

Hampden County Individual Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 4/20/21

In attendance: Farida Bature, Mercy Medical - Health Care for the Homeless, Bevely Camacho, Catholic Charities, Lynn Conway, Eliot CHS-Homeless Services, Aneilys Cruz, FOH/CSO, Alyssa Golden, Community Legal Aid, Dave Havens, Mental Health Association, Janice Humason, Friends of the Homeless, Mark Jachym, FOH/CSO, Nichole King, FOH/CSO, Jay Levy, Eliot CHS Homeless Services, Jen Lucca, Samaratin Inn, Gerry McCafferty, City of Springfield/Hampden CoC, Marisabel Perez, CHD, Keith Rhone, FOH/CSO, Denise Rivera-Nunez, FOH/CSO, David Rodriguez, Viability, Pamela Schwartz, Network, Rosemary Surdyka, Mercy Medical, Healthcare for the Homeless, Stephanie Tonelli, City of Springfield, Kathy West, Eliot CHS-Homeless Services, Delphine Wray, FOH/CSO, Chris Zabik, DMH

Presentation by Alyssa Golden, Staff Attorney, Community Legal Aid on CORI sealing and expungement

Alyssa offered a brief overview of legal services available regarding CORI sealing and expungement as it relates to housing. Legal representation is available to receive counsel on CORIs - what can be sealed or expunged and what is required to be disclosed or not - and to those who have been denied public or subsidized housing due to a criminal record. Other information included:

- Bases for appeal include reasonable accommodation, e.g., the criminal record stemmed from a disability and therefore must be overlooked as part of the reasonable accommodation requirement.
- Another basis is "disparate impact theory" - because criminal records happen disproportionately to people of color, they must be examined under the discrimination lens and housing denial would be furthering discrimination.
- Another approach is mitigation, e.g., to look at the circumstances surrounding the record alongside more holistic information about the person, limiting the impact of that record in a housing application.
- Representation is also available to contest terminations from housing due to a criminal or substance use incident.
- Representation is also available for sealing and expunging CORIs. It is vital to understand what is on your CORI to confirm if it's accurate, and to understand what a person is required to disclose vs. NOT required to disclose. Alyssa can provide counsel on options for sealing and expungement.
- Re: seeking change in Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB) classifications: the individual must file the initial paperwork but legal assistance is possible available after that filing
- Contact Alyssa Golden with any questions - agolden@cla-ma.org - she is readily available for consultation and possible referrals

Hotels Discussion: Pamela clarified the DHCD policy re: hotels. DHCD made clear that "no one will be or should be discharged to the streets." They are prepared to work with providers to

ensure safety for all individuals, with everyone's shared goal of a move out to permanent housing or if necessary a move to alternative congregate shelter. If a person is requesting shelter now, a provider should reach out to DHCD to discuss new entries into hotels - this is an option if necessary.

The group then discussed extensively the challenges posed by evaluating requests for hotel shelter vs. congregate shelter. The group confirmed the policy that hotels are only intended for people who are unable to stay at a congregate site due to mental health or medical issues. Currently, there is shelter capacity at Friends of the Homeless. This complicated vetting and policy-setting will continue.

Point in Time Count 2021: Gerry shared this draft information on the [Point in Time Count 2021](#). The group discussed the decline this year as compared to last (but a slight rise compared to 2 years previous) - hard to decipher in relation to covid (the reduction in the unsheltered population this year makes sense in view of the new hotel capacity). We will continue to consider and discuss.

FY22 House Ways and Means Budget: Pamela shared the Network's priorities in relation to the House Ways and Means Budget released last week (see a comparison [here](#)). She also shared the Network's [priority amendments](#) that are being considered by legislators this week for co-sponsorship. House debate on the budget begins next week.

Network's Annual Gathering - June 4 - Please join! [See the flyer and registration link here.](#)

Next meeting date: Tuesday, May 18, 1 pm – 2 pm