting.

impacts on Outreach?

Establish a centralized rental housing locator (navigator)
- Potential role for housing navigation unit (HNU) regarding engaging landlords around move-on strategies, including aligning landlord incentives and relationship building with Housing Authorities

Expand and develop partnerships to pilot new programs and help with school responsibilities under ESSA
- Distinction regarding planning around homelessness services for youth and meeting the responsibilities under ESSA, and making space to inclusive of both needs within the system
- Consider the employment realities for youth and how that may impact service and support planning and needs
  - Susie Puskar, Chief Program Officer, Partner4Work, shared: since 2020, about 6% drop—numbers have come back for high wage jobs (paying 60k or more), but low wage jobs are still down 18% since 2020. There is natural pressure on wages and employers are seeing need to pay more. Within Learn and EARN program, it was a low application year, with some young people citing wanting the summer off and others citing jobs in the open market.
- Follow up on recent cross-system work facilitated by AIU and NCHE focused on identifying best practices and local needs for the ARP funding.
- Transportation needs seem key

Ensure that outreach resources are sufficient to cover the entirety of Allegheny County
- Second Avenue Commons is expected to be a strong linkage point, with access to clinical services, mainstream service access supports, and having the DHS Field Unit located there.

Develop a communications plan that includes broader dissemination of information
- Desire to develop a communication strategy for a final report on the Plan—involves developing a report that engages the whole CoC on the outcomes, and a strategy for getting the report out.

Increased supply and access to affordable housing
- Opportunities to better keep people stable in their homes when transitioning from homelessness housing system into using vouchers
  - Rental support while waiting for voucher payments to begin
  - Funds to keep/bring housing up to code
- Explore opportunities for process improvements to reduce hardship of accessing affordable housing
- Seek more flexibility between systems to leverage and effectively braid resources and supports, for example with healthcare and housing
  - https://www.macpac.gov/publiQuestication/medicaids-role-in-housing/
- Enhance services and supports connections for individuals and families living in public housing to help maintain their housing stability
- Consideration of the CoC and HAB's role and reach in affordable housing and seeking to set strategic priorities that can stay aspirational but are within a sphere of control

The HAB further discussed considerations that may not fit into the existing initiatives or should be added to future planning efforts. Items raised included:
- Equity, with particular recognition of racial disparities
- Centering the voice of people who have traveled these systems
- Supporting an agile system that can be responsive to people's needs

3. **Planning Next Steps**

   To support continued planning, Ms. Schwartz suggested that the Committees explore the same considerations: What is missing from the last plan?; what are key considerations moving forward?; what ideas are there for making progress?

<u>Next CoC Meeting</u>
September 28, 2021 from 10:00am to 12:00pm
Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting
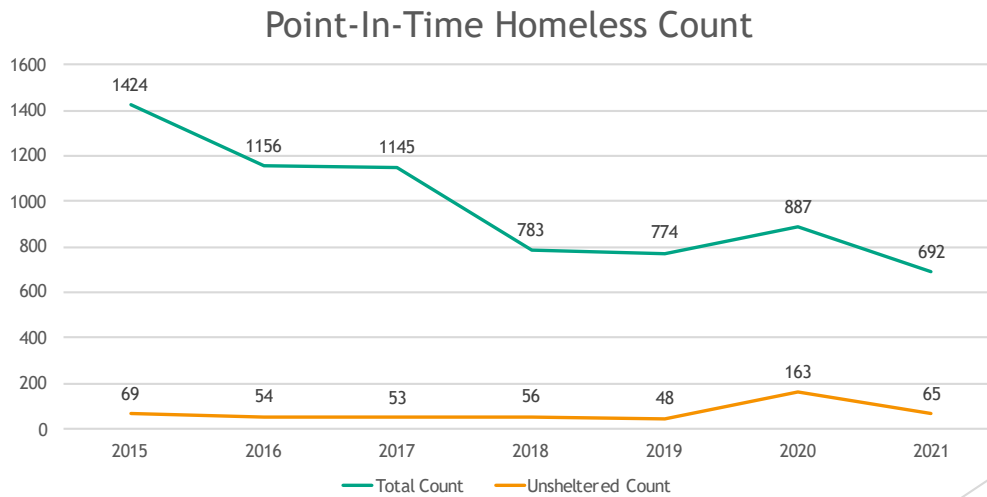Public Access Space Available at HSB (1 Smithfield St, Pittsburgh, 15222)

