



Homeless Continuum of Care of Stark County

No one should experience homelessness. No one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.

HOMELESS CONTINUUM OF CARE OF STARK COUNTY

Members' Meeting

December 14, 2015

Held at

Main Branch, Stark County Library

In Attendance

Please see attached sheet for members and guests in attendance.

Call to Order

Jean Van Ness, Chair of the HCCSC, called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m. and welcomed everyone. Jean apologized for postponing the November members' meeting and explained that the CoC Application was due just days prior to the originally scheduled meeting date.

I. Approval of Minutes

Motion: Cathy Jennings moved and Mike Cody seconded approval of the minutes from the July 2015 members' meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Vote on New HCCSC Board Members

Jean briefly explained the HCCSC Charter's provisions governing the development of a slate of candidates for the HCCSC Board and presented the following nominations for the six open Board seats:

Three current Board members were recommended for re-election:

Maria Heege – CEO for United Way of Greater Stark County

Lisa Miller – Director of Development for City of Canton

Kelly Perry – Homeless Liaison for Canton City Schools

Three new Board members are being recommended:

Dr. Kellie Johnson – Director of Access Health Stark County

Kimberly Kroh – Director for Stark & Muskingum Lakes Chapter of American Red Cross

Bruce Lawver – Chief of Police for Canton City Police Department

Motion: Lynne Dragomier moved and Msgr. Lewis Gaetano seconded approval of the slate of candidates for election to the Board. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Changes to Governance Charter

Jean explained the following charter revisions being recommended by the HCCSC Board.

Membership - Members will be asked to commit to attending at least two of the three annual members' meetings. This revision reflects HUD's expectation that Continuum of Care (CoC) members should be actively, not just nominally, involved.

Recipient Approval & Evaluation Committee - The proposed charter revisions spell out in more detail factors that the committee will use in scoring and ranking projects applying for CoC and ESG funds.

HMIS - With the adoption of new software by our Homeless Management Information System, the name of our HMIS software must be changed in the charter.

Removal of Treasurer - Details will be discussed more during the later discussion on future plans for the CoC. Board determined this officer position is unnecessary for the HCCSC Board as the HCCSC does not receive any funds directly.

Motion: Shirene Starn-Tapyrik moved and Renee Biggums seconded the Board-recommended charter revisions as proposed. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. 2015 CoC Collaborative Application

Natalie highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the HCCSC's 2015 CoC Application. In this application, HUD focused considerable attention on communities' timelines and plans for ending homelessness (2015 for ending veteran homelessness, 2017 for ending chronic homelessness and 2020 for ending family and youth homelessness). In addition, it signaled its interest in ensuring that communities were:

- Considering and implementing strategic reallocations of resources
- Assessing needs and project performance
- Making data-driven decisions
- Using all available resources and partnerships

Natalie shared that, while we have a way to go, we have come a long way. Weaknesses noted included:

- Partnerships – Key partnerships in addressing human trafficking have been missing. However, we have been taking steps to repair this gap by recruiting people to the Board who can serve as liaisons to the groups that are working most actively on human trafficking problems.
- CoC Application Process – It seems evident that we can and should do a better job in informing the public about the application, scoring, and ranking processes; soliciting

their feedback on these processes; and inviting new applications for available funds. Various efforts will be made next year to do that.

- Performance Outcomes as a System – While HUD did not request specific data on most of the performance measures it has adopted, the application did require CoCs to explain the progress they are making in tracking these system-wide performance measures. This must be an increasing area of focus for us.
- PIT Numbers – While the overall number of literally homeless persons went down by 59 persons, the unsheltered count went up by 22.
- System-wide Exits to Permanent Housing - To obtain the maximum points offered for system-wide success in exiting clients from our programs into permanent housing, we needed 80%, but received a score of only 74%.

Strengths noted included:

- Positive Changes in Homeless Counts –
 - Since the 2014 PIT Count, we have reduced chronic homelessness by 20%.
 - Since January 2015, we have reduced homelessness among families with children by 61%.
 - Between the 2013 PIT Count and the 2015 count, we reduced homelessness among transitional age youth from 41 to 23.
- Retention Rates - System-wide, we had a 93% retention rate for persons staying in permanent supportive housing or exiting to other permanent housing.
- Partnerships - Collaborations have been increasing, and the CoC now benefits from a wide range of partnerships.
- Active Involvement of Mental Health & Recovery Services Board (MHR SB) - MHR SB has responded to the need to plan housing and services for people being discharged from mental health and substance abuse programs and is much more actively involved with the CoC than mental health boards in other areas.
- Centralized Intake & Assessment (CI&A) Policies and Procedures – Many communities are still in the planning stages for CI&A or just beginning implementation of CI&A systems. We began CI&A for shelters last September 2014 and for housing projects in January 2015. Strengths of our CI&A system include:
 - Active communication among housing providers, the Homeless Hotline and PATH outreach staff at ICAN
 - Dedicated providers willing to move beyond preoccupation with their own programs to think in terms of what is good for the homeless system as a whole
 - The creation of one central waiting list, which eliminates the need for clients to contact and deal with multiple providers in order to secure housing
 - Adoption of research-based assessment tool that allows us to prioritize the clients with the greatest needs and link all clients to the programs that best suit their needs.
- New Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), There is new PSH in the pipeline as a result of our reallocation of CoC funds, our access to new funds through the Ohio Housing

Finance Agency's (OHFA) Capital Funding to End Homelessness Initiative (CFEHI), and MHRSB initiatives.

