

Three County Individual Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 10/17/22

In attendance: Keleigh BenEzra, Three City CoC, Keith Benoit, City of Northampton, Karen Carmona, Franklin Opioid Task Force, Sami Cunningham, Northampton Resilience Hub, Shaundell Diaz, Three County CoC, Sean Donovan, Northampton Dept. of Health and Human Resources/Community Care, Laura Hudson, Positive Place, Andy Klatka, Eliot Services, Michele LaFleur, Three County CoC, Jay Levy, Eliot Services, Tim McCarthy, Craig's Doors, Gilad Meron, Northampton Resilience Hub, Lizzy Ortiz, C3ACO, Pamela Schwartz, Network, Dan Sontag, DMH, Chris Zabik, DMH

Shelter Updates

The updates were shared below (but minutes are drawn from the reports provided at last week's Task Force meeting because it is the same report and already compiled!)

Northern Berkshire (Louison House): currently at capacity with 25 people in 12 hotel rooms; transitional housing is also full with 20 people. Will be opening approx 4 more motel rooms in Nov. Next year's funding will stay constant with a commitment to identify a non-hotel location for future sheltering.

Pittsfield (ServiceNet): this season will continue at St. Joe's High School with a capacity for 50. Close to full now. For next year: Pittsfield shelter is funded year-round at 40 beds; also received funding for small shelter capacity (in motels) in South County, and continuing with rapid rehousing funds.

Greenfield (ServiceNet): this season will continue with 30 beds - full to capacity. Next year shifting to a new provider. Clinical Support Options (CSO). (ServiceNet chose not to apply for Greenfield and Northampton shelter).

Northampton (ServiceNet): this season will continue with its 2 shelters - 19 people at Grove Street (24/7); 16 people at Interfaith Cot shelter (night time use only; day time use for resource center). Total capacity of 35 is down 5 beds from last year (40 when at First Churches). . Next year, CSO will be the provider.

Amherst (Craig's Doors): at capacity at University Motor Lodge (40 beds); currently at the Knights Inn with 40 beds until Nov. 1 when shelter will return to Immanuel Lutheran Church with 23 beds (a loss of 17 beds). Next year funded to continue at Lutheran Church and UML.

Easthampton (City of Easthampton): For this season, DHCD is likely to provide Easthampton a small budget to assist with emergency shelter needs (thanks to Liz Plouffe, Easthampton's social worker, and to Mayor LaChapelle, for their support and leadership on this).

Holyoke (Center for Human Development): Motel 6 is full with 48 beds. Working to open low-threshold housing in Holyoke with 46 units - new target open date is end of November. Motel 6 will continue next year. CHD was also funded to create an outreach, triage and diversion program for all four counties, including a 1-800 number, and significant staffing. Exciting prospect for Western MA!

Springfield (Friends of the Homeless, Clinical Support Options): At capacity with 175 beds. Received funding to continue this capacity next year. CSO also received funding to operate the Northampton and Greenfield shelter programs.

Springfield (Catholic Charities): last year operated 40 beds at motels; currently with 25 guests; funding has run out so now waiting to see what DHCD can provide through its remaining ESG-CV funds.

Westfield (Samaritan Inn): will continue this season with its 30 beds. However, DHCD will not be funding it next year because it did not submit an application (an unintentional snafu). Mayor McCabe acknowledged the situation - the prospect of a 30-bed loss to the city and region - and the City is having conversations to explore alternatives.

Shelter capacity overall is less for the region. Currently seeing more people seeking shelter BEFORE the winter cold sets in. Concerning!

Community Foundation funding:

Pamela will be reaching out to the Community Foundation later this week to discuss the prospect for new emergency winter overflow hotel funding (they funded the region \$75,000 last season). The Holyoke pop-up shelters have been funded through Holyoke ARPA dollars allocated to Providence Ministries (good news!).

Isolation and Recovery RFP: DHCD has released an RFP to fund I&R sites this winter. Dr. Bossie is considering submitting an application, working in collaboration with Craig's Doors. We'll stay tuned on its submission.

New Housing Resources

- Independent Housing Solutions' PSH with 16 beds is slated to open on 11/1. Exciting progress - 4 people currently at Craig's Doors are lined up to move into a unit (which will in turn open up more shelter beds).
- Good news on Safe Havens: An additional \$2 million has been allocated statewide and Western MA will receive \$500,000 to open an additional Save Havens program in Hampden County. The Dept. of Mental Health will be releasing a new RFP in coming weeks.
- Gov. Baker's proposed supplemental budget includes \$20 million more for low-threshold housing and \$50 million more for community based housing to address discharges from hospitals. Now waiting on legislative action - on this and the stalled economic development bill - that must happen in the next few weeks in order for it to move forward. We will stay posted and at the ready to support our legislative delegation.

RAFT Advocacy: The Network has joined with its statewide partners Mass. Coalition for the Homeless, Mass Law Reform Institute and CHAPA to urge legislators to act to end the requirement to provide a Notice to Quit in order to be eligible for assistance (this new rule came into effect in August). This rule creates a significant barrier, results in premature exits from housing and more homelessness. Please [go HERE](#) to sign on as individuals or as an organization urging quick action.

Data Analysis Report-Out and Discussion

Michele shared a compilation of the possible data points available to us to review our progress around individual homelessness in the 3 county region. [Go here](#) to see what we reviewed (a big thanks to Michele for all this leg work!). We are constrained by the limits of the reports that the new data system can generate. There was some confusion around "bed nights" vs. "enrollments" and how best to differentiate and track the outcomes we are interested in. Michele also shared the possibility of relying on the state data warehouse that is in motion now; to utilize the reports that it can generate. We agreed that the highest priority is streamlining the information in a way that is easily obtainable and comprehensible. The data working group will exchange on best next steps in this effort. Thanks again to Michele!

Announcements

- Lunch and learn training series is hosting a final training on SNAP benefits on 10/26 at 12:30 pm. Go [HERE](#) to learn more and for the Zoom link
- The 3 County CoC is hosting a youth and young adult financial literacy training on 10/27 on zoom. Go [HERE](#) to see the flyer.
- The Northampton Resilience Hub is hiring two positions, Assistant Coordinator and the other to support the shelter and housing work - more details to come.
- Be sure to check out the New York Times' recent piece on "The Rent Revolution is Coming" - check out the [Network blog post here](#) for the article.

Next meeting date: Monday, 11/21, 2 pm (note 3rd Monday instead of 2nd due to Pamela's conflict)