

Special Joint 3 County/Hampden Individual Services Committee Meeting Minutes – 5/8/2023

In attendance: *Farida Bature, WMNEH, Keleigh BenEzra, CSO/FOH, Keith Benoit, City of Northampton, Olivia Bernstein, MHA , Alexis Breitenreicher, Valley CDC, Court Cline, City of Northampton, Elysse Cooper, CSO DPH LTH, Linda Cruz, RVCC, Shaundell Diaz, Three County COC, Katie Dwan, Three County COC , Jess Elliot CHS, Jake Ferrera, Sheriff's Department /AISS, John Fisher, Wayfinders, Erin Forbush, Service Net, Jennifer Halstrom / DPH BSAS, Janice Humason, CSO/FOH Kathy Keeser, Louison House, Andy Klatka, Elliot services, Jay Levy, Elliot Community Human Services, Gilead Meron, CAPV/ Northampton Resilience Hub, Gerry McCafferty, City of Springfield/ Hampden County COC, Tim McCarthy, Craig's Doors, Debra McLaughlin, Opioid Task Force of Franklin County and the North Quabbin Region, Emily Matney, Catholic Charities, Gilad Meron, CAPV, Bill Miller, CSO, Atika Novak, Open Pantry Community Services, Dawn Orluske, Lizzy Ortiz, Community care cooperative, ACO, Omayra Quinones, The Salasin Project Kristen Rhodes, City of Northampton, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Sam Shanky, Craigs Doors, Lisa Sirabella, COC Participant-Person with lived experience/ Craigs Doors, Orlando Soto, Craig's Doors, Bill St. Denis, Veterans Inc., Rua'a Wahhas, Amherst Community connections, Chris Zabik, DMH, Joanny RVCC, Tina, Salasin Project*

Special Guest: Jennifer Halstrom, MA Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse

Jennifer is the supervisor of the DPH Low-Threshold Housing Program and joined us to share more information about the program. Please see her [Powerpoint presentation here](#).

Background info:

- This program was developed a few years ago, initially in direct response to the Mass & Cass crisis in Boston.
- The initial procurement was for Boston only, funded at \$1 million for 30 units to house a total of 60 people. The rate is roughly \$40,000 per person per year (to address complex needs and intensive case management).
- Since the success of that initial procurement, it has become a rolling, statewide procurement with a now \$10 million line-item to support the effort. BSAS is committed to its continuity.

Program goals, structure and criteria:

- The goal is to reduce homelessness, improve health outcomes and advance health equity.
- The program is structured to allow for flexible funding so that programs can meet individuals where they are at and address a broad range of barriers to housing. Beds are held if/when individuals enter treatment.
- The criteria: individuals experiencing homelessness (broadly defined, not subject to HUD definition, but among the most vulnerable) with substance use or co-occurring mental health disorders, living with HIV or do not qualify for or drop off other pathways to supportive housing.

Current Scope of Program, Impact:

- DPH/BSAS currently has 14 contracts statewide for low threshold housing and services.

people at a time while they're looking for permanent housing.

- In total in the last few years DPH has contracted for 770 units; mostly permanent and 156 temporary. There have been over 400 placements thus far and on track to house over 500 individuals by the end of next fiscal year.
- In western MA thus far, we have 195 funded LTH units and have housed 168

Coordinating with CoCs:

- LTH programs may use their local coordinated entry programs but are not required to do so. DPH encourages communication and coordination to the extent possible.
- The vulnerability index is flexible so that unique needs can be met. This program seeks to meet the needs of people who frequently don't "check the boxes" (e.g., people with sex offense histories).
- Our group noted the value of integrating the LTH data with HMIS so the region can track impact of rehousing effort across the CoC. There will be follow-up with Jennifer on this point.

Jennifer is available to answer additional questions. Contact her at: Jennifer.halstrom@state.ma.us

And see the RFRs here (consider applying!):

Low-Threshold Housing & Services - 212826

<https://www.commbuys.com/bsa/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-22-1031-ADMIN-ADM07-66770&external=true&parentUrl=close>

Housing Stability Supports - 214830

<https://www.commbuys.com/bsa/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-21-1031-BSAS0-BSA01-59604&external=true&parentUrl=close>

Other Network updates:

The MA House of Representatives finalized its FY24 state budget a couple of weeks ago. Read about it [here](#). The Senate Ways and Means Committee released its proposed FY24 state budget. Please read more [here](#). Stay tuned for next action steps!

Tenants Rights Training – June 15 by Community Legal Aid. [Register here](#).

The Network Annual Event is happening this Friday, May 12! Zoom registration is still available [here](#). Please join us!

Next Meetings:

Hampden County Individual Services: May 23, 2023

Three County Individual Services: June 12, 2023