Appendix A
Meeting Presentation

CoC/HAB Bi-Monthly Meeting
July 27, 2021

Please mute your lines when you are not speaking

Meeting will be recorded

System Review: Needs

Point-In-Time Homeless Count

System Review: Capacity

Since increasing permanent housing resources in 2017, the CoC has maintained its inventory of beds and number of households served

- ▶ 170 PSH and 236 RRH beds were added in 2017
- ▶ Served ~1,000 more households a year in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 than we did in 2016

System Bed Capacity (as of 1/15/21)		2020 Households Served
Emergency Shelter	670 beds	6,118 households (rental assistant/homeless prevention, street outreach, shelter, bridge/transitional housing, RRH and PSH)
Transitional Housing	169 beds	
Rapid Rehousing	964 beds*	
Permanent Supportive Housing	1836 beds	

Includes ESG beds, which are calculated by use

System Review: Exploring the Waitlist

- ▶ In 2019, 2221 households were eligible for longer term housing services
  - ▪ 612 (28%) were enrolled into a transitional/bridge program, rapid rehousing and/or permanent housing program within one year
  - ▪ 1,609 (72%) were not enrolled into one of the above
- ▶ Of the 1,609 households not enrolled:
  - ▪ **7%** returned, were eligible for homeless services and had a second housing referral within 12 months

Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness

▶ Finalized in July 2017

▶ Outlines a strategy to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring in Allegheny County by 2022

▶ Built on Continuum's progress

- Shift the inventory of homeless assistance resources toward those interventions that have been shown to be more effective including permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing

- Implementation of a system of coordinated entry in conjunction with the existing Allegheny Link

- Establishment of a requirement that all housing assistance providers serving homeless people follow the Housing First model

- Prioritization of all permanent supportive housing resources to serve the chronically homeless until chronic homelessness has been solved in the community

▶ Developed through a community process

- Community kick off meeting; data reviews/analysis; focus groups; interviews; site visits; community forums

Strategic Initiatives

Provide access to year-round low barrier emergency shelter

Establish a centralized rental housing locator (navigator)

Expand and develop partnerships to pilot new programs and help with school responsibilities under ESSA

Ensure that outreach resources are sufficient to cover the entirety of Allegheny County

Develop a communications plan that includes broader dissemination of information

Increased supply and access to affordable housing

Provide access to year-round low barrier emergency shelter: Plan Goals

▶ Establish year-round low-barrier shelters that will provide a safe environment focused on assisting those served to secure housing in the community.

▶ Target case management and supportive services to those not able to resolve their homelessness crisis on their own

▶ Since housing and case management resources will always be limited, provide an opportunity for shelter residents to 'self-resolve' their homelessness

▶ Based on the introduction of year-round low barrier shelter, assess remaining shelters and adjust accordingly.

Provide access to year-round low barrier emergency shelter: Discussion

▶ Achievements

- Continued operations of shelters throughout the pandemic

- Groundbreaking on Second Avenue Commons

- RFP for operations of shelter and drop-in center at Second Avenue Commons

- ...

▶ Considerations for the year ahead

- Ability to support shelter flow

- ...

Establish a centralized rental housing locator (navigator): Plan Goals

▶ Expand navigation support and housing location services to expedite access to permanent housing.

