

**Minutes of the
Homeless Continuum of Care of Stark County's
October 26, 2016 Central Intake and Assessment Committee Meeting**

Attendance. The following members of the Central Intake and Assessment Committee attended the meeting: Frank Aquino; Amy Dornack; Margaret Egbert; Amanda Fletcher; Jack French; Denise Hollenbach; Jennifer Keaton; Tracey Lane; Teresa Ponchak; Shirene Starn Tapyrik; Sylvia Thomas; Lisa Waikem; and Jean Van Ness. Also, CommQuest employees Tiffany Williams and Celeste Barnes attended part of the meeting to discuss temporary changes to eligibility requirements for prevention services.

Approval of Minutes. Jean opened the meeting shortly after 8 a.m. and requested a motion to approve the minutes of the Committee's September 28 meeting. Jennifer made the motion, Shirene seconded it, and the minutes were approved as written by a unanimous vote of those present.

Renewal of Discussion of Changes to be Made to Central Intake Guide Regarding Verification of Disability and Homeless Status. Jean shared with the Committee her confusion about what changes should be made to the Central Intake Guide in light of the decision made by the Committee in September to discontinue use of an independent agency to verify homeless status and disabilities for people on the central prioritization list before they were referred to shelter or housing providers. The Committee reviewed how central intake and prioritization procedures would work after this change, and Jean indicated that she would change the written procedures accordingly and submit them for Committee review at its next meeting.

During the course of this discussion, Teresa asked about closing the Hotline for 4 hours every quarter – probably on Friday afternoon to provide time for staff training. Committee members agreed that this was a good idea and recommended:

- That the Hotline notify providers when dates and times for shutdown were determined and post this information on the CoC website, and
- That providers be encouraged to conduct staff training at the same times.

Teresa also mentioned that, in the future, the Crisis Center will be taking names and phone numbers for persons who call the Hotline, not just asking them to call back.

Disability Verification Form: In September, the Committee had agreed that the CoC needed to follow up with Anthony Forte to discuss concerns he had about the verification of disability form we are using. Natalie did so, and Jean sent to Committee members before the meeting the form from Trumbull County that Anthony had forwarded as a model.

Margaret indicated that use of this form would violate the Americans with Disabilities Act and HUD's Fair Housing rules, and others agreed. There was a consensus that Natalie should have another conversation with Anthony and ask him about these specific concerns.

In the meantime though, the Committee agreed that changes should be made to the form to include a space for the signatory to state his profession and provide information about professional licenses.

Motion. Shirene moved that these changes be made; Lisa seconded the motion; and the motion passed by a unanimous vote of those present.

Jean will ask Natalie to make these changes.

Documentation of Chronic Homelessness. At their September meeting, Committee members also discussed the need for technical assistance on how to document chronic homelessness. Although Jean had asked Natalie to pursue this also, she had not done so yet. However, Beth Pearson had promised that she or Natalie would follow up with Anthony within the next week.

Prevention Services. Tiffany Williams and Celeste Barnes joined the meeting at this point to request temporary modification of the rules governing provision of prevention services. They explained that they are nearing the end of the period for spending their latest Homeless Crisis Response Program (HCRP) funding from Stark County and have enough funding left to serve about eight more families. However, they have been receiving no referrals of families living in the county that meet the CoC's eligibility criteria for prevention services. Accordingly, they requested that the eligibility criteria be relaxed temporarily to permit prevention services for families that were just one month behind in rental payments rather than a minimum of 2 months in arrears. During the brief discussion that ensued, Teresa assured the group that the Hotline would be able to refer to prevention services at least eight families that met this looser criterion.

Motion. Shirene moved that the CoC's rule restricting eligibility for prevention services to those who were at least 2 months behind on their rent be relaxed to allow the delivery of services to those who were at least 1 month behind until current HCRP funding has been expended. Amanda seconded that motion, and it passed by a unanimous vote of those present.

Thereafter, there was a discussion about widespread problems with affordable rental housing in the county. Celeste described some of the structural problems she was seeing and indicated that she has been writing letters to landlords whose properties are unfit for habitation. Margaret suggested that she and others who were checking out properties for clients upload photos and information about substandard properties into HMIS. There was consensus among Committee members that this was a good idea.

Discussion of RRH Needs. Amanda and Tracey reported that they would be meeting immediately after the Committee meeting to discuss coordination of standards for RRH and determine what, if any, help the CoC needed from a consultant in developing first-rate RRH services.

A question was raised about the YWCA's practice of closing RRH cases if clients cannot find housing within 30 days. Tracey explained that clients are given extensions if they demonstrate due diligence in pursuing housing. However, she noted that many clients never even show up for appointments and make no visible effort to find housing.

Committee members expressed some concern about the negative outcomes resulting from this practice – both for shelters and rapid re-housing. They asked that Amanda and Tracey discuss this practice and explore alternatives.

Adjournment. At this point, the time allotted for the meeting was spent, and Jean adjourned the meeting