

Youth and Young Adult Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 10/28/20

In attendance: Rosemary Fieldler, HCC, Leslie Garcia, Springfield YAB, Leslie Garcia, Springfield YAB, Lisa Goldsmith, Community Action PV, Jake Hogue, BCRHA, Amanda Koch, BCRHA, Jill Fijal, Chicopee Schools, Lizzy Ortiz, City of Springfield, Stacy Parsons, McKinney Vento liaison and North Berkshire Schools, Kim Puffer, Domus, Inc., Jean Rogers, CHD, Jennifer Sunderland, Springfield Schools, Tyrese Tillman, CHD

Franklin County Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP):

- Projects are progressing - Gandara is looking at some properties and is in process of hiring staff; Mental Health Assoc. has hired Israel Ortiz to oversee projects in Hampden and Franklin Counties; DIAL/SELF is already set up to move forward, beginning staff search
- Meeting monthly with Youth CoC Committee - discussion of continuous quality improvement - will get into expectations around projects, goals, measures.
- Youth and Young Adult coordinated entry meetings are underway, planning for a comprehensive youth coordinated entry system

Hampden County YHDP:

- Project start-up - coordinated entry and navigation project up and running - CHD and Gandara are sharing it - Gandara staffed up; CHD almost fully staff - inaugurating single phone number to call for assistance; Joint TH/RRH - Gandara project - has started up; CHD with larger 30 unit RRH project - in process of hiring and looking for units; MHA PSH project - in process of hiring and looking for units. Hiring process is challenging - taking longer than anticipated.
- Held formal launch of the program yesterday with close to 100 attendees and media present. A success!
- Working on training and performance measures and using TA for policies and procedures.
- Case-conferencing is taking place every 2 weeks. 7 youth were re-housed in the last 1.5 months. This collaboration has had other ancillary positive effects as it is creating pathways to openings in non-YHDP programs.

Education/Youth Homelessness Forum Nov 12, 11 am - 12:30 pm: This session will focus on best practices and resources for identifying youth and young adults experiencing homelessness, and on sharing information about Hampden County's new youth-focused coordinated entry system. Springfield/Hampden County will share their new coordinated entry phone # and resources for referring young people in need of housing and other supports We'll also be joined by young people with lived experience of homelessness as they share their perspective on do's and don't's for identifying young people experiencing homelessness and discussing their needs with them. While

the resource exchange will be focused on Hampden County, Three County CoC members are welcome to attend.

Registration: <https://uncg.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlodu6tqT4vHdOiLiXzsWRDhaTypBl6sG7p>

Foster to Youth Independence (FYI) program updates:

City of Springfield is connecting with Springfield Housing Authority around using these vouchers (called Tenant Protection Vouchers - allocated through HUD to house youth and young adults who are or have been foster care involved). It involves a relationship between DCF and a local housing authority (MOU between the former two re: services to be provided by the HA). One new variable has come to light: receipt of the voucher means young people lose the Young Adult Support Payment (YASP) provided through DCF. It's important to make young people aware of this. This is one explanation for the slow rate of referrals in the Berkshires (Stockbridge HA is the one HA where this is underway) - because DCF is waiting until they believe the young person is ready to no longer receive these payments. The voucher has a 3 year term so the timeline to "independence" is also relevant. In the Berkshires, there are 3 young adults in the "pipeline" and 1 in housing search right now.

Discussed the complexity of relying on DCF for referrals since it leaves out the young people who may have been foster care involved but are no longer connected - people who may need this resource the most. One way to address this is to incorporate the foster care question into the Coordinated Entry assessment tool.

US Interagency Council on Homelessness' new strategic plan: it was noted that the revised version of this plan contravenes basic Housing First principles and is opposed by all the leading national homelessness organizations. [See here](#) for more information.

Training:

Gerry updated the group on two different training events Hampden County is planning, to be facilitated by consultant Matt Aronson:

- short-term, immediate training for new staff that will focus on problem-solving protocol. This will be offered in the next couple of weeks in 2 2-hour sessions.
- Training Institute: this will be a kind of "community learning" as a year long series for ongoing staff (not new), including a series of sessions on a broad range of topics (e.g., adultism, working with youth, Housing First, Trauma Informed Care, etc.) - alternating one month, 4 2-hour sessions, other month 2 hours of peers working together. This is a model that has been piloted in other parts of the country. Three County members are welcome to participate with a full commitment to the whole series.

The National Runaway and Homeless Youth Training will be happening virtually November 17th-19th and there will be no cost for attending.

[Here is the link](#) to get more information and to register:

Racial Equity Work: The Three County CoC is continuing its work on racial equity and will be releasing a final action plan shortly and will soon turn to particular focus on youth and young adults. The Hampden County CoC began with its focus on YYA and will now be moving towards a comprehensive plan.

Eviction Moratorium next steps: With the ending of the eviction moratorium on October 17, evictions are now permissible. The Governor's Eviction Diversion Initiative allocates additional funds to RAFT and will create access to lawyers and case managers but that will take start-up time. The Network is continuing to advocate for passage of the Guaranteed Housing Stability Bill - please [subscribe to the blog](#) to get in the action loop. Lizzy also pointed out that for Hampden/Hampshire Counties' access to RAFT, Way Finders' online application can be glitchy and encouraged use of the paper application - please see attached.