

## **Family Services Committee Meeting Minutes - October 13, 2012**

*In attendance: Barbara Agosto, New England Farm Workers Council, Melissa Blissett, Square One, Lynneanne Brown, Elizabeth Freeman Center, Anthia Elliott, BHN, Waleska Estrada, New England Farm Workers Council, Jen Dieringer, Community Legal Aid, Cheryl Gingras, Community Action, Rosemary Fiedler, Holyoke Community College, Jill Fijal, Chicopee Public Schools, Brenda Garcia, FIT program/BHN, Hwei-Ling Greeney, Amherst Community Connections, Cheryl LaChance, Way Finders, Fran LeMay, ServiceNet, Jane Lindfors, DTA DV Unit, Matt Montanaro, ServiceNet, Donna Nadeau, DHCD, Ana Rodriguez, Care Center, Ehra Rodriguez, WomanShelter, Brett Rogers, HCS Head Start, Jasmin Rojas, Way Finders, Heather Roy, Elizabeth Freeman Center, Stacy Parsons, DESE McKinney-Vento Regional Liaison/School-Housing Partnership Coordinator, Pamela Schwartz, Network, Anthony Thomas, Springfield Partners, Rachel Trant, DCF, Amanda Watson, Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority*

**Family shelter data review:** see attached. The group is still looking for the number of families who entered shelter in a given month (not just applied). Pamela will follow-up with DHCD.

**End of Eviction Moratorium on 10/17:** Pamela updated the group about the imminent end of the eviction moratorium on October 17 and [the Governor's proposal](#) to provide an increase in RAFT funding, HomeBASE funding and access to legal counsel. The Network's position on this proposal, in conjunction with statewide advocacy partners, is that while it is a good first step, it is not nearly comprehensive enough to address the eviction crisis facing tens of thousands of tenants. The Network is advocating for passage of the [Guaranteed Housing Stability Act](#). Pamela encouraged everyone to get connected to this effort via the Network blog - subscribe at <http://westernmasshousingfirst.org>. For more info (and access to English and Spanish web pages) on the Governor's plan, go [here](#). To see next advocacy steps on the Housing Stability Act, go [here](#).

### **Program updates and discussion points:**

- Franklin County Regional Housing and Way Finders: RAFT and ERMA funding is available. Please see each agency's website for how to access.
- NEFWC: received DHCD funding to purchase material to enhance remote learning for children in households (e.g., headsets!)
- [The Gray House](#): a possible resource for school tutors - based in Springfield - could be a good resource for families with children in multiple grades in the same house, balancing remote learning at the same time
- Employment services: Way Finders is launching an online cohort for employment support. Contact Jasmin Rojas for more info, [vrojas@wayfinders.org](mailto:vrojas@wayfinders.org).
- Access to cell phones: it was noted in the discussion that lack of a cell phone creates a critical barrier to services (e.g. obtaining SNAP benefits requires a phone interview). Assurance or Lifeline is the entity that provides a free phone

to those who are eligible but the application process is very challenging (e.g., people from the same address such as a homeless shelter cannot get a phone or people with a PO Box cannot get a phone). Is there something we can do about this? Pamela will put this on the next meeting's agenda to discuss further.

**Next meeting date: Tuesday, November 10, 11 am**