

Hampden Individual Services Committee - 4/25/23

In attendance: Tanja Alessi, CSO/FOH, Michele Carr, Eliot Services, Lynn Conway, Eliot Services, Kim Fontaine, Eliot Services, Monique Gondek-Ashe, BHN, Kim Lee, Mira Vista, Jay Levy, Eliot Services, Jenn Lucca, Samaratin Inn, Madeline Martinez, Way Finders, Emily Matney, Catholic Charities, Gerry McCafferty, City of Springfield/Hampden CoC, Lizzy Ortiz, Keith Rhone, CSO/FOH, Kimberly Ryan, CSO, Jess Salvas, Elliot Services, Stephanie Tonelli, Tapestry, Edgar Vaskanyan, CSO/FOH, Kathy West, Eliot Services, Chris Zabik, DMH

Shelter/Housing Updates

- Catholic Charities hotel shelter program ending (due to end of pandemic and other emergency funding). Work is happening to rehouse and if necessary re-shelter approx. 48 individuals.
- Center for Human Development's 46 units of low-threshold housing is opening imminently (furniture being moved in this week). Some individuals from the Motel 6 will be housed there, freeing up shelter space for individuals needing to be relocated by Catholic Charities.
- Friends of the Homeless/CSO: Springfield site full to capacity. Greenfield and Northampton programs are up and running. Useful to have 3 sites in order to accommodate some relocations as needed.
- Samaratin Inn - full; seeing greater demand from women

Low-Threshold Housing program discussion

Pamela shared that the DPH manager of the Low-Threshold Housing (LTH) Program will be attending the next 3 County Individual Services meeting on May 8 at 2 pm. All are welcome to join to bring questions and learn more about the LTH program. Some questions that were raised here include wanting to know how eligibility/priority gets determined; and how to get individuals entered into HMIS (for data purposes). Please join the meeting on 5/8 if interested in learning more.

Additional populations data

In Hampden County, the number of people experiencing homelessness has increased for individuals and families and is now the highest it has been in 5 years. Of particular note are stark increases in the numbers of people experiencing serious mental illness, substance use disorder and domestic violence. [Go here for powerpoint](#) to see the precise numbers.

The group discussed the combination of factors, including the potential impact of better outreach and surveying (resulting in a more accurate reflection of the reality) as well as post-pandemic impacts of additional stress, spiraling rents, lack of affordable housing and more.

HMIS Update: Gerry shared that the CoC is in the process of shifting HMIS systems (to improve upon the current version). This will make data entry and analysis more accessible - please stay tuned for additional updates.

Shelter safety for staff

The group noted the recent tragic death of a staff person at Brattleboro's shelter (as a result of guest violence). We discussed the importance of keeping the issue of staff safety front and center and the potential challenge of maintaining a trauma informed environment for guests while not sacrificing maximum safety for staff.

It was suggested that the DV provider universe has expertise that may inform the individual shelter world. They have long-standing experience with this.

The Network is available to assist with any coordination around this issue and will stay tuned on any requested next steps.

FY24 Budget Updates

The state House of Representatives is debating its FY24 budget now. [Go here](#) to see this action step to weigh in on the budget amendments.

The Network's upcoming regional event: May 12. Please [go here](#) to RSVP.

Next meeting date: Tuesday, May 23, 1 pm