– Working with shelter and other providers to assist clients in becoming 'document ready' for housing

– Developing working relations with owners of rental housing to expand the potential supply of housing available to program participants (consider establishing risk mitigation fund to support this)

– Assisting housing search including: Providing transportation to assist in looking at potential units; Assisting families in negotiating with landlords; Being familiar with HUD Housing Quality Standards (HQS) and doing a preliminary assessment of whether the unit will meet standards; Identifying housing that will allow students in the family to remain within the school system they were enrolled

Establish a centralized rental housing locator (navigator): Discussion

▶ Achievements

– Establishment of Housing Navigator Unit, which is not limited to people exiting the homeless system, but it is an important new service to work with landlords to increase the supply of affordable housing and provide choices for formerly homeless people

– …

▶ Considerations for the year ahead

– …

Expand and develop partnerships to pilot new programs and help with school responsibilities under ESSA: Plan Goals

- Ensure homeless liaisons in the educational system understand the process to access homeless services and school liaisons in the homeless system understand the process to access services through the educational system
- Seek to identify high need students/households at greatest risk for literal homelessness and prioritizing them through the Coordinated Entry System (CES) for prevention services
- Establish a plan to ensure data reliability and participation by all 43 school districts in the data warehouse.

Expand and develop partnerships to pilot new programs and help with school responsibilities under ESSA: Discussion

▶ Achievements

- Expansion of services and partnerships for transition aged youth experiencing/at risk of homelessness via the development of the Coordinated Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness and launch of new YHDP-funded projects.
- Act 1615 Tuition Waiver signed into law for Foster Card Youth
- ...

▶ Considerations for the year ahead

- Addressing the housing and social-emotional needs of young adults in the post-pandemic era
- Identifying mentors for the Foster Care youth who qualify for the tuition waiver
- Forum for Higher Education Administrators and Faculty for students expecting hunger and housing issues
- ...

Ensure that outreach resources are sufficient to cover the entirety of Allegheny County: Plan Goals

- ▶ In the absence of a sustained outreach effort, hard-to-engage homeless people will remain unsheltered and outside the system of care
- ▶ Outreach can be provided by multiple organizations and a key to effective outreach is coordination of services
- ▶ Use the Department of Human Services data warehouse to identify the highest cost users of multiple systems and prioritize eligible households for permanent supportive housing
- ▶ Expand efforts to coordinate with the health care, behavioral health, criminal justice and foster care systems to prevent discharges into homelessness

Ensure that outreach resources are sufficient to cover the entirety of Allegheny County: Discussion

▶ Achievements

- – Expansion of Field Unit
- – Implementation of Allegheny Housing Assessment (AHA)
- – Connection to clinical (behavioral health and physical) via telehealth
- – …

▶ Considerations for the year ahead

- – Creating a continuum of care for physical, behavioral health and substance use hand-offs
- – …

Develop a Communications Plan: Plan Goals

▶ Address the lack of understanding of the homeless services system in Allegheny County, how and where to access services and limited public awareness of success of efforts to date to prevent and end homelessness.

▶ HAB should explore strategies to remove the stigma associated with "homelessness"

▶ Develop a schedule for reporting back to the public on progress in implementing the plan

Develop a Communications Plan: Discussion

▶ Achievements
  – CoC webpage plan developed and initiated
  – …

▶ Considerations for the year ahead
  – Strengthening communication and growing a community of responder practices
  – …

Increase supply and access to affordable housing: Plan Goals

▶ Increase access to the existing housing stock

▶ Ensure access for homeless people in new affordable housing development

▶ Establish additional set -asides/preferences for people exiting homelessness in affordable housing developments

▶ Enhance coordination/cooperation with PHAs

▶ Address low -cost barriers to housing such as lack of funds for basic household furnishings, access to security and utility deposits, and application fees through the development of a flexible housing assistance fund

Increase supply and access to affordable housing: Discussion

▶ Achievements

– Continuation and expansion of voucher set asides

– Risk mitigation fund

– …

▶ Considerations for the year ahead

– Utilization of emergency vouchers

– End of eviction moratorium

– Launching Housing Mobility Demonstration Project

– …

What's missing?

What is key over the next year?

What comes next?

▶ Public Comment/Announcements

Next Meeting:
Tuesday, September 28, 2021
10:00am-12:00pm