

Family Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 5/24/22

In attendance: Barbara Agosto, New England Farm Workers, Sophie Chambers, Community Legal Aid, Jennifer Dieringer, Community Legal Aid, Brenda Garcia, BHN, Rolando Garro, Josceelyn Gonzalez, New North Citizen Council, Danielle Hartner, CHD, Erin Hartwiger, Elizabeth Freeman Center, Cheryl LaChance, Way Finders, Matt Montanaro, ServiceNet, Theresa Nicholson, Center for Human Development, Stacy Parsons, North Berkshire School Housing Partnership/DESE regional liaison, Omayra Quinones, Salasin Project, Sarah Rivera, NNCC, Brett Rogers, HCS Headstart, Heather Roy, DTA-DV unit, Jessica Sastre, NEFWC, Sonya Sadoway, Elizabeth Freeman Center, Pamela Schwartz, Network, Janette Vigo, Way Finders

Shelter Updates

CHD: uptick in census - 80-85% at capacity; seeing an increase in COVID cases (5 positives among families and some staff); also seeing a movement in housing placements.

Way Finders: also seeing an uptick in referrals; seeing increase in covid positives in families and staff; also seeing some more housing placements. Still facing challenges using vouchers - too few rentals, too high rent. Also DV BSAS referrals are coming in more frequently - getting support via HomeBASE.

New England Farm Workers: no new covid cases in last 3-4 weeks. All available units are occupied. Placements are variable - large families are more challenging to house.

Valley Opportunity Council: uptick in covid cases - seeing high in-flow of families with DV

Rental assistance:

Way Finders report for Hampden/Hampshire Counties: In April: assisted over 4,400 households with \$8.6 million. Year to date assisted over 15,000 households with \$7 million. Wrapping up ERAP applications (ended on 4/15), down to 54 ERAP applications. In terms of RAFT applications as of 4/16, about 1,200 applications to date. Averaging about 90 applications/day. Still at about a 3 week processing time. Seeing homeowners who are not eligible for HAF and over-income for fuel assistance. RAFT denials are happening with maxed out due to end of ERAP and more restrictions (RAFT capped at \$7,000; no more than one month stipend - ERAP had no cap and could provide up to 3 months).

FY23 Budget Update: The budget is currently being debated by the Senate. We are advocating for key amendments. Go [here](#) to see the summary.

Announcement: HCS Head Start is enrolling for the fall! Homeless children automatically qualify for at least a part day classroom. Please call 413-417-7779 or you can go to our website at www.hcsheadstart.org.

Next meeting date: Tuesday July 12 11 am