

Hampden County Individual Services Meeting Minutes- February 14, 2023

In Attendance: *Tanja Alessi, CSO/FOH, Shawn Banks, CSO/FOH, Farida Bature, WMNEH, Michele Carr, Maria Chambers, BHN, Justin Chellman, Lynn Conway, Elliot CHS, Kim Fontaine, Elliot CHS, Erin Forbush, Service Net Mark Jachym, Springfield Comprehensive Treatment Center, Jay Levy, Elliot CHS, Sara Lopes, CSO/FOH, Jenifer Lucca, Samaritan Inn, Daimarie Marquez, Catholic Charities, Marilyn Martinez, Catholic Charities, Emily Matney, Catholic Charities, Gerry McCafferty, City of Springfield/Hampden County COC, Lizzy Ortiz, Community Care Cooperative/HCH, Kimberly Ryan, CSO/FOH, Jess Salvas, Elliot CHS, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Kathy West, Elliot, Kennyetta Wilson, CSO/FOH, Chris Zabik, DMH*

Preliminary 2023 Point in Time Count Report

Gerry McCafferty provided preliminary numbers that will be finalized in the coming days. But the first glance shows a significant increase in individual and unsheltered homelessness, and family homelessness as well. There was excellent provider engagement in the count, which also could contribute to the “increase” (i.e., a more real count). Additional shelter space – Holyoke pop-up shelter – and funds for overflow hotel rooms (Community Foundation funds) – also contributed to better identification and count.

Shelter/Housing Updates

- CHD will be opening its low-threshold housing in Holyoke in the next couple of weeks. 40 chronically homeless individuals will be housed!
- Independent Housing Solutions in Northampton will be opening its 16 bed PSH development hopefully by the end of February/March.
- There are a total of 87 PSH units under development in Hampden County. This is great and we need MUCH more to address the need.
- As of 4/1, Samaritan Inn will lose state funding; the city is working on identifying other funds to maintain the program. 30 beds at stake.
- CHD’s newly state funded triage/diversion program will start-up as of 4/1. More information to come.
- A new Safe Havens project – 7 beds – will be opening in Holyoke. Start date of 7/1.
- Friends of the Homeless – full at overflow capacity
- Rescue Mission – discussion of its policy to not allow individuals who are on medicated assisted treatment (privately funded so not governed by state policy). More dialogue recommended with director and staff on harm reduction approach.

Community Foundation of Western MA Funds: \$50,000 grant to provide overflow emergency shelter spent down – the cold snap depleted the funds quickly. Roughly 92 individuals were placed in motel shelter. Channel 22 covered CFWM’s funding [HERE](#).

Low-threshold housing to be discussed: The group agreed it would be useful to devote 30 minutes of our next meeting to the topic of low-threshold housing, e.g., where is it located, how many units, what is criteria for access, what is the path to access. An information sharing

opportunity for providers. Pamela will follow-up with outreach to low-threshold housing providers and plan for this at the 3/14 meeting.

Network Legislative meetings coming up: FYI, the Network is hosting meetings with the Western MA delegation on 2/27 (Hampden County 9:30-10:30am; Franklin Counties 11:00am – 12noon; Berkshire County 12:45-1:45pm) The Network will be presenting budget and legislative priorities. This will be a great opportunity to demonstrate partnership among city/ towns and providers. See [HERE](#) for legislative priorities. More to come on advocacy follow-up!

Western Mass Housing Coalition: This group, convened by Way Finders, had its first legislative briefing last week with a dozen legislators and staff from across the region and 40 other partners. The Coalition's primary goal is to increase housing production in the region. The Network and the Coalition are working in close collaboration.

Network Annual Event: Make sure your calendar is marked for the **Network's Annual Gathering on Friday, May 12, 10 am - 11:30 am at Holyoke Community College**. See here for the [save the date flyer](#).

Other announcements:

- The MATCH program: Go [HERE](#) to learn more about move-in costs (first, last, security deposit, furniture, etc.) for individuals who are moving from homelessness (or an institution). Available through MassHealth members until 2025.
- Behavioral Health Helpline: A new behavioral health helpline funded by the state through DMH has been launched. Click [BHHL](#) to learn more.

Next Meeting: Tuesday March 14, 2023, 1pm – 2 pm