Our priorities in 2016 will include:

- Reexamining our need for additional PSH as we surpass our goal (established in 2014) of establishing 45 new PSH units.
- Identifying how we can improve supportive services for PSH clients and raise the funding needed to subsidize those services. (Corporation for Supportive Housing is assisting with further training and guidance in accessing possible resources.)
- Continuing to implement and refine the many new policies and procedures established over the last year.

V. Progress on Ending Homelessness among Veterans

Lisa Waikem reported that she has been maintaining a master list of homeless veterans developed in partnership with the Veterans Administration and the Veterans Service Commission. As of December 14, there were 3 veterans waiting for rapid rehousing and 11 waiting for permanent supportive housing. The Hotline and the VA's Community Resource and Referral Center in Akron are referring veterans to one another to assist with prompt access to all eligible resources. Unfortunately, since last month, they have seen an increase in the number homeless veterans.

Natalie reported that, with the recommendation of the HCCSC, the City of Canton awarded 2015 Emergency Solution Grant funds to create a small rapid rehousing project targeting veterans. She also noted that, on December 3rd, HUD had issued benchmarks to determine when a community has officially ended veteran homelessness.

In response to a question from a member, Natalie noted that programs for homeless veterans sponsored by the Veterans Administration (VA) and the Veterans Service Commission (VSC) have different eligibility requirements and that less-than-honorable discharge may affect the eligibility of veterans for these programs. By contrast, discharge status does not affect eligibility for CoC-funded programs serving veterans.

VI. New Definition of Chronic Homelessness

Natalie reported that HUD has issued a final definition of "chronic homelessness" (CH). She explained that, to be considered "chronically homeless" an individual or head of household must have a disability of possibly life-long duration that impedes their ability to maintain housing, and they must have experienced literal homelessness for 12 months consecutively or during 4 different episodes within the past 3 years.

The new and final rule adds the following clarifications:

- The 4 episodes must total 12 months of literal homelessness.
- A period of at least 7 days during which a person is housed in either a permanent or temporary housing will constitute a break in homelessness.

- If a person was literally homeless before entering an institution and was released in less than 90 days, the time spent in the institution does not constitute a break in homelessness.

VII. Plans for Future Management of HCCSC and Need for New Strategic Plan

Jean shared information about the HCCSC's First Annual Report and the September 10th Housing Summit where that report was released. She explained that the summit was held to raise awareness among community leaders about the role of the HCCSC and the need for ongoing support of the HCCSC's operating expenses, including the expense of maintaining a full-time staff. Jean also discussed the HCCSC's need to identify a more permanent management structure that will enable it to fulfil its HUD-mandated responsibilities. Among other things, she reported that

- In many communities, a unit of local government manages the local CoC.
- To date, our local municipal and county leaders have not stepped up to assume responsibility for the future management of Stark County's CoC.
- In communities where no political subdivision is managing the CoC, it is common for a 501(c)(3) organization ("a backbone organization") to assume those management responsibilities. Kevin Finn, CEO of the organization managing the Cincinnati/Hamilton County CoC, was one of the presenters at the summit in September. Among other things, he explained how his organization has been able to diversify and maximize funding for the county's homeless programs.
- Those who attended the summit appeared to respond favorably to the idea of creating a backbone organization to manage Stark County's CoC, and the HCCSC Board is moving forward with plans for filing articles of incorporation for such an organization.
- Before taking final steps to establish a backbone organization and hire staff, we must identify reliable sources of ongoing funding for that organization from public and private sources.
- If we cannot secure sources of ongoing funding for the backbone organization, our only option will be to merge our local CoC into the Balance of State CoC, which would result in loss of local control over funding allocations.
- In the hope that the CoC will be able to secure other sources of funding for the backbone organization and its staff, the HCCSC will be presenting to The Sisters of Charity Foundation a request for temporary funding to support the employment of an HCCSC executive director. Until the backbone organization secures recognition of its charitable status from the IRS, Goodwill will serve as the executive director's employer. A job description is being created and will be posted.

Given the regulatory changes that have taken place since our current 10-year strategic plan was adopted by the HCCSC's predecessor organization in 2010, the HCCSC desperately needs a new strategic plan. However, the Board has decided to wait until an executive director is hired before launching a comprehensive strategic planning initiative. In the

meantime, it will be developing a work plan for 2016. Among other things, that plan will focus on increasing Medicaid enrollments and employment opportunities.

At Jean's request, Mike Cody, Director of Assets for the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority (SMHA) and an HCCSC Board member, reported briefly on SMHA's interest in developing housing for citizens reentering the community after their discharge from correctional institutions.

VIII. Other Updates

Carla Wright of ICAN Housing provided an update on the PIT Count plans for January 2016. She reported that plans are underway to improve the accuracy of the count by employing new methods to target subpopulations of homeless and expand the street count to include Alliance and Massillon.

Following a question on shelter overflow, Jean shared that Refuge of Hope always operates a winter overflow for men and will also be offering women's overflow shelter through the 2015-16 winter months. Alliance for Children and Families will be also have additional shelter beds available soon, some temporary, overflow beds and some permanent.

Matt Hudak gave an update on the HMIS progress with the new software, which was a huge undertaking and a great accomplishment. HMIS staff members are documenting and vetting remaining software issues and tracking progress in solving them through weekly meetings.

Answering a question about whether CoC funding opportunities would be available to new agencies in the future, Jean noted that such opportunities would be available. However, she cautioned that there are restrictions on the types of agencies and programs that can be considered as likely candidates for this funding in any given year since CoCs are responsible for (1) identifying what types of projects are needed to fill gaps in the system and (2) honoring HUD funding preferences as outlined in its Notice of Funding Availability. In addition, she noted that HUD regulations are very complex, which makes it extremely difficult for agencies that lack experience administering federal grants to compete successfully for CoC funds.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:40pm.