

**Minutes of the
Homeless Continuum of Care of Stark County's
March 30, 2016 Central Intake and Assessment Committee**

Attendance. The following members of the Central Intake and Assessment Committee were present: Frank Aquino; Renee Biggums; Amy Dornack; Margaret Egbert; Amanda Fletcher; Denise Hollenbach; Jennifer Keaton; Natalie McCleskey; Teresa Ponchak; Shirene Starn Tapyrik; Sylvia Thomas; and Jean Van Ness.

Matters Covered. Jean Van Ness, chair of the Committee, called the meeting to order about 8 a.m. The meeting had been convened to discuss possible changes to be made to two documents: (1) the HCCSC's *Central Intake and Standardized Assessment Guide* (the Guide) and (2) the HCCSC's *Policies Governing Eligibility and Prioritization to Receive CoC Assistance and Standards* (the Eligibility and Prioritization Policies). For the most part, the changes discussed were intended to respond to questions raised and suggestions made by the HCCSC Quality Assurance groups. Matters covered included the following:

1. Finalization of Rules Regarding Allocation of Clients between RRH and TH. During a December 16 meeting of a subgroup of the committee, there had been discussion of possible changes to the Eligibility and Prioritization Policies to give TH first refusal on clients within a particular range of SPDAT scores who were also eligible for RRH. Jean asked those present at the December meeting about finalizing the changes they had considered then. The consensus was that it was not worthwhile to make any changes at this point because all the transitional housing left in the Continuum of Care would be phased out by the end of 2016.
2. Clarification of Policies for Prioritizing the Chronically Homeless. The committee reviewed the issue of whether persons who claim to be chronically homeless but have not been verified as such should be given priority over persons who are not chronically homeless. After some discussion, Theresa Ponchak made the following **MOTION**: For all categories of housing, the Hotline should put at the top of the prioritization list all persons who have been verified as chronically homeless in the order of their SPDAT scores and include all other persons on the list in order of their SPDAT scores. That motion was seconded by Amanda Fletcher and approved by a vote of all present with the exception of Margaret Egbert. Margaret voted "no" based on her view that use of the SPDAT resulted in illegal "stacking."

There was additional discussion about the fact that providers should be required to upload to HMIS documents they had collected to verify the chronically homeless status of prospective clients and that, based on those documents, the Hotline would make the final decision about who qualified as "chronically homeless."

There was also discussion about the propriety of removing from the prioritization list all information that identified the disabilities claimed by a client. Theresa Ponchak made a **MOTION** to remove all information identifying a disability from the prioritization list. Amanda Fletcher second the motion, and it passed by a unanimous vote of those present.

3. Elimination of the Homeless Certificate. There was a brief discussion about the pros and cons of continuing to issue Homeless Certificates. Committee members reported that, by and large, sites approved to issue these certificates favored eliminating it and, instead, having service providers who wanted to verify a prospective client's homelessness call the Hotline. Following this discussion, Denise Hollenbach made a **MOTION** to eliminate the Homeless Certificate. Natalie McCleskey seconded the motion, and it passed by unanimous vote of those present.
4. Transfers from One Housing Project to Another. There was a lengthy discussion about the circumstances in which clients might want to transfer from one permanent housing (PH) project to another as well as circumstances in which a PH provider might want to effect such a transfer. There appeared to be consensus in favor of a policy that would allow such transfers for defined reasons, including need for handicap accessibility, changes in household size, safety concerns, and need for better access to one's job or family. There also appeared to be consensus in favor of (a) an easy process that would enable providers to accomplish transfers quickly; (b) a process that requires providers to contact the Hotline before a transfer to see who has open units; and (c) a recommendation by Theresa Ponchak to requires that, before clients are transferred, their SPDATs must be redone. Jean agreed to develop a policy based on these principles and circulate it before the end of the day.
5. Emergency Shelter Policies. The committee discussed the following matters concerning shelters:
 - 10-Day Time-out Rule: Committee members discussed the circumstances under which shelters could exercise their discretion to expel or refuse to take a person for a 10-day "time-out" period. There appeared to be consensus that this rule was a valuable way to impress upon clients and prospective clients that they must follow shelter rules and that they should not be laying claim to shelter beds/units that they are not occupying and thereby preventing shelters from making use of their full capacity. Members cited the following circumstances in which shelters would have cause to impose a 10-day time out: (i) after referral to a shelter, a client fails to appear at the shelter for admission; (ii) after admission to shelter, a client fails to make use of the shelter bed/unit for one or more nights; (iii) when clients are aggressive or violent. Members appeared to agree, however, that such circumstances did not justify permanent exclusion from a shelter. Nor did it justify the refusal of other shelters in the Continuum to consider admitting an individual while he is subject to a time-out at another shelter. Jean will develop a policy that incorporates these ideas for review at the committee's next meeting

In the context of this discussion, members raised what they identified as a "bigger community problem," namely, that shelters cannot identify the case managers of clients who are connected to the mental health and addiction recovery system and that those case managers are not visiting their clients in shelters. There appeared to be consensus that, given rapid turnover among case managers, quarterly housing trainings should be scheduled to impress upon new case managers the importance of making contact with clients' housing/shelter providers. Members also discussed the possibility that such training

could be incorporated in the more comprehensive training that case managers receive when they are hired by a mental health or addiction recovery agency.

- The Application of Housing First Principles to Shelters: During a brief discussion of the applicability of Housing First principles to shelter admissions and termination, there appeared to be consensus that, strictly speaking, these principles did not apply to shelters. However, members agreed that shelters should document their reasons for declining to admit and terminating a client.
 - The 90-Day Rule: There was consensus among those present that the general rule for exiting clients from shelters within 90 days should remain in effect.
6. Eligibility for Basic Accommodations. During a brief discussion of the eligibility rules for the Continuum's only safe haven, Basic Accommodations, there was consensus that the provider should be prioritizing those with the high SPDAT scores first and, between clients with equal SPDAT scores, giving preference to those who are verified as chronically homeless. Jean will amend current policies accordingly.
 7. Trainings. The Committee discuss the Continuum Board's concern about making training available to providers on all new policies and procedures. After some discussion, there appeared to be consensus that Hotline staff and others, as appropriate, should (i) provide training in segments – perhaps on a monthly basis; (ii) develop Powerpoint presentations and Frequently Asked Questions in connection with each of these trainings; and (iii) make the presentations and FAQs available online.
 8. Future Meetings of the Committee. Members agreed that, for the duration of the year, the committee should meet monthly on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 8 a.m.

At this point, the meeting was adjourned.