

Family Services Committee Meeting Minutes - June 8, 2021

In attendance: Barbara Agosto, NEFWC, Ellen Broadhurst, West Springfield Public Schools, Sophie Chambers, Community Legal Aid, Natalie Charneco, New North Citizens Council, L Cisero, Square One, Tamicha Colon, Alianza, Hillary Cronin, HUD-VASH, Anthia Elliott, BHN, Brenda Garcia, Project FIT, BHN, Paula Kularski, Behavioral Health Network, Fran LeMay, Greenfield Family Inn/ServiceNet, Jane Lindfors, DTA DV unit, Becky Lockwood, Salasin Project, Luis Martinez, CHD, Yeisie Mateo, DCF, Donna Nadeau, DHCD, Monique Osbourne, YWCA, Stacy Parsons, North Adams Schools homelessness liaison/Western MA DESE liaison, Steve Plummer, Springfield Partners, Brett Rogers, HSC Head Start, Jasmin Rojas, Way Finders, Jessica Sastre, NEFWC, Brianna St. Peter, Head Start, Anthony Thomas, Springfield Partners for Community Action, Esermalda Vazquez, Behavioral Health Network

Emergency Assistance Data Review - May 2021 - [Click here](#). Notable decline in families entering EA over the last 2 months. Theorizing this is a result of the new prevention resources being made available. They are making an impact in preventing new homelessness!

Eviction Protections Needed: With the Governor's lifting of the state of emergency on June 15, certain eviction protections (Chapter 257) will no longer be in effect unless the legislature passes an extension. Note what follows is an update since this meeting was held: The Senate voted on 6/10 to adopt an extension of Chapter 257 laws. This is good news, although the Network is disappointed that 2 amendments were not adopted (extending the CDC moratorium in MA; and closing a loophole that made it easier for landlords to still seek eviction for non-payment of rent). The Senate bill now goes to the House for consideration. Please stay connected by [subscribing to the Network blog](#).

Network Annual Event on June 4: Thanks to all 226 people who joined! It was moving and informative and you don't have to miss it! [Go here](#) to get to video highlights and the slide presentation.

RAFT/ERAP Updates: Way Finders reported it is averaging roughly 500 applications/week - distributing \$1.5-\$2 million in rental assistance each week; turn-around time is about 4 weeks or less if utility shut-offs or other emergencies are happening. Utility shut-offs are spiking (6-8/day!) and more are expected as National Grid is sending out shut-off notices. There are the resources to respond, however, so the key is making sure people are aware that this assistance is available.

Federal Resources Update: Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) will be coming to our communities in the next month. Certain local housing authorities have accepted vouchers (Springfield, Holyoke, Northampton, Greenfield, Franklin County) and DHCD is also getting close to 900 vouchers that will be distributed in coordination with the CoCs and administered by the regional administering agency (Way Finders, Franklin County Regional Housing and Berkshire Housing). They will be targeted to people who are homeless, at-risk of homeless, who suffered domestic violence or for "move on" (people in permanent supportive housing who are ready to move into other housing). They come with flexible dollars for additional costs such as

moving or furniture costs and also allow for landlord incentives. There is also flexibility around allowable rent levels. VERY exciting resource - please stay tuned for more information soon!

Domestic Violence/Housing Project: The two CoC's are working with the National Association for Safe Housing (NASH) to help bridge the gap between domestic violence providers and our housing systems. There is an initial convening this Friday, 6/11. Please contact Pamela if interested in participating.

FY22 State Budget update: The State Budget has now moved onto Conference Committee where the Senate and House versions will be reconciled. Please stay tuned for for action alerts via the blog.

Next meeting date: due to a conflict for Pamela on our usual meeting date of the 2nd Tuesday (7/12), we agreed to meet in July on **Monday, July 11 at 11 am**. If you would like to get on the calendar invite list, please email Pamela at pschwartz@wesernmasshousingfirst.org