

## **Family Services Meeting Minutes – November 8, 2022**

*Jennifer Aldrich, Valuing our Children's Family resource center, Kevin Atkinson, BHN CHW Holyoke fit, Melissa Blissett, Family Service Square one, Hilary Cronin, VA, Mayra De Jesus, Social worker-Shriners Hospital, Shaundell Diaz, Three County CoC/CAPV, Anthia Elliot DV & Patch services BHN, Brenda Garcia, BHN, Danielle Hartner, CHD Diversion Housing and shelter, Dora Lambertus, Housing specialist C3 flex housing program (BHN), Nicky LaVally, NEFWC, Liz Lopez, NNCC Housing division, Monique Osbourne, YMCA, Jenn Ramos, Christina's House, Sara Rivera, NNCC Housing Division, Heather Roy, DTA DV unit, Jen Santos, Wayfinders, Jessica Sastre NEFWC, Elizabeth Soto, Wayfinders, Rachel Trant, DCF Homeless Health and Safety Assessment (Has) unit, Alicia Walker, Wayfinders*

## **Family and DV shelter updates**

### **NEFWC:**

Shelter is full and there is not enough time to turn over units because the need is high. Expecting to receive more Haitian refugees as units open. There is a need to find an immigration lawyer as Community Legal Aid is not taking clients till March 2023. Families are coming in with immigration paperwork and need support. There is high stress and anxiety as they do not understand the paperwork. Families are asking for a place to worship in Western Massachusetts area. There is an SDA Haitian church located on Island Pond Road. (Springfield New Jerusalem SDA).

Most resources provided by DHCD are based in the eastern part of the state. Suggested Springfield and Holyoke Family Resources Centers in Springfield and Holyoke as a possible resource.

Boston Healthcare for the Homeless reached out to make connections in Western MA in order to facilitate a "warm hand-off" to providers serving families who are placed in western MA shelters. There was an initial meeting last week (several providers on this meeting attended and found it useful) and the next meeting has been scheduled for November 15, 2022, at 12:30pm. Please contact Fay Khudairi of Boston Health Care for the Homeless if you want to participate. Her email: [fkhudairi@bhchp.org](mailto:fkhudairi@bhchp.org)

FYI: eligible non-citizens, including Haitian-Creoles can receive cash benefits and EADEC and food stamps. Learn more here:  
[https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSI/WebHelp/TAFDC/Program\\_Nonfinancial\\_Requirements/TAFDC\\_Noncitizen/Eligible\\_Qualified\\_NoncitizensT.htm](https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSI/WebHelp/TAFDC/Program_Nonfinancial_Requirements/TAFDC_Noncitizen/Eligible_Qualified_NoncitizensT.htm)

**Christina's house** (transitional housing for women with children that is not part of the EA system, program duration is 18-24 months). Full with a wait list of 30 individuals. Getting a lot of calls.

**Way finders (EA shelters):** Increase in positive covid cases with staff and families. Ongoing challenges with accessing necessary support for Haitian families, including entitlements and legal support for immigration translation services. Pleased with the connection with Boston healthcare for the Homeless. Hoping for a soft hand off for family transition of services.

**CHD:** The referrals of families to the resettlement agencies are limited. Some individuals can get cash assistance and are eligible and some are not. The children are having a hard time adjusting but the schools are doing a great job welcoming them. These are needs on multiple levels.

## **DV Updates**

**BHN (Ware community-based DV):** Seeing an increase in referrals. Many women who do not have their children with them due to DV issues but then are not eligible for DV shelter. A catch-22.. Several clients have lost custody of their kids because abusers have stated that they have mental health issues even though they have documented abuse with the police. They are seeing cases of people who have fled and have had to come back because of custody issues or risk being charged with kidnapping. They have seen 8 in the last week and none of them are housed.

CHD noted they are seeing this issue as well. The group recognized the need for policy action to address these issues. The Network would be at the ready to join any statewide efforts (but does not have capacity to initiate).

**YMCA - Shelter** is completely full. Many more inquiries than spaces, trying to refer elsewhere but a continual gap in capacity.

## **RAFT Updates:**

**Way finders:** Pilot launch of new RAFT portal is happening next week for Hampden/Hampshire Counties (Way Finders is one of two pilot programs across the state). See [this blog post here](#) for upcoming webinar.

**Economic Development Bill outcomes:** Pamela shared the update around passage of the economic development bill. See [this blog post](#) for more detail.

**Next Legislative Session - priorities discussion:** Bills are passed in 2-year cycle and advocates are now preparing for the start of the next session in January, 2023. The Network is participating in the discussions around strategy for bill filings – we are continuing at minimum with last session's priorities since none passed - and will provide an update at the next Committee meeting. We will organize!

**Other announcements/updates:** Reminder to vote as today is voting day!

**Next meeting date: Tues, December 13, 2022, at 11 am**