

Family Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 7/12/22

In attendance: Ateinna Alicea, DCF, Melissa Blisset, Square One, Ellen Broadhurst, social worker, Mayra De Jesus, Shriners Hospital, Jen Dieringer, Community Legal Aid, Ruth Flores, CHD, Brenda Garcia, BHN, Josceelyn Gonzalez, New North Citizens Council, Lynn Guertin, BHN, Ragida Haynes, Ware Family Resource Center, Cheryl LaChance, Way Finders, Michele LaFleur, Three County CoC, Dora Lambertus, BHN, Niki LaValley, New England Farm Workers Council, Gerry McCafferty, Hampden CoC/City of Springfield, Matt Montanaro, Greenfield Family Inn, Theresa Nicholson, Center for Human Development, Stacy Parsons, North Berkshire School Housing Partnership/DESE McKinney Vento Regional Liaison, Dorothy Prieto, Head Start, Omayra Quinones, Salasin Project, Jen Ramos, Christina's House, Heather Roy, DTA, Xiomara Sanabria, Valley Opportunity Council, Jen Santos, Way Finders, Pamela Schwartz, Network, Jessica Sastre, New England Farm Workers, Sarah Slutterback, DESE, Eileen Tosado, Way Finders, Alicia Walker, Way Finders, Amanda Wallace, Way Finders

Springfield's HOME-ARP Plan: Gerry McCafferty requested feedback to inform Springfield's HOME-ARP plan (roughly \$6 million in city funding to address housing and homelessness services). Asked for feedback on current gaps and needs. Comments included:

- EHV's are helpful but not enough, even with increases in HomeBASE
- lack of public transportation
- lack of affordable apartments
- lack of high school diploma/HISET to gain sufficient employment to obtain housing stability
- lack of sufficient mental health services
- lack of support services in general
- increasing number of DV survivors in need of housing
- lack of permanent supportive housing for DV survivors
- lack of handicap accessible housing

To continue to participate in this discussion, please attend the **upcoming Springfield Community Roundtable on homeless housing needs and priorities, Wed., July 20, 1-2:30 pm**. Via Zoom:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81275450141?pwd=SjB1azBOQzV6VVo4N2hQTW5uUTVNQT09>.
All are welcome!

Shelter updates:

- DHCD has asked shelters to bring online all covid set-aside units to expand capacity.
- Noting increase in number of Haitian Creole families without citizenship status. Unable to work without documentation (wanting to work!) so required to stay in shelters for longer. Re-housing is extremely difficult.
- Landlords are refusing vouchers
- Mental health services especially difficult to obtain for undocumented clients; not enough support services!
- Noted huge increase in utility shut-offs

- Noted increase of individuals calling for shelter

RAFT/eviction prevention: In June, Way Finders served 3,363 households, averaging 90-100 applications/day. Continuing to see a large number of utility shut-offs, esp a large number of homeowners that are not eligible for HAF. There has been a reduction in staff, which could require a longer application lag time (up from current average of 3 weeks).

Network Updates:

- The FY23 Budget is still in Conference Committee and is expected to be released soon!
- The Economic Development Bill is coming up for debate and will be a vehicle for trying to push through important legislative priorities. See [this blog post](#) for more details.
- The formal legislative sessions ends on July 31. Continuing to push. See [this blog post](#) for more details.
- The Network will be posting for a Network assistant position in September. Please [see here](#) for the DRAFT job description, fyi.

Next meeting date: Tuesday, August 9, 11 am