

### **Family Services Committee Meeting - 6/13/23**

*26 attendees (note: in the interest of time, we are no longer listing each individual attendee - come to the meetings to say hi to your colleagues!)*

### **Family shelter updates**

**CHD:** sheltering 120 families in 4 hotels in West Springfield. Roughly 60% refugee families, remainder are not. Western MA housing gap creates a huge barrier for exiting families to permanent housing.

**ServiceNet:** 43 families at the Days Inn, Greenfield. ServiceNet is staffing with it (currently 1 staff person, aiming to add another). DPH is on site, working intensely re: access to medical care, prenatal care, WIC, SNAP. The Family Inn is also full, continuing with high demand.

**VOC:** sheltering 100 families in Chicopee motels. Large # of refugee families. High needs on immigration process, medical issues, basic needs.

Discussion of rules limiting work options for most immigrants - must obtain "paperwork" and that is a lengthy process and not even an option for all. So they are prevented from employment, income, and the option to use HomeBASE for rehousing because they cannot sustain the cost.

**Shelter transitions:** Way Finders is taking over New England Farm Workers' EA contract as of July 1; they will be sheltering an additional 71 families formerly with NEFWC.

### **RAFT Update (Way Finders - Hampden, Hampshire Counties)**

Roughly 100-120 people seeking rental assistance each day; working with 1,400 applications. 15-20 people each day seeking assistance re utility shut-offs  
RAFT will also assist homeowners as of 7/1.

**Secure Jobs:** Awarded new 5 year contract. Serves all 4 counties; will focus more outreach on Franklin and Berkshire County

### **Legislative and Budget Update**

Legislative hearings on Network priority bills are happening. Next up is the Joint Housing Committee hearing on June 26 where both RAFT and HomeBASE bills will be heard. See more details [here](#). The Network will testify. Please consider submitting testimony on your organization's behalf.

The FY24 budget is now in Conference Committee. Significant increases in our key areas (and still not enough). You can see an overview of both House and Senate budget proposals at our [blog post here](#).

**DHCD no more: now the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (HLC).** The transition has been made! The MA Dept. of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has been elevated to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities with a first-time Housing Secretary Ed Augustus. The essential functions of

DHCD remain the same and we look forward to learning more about Secretary Augustus' agenda and bringing western Mass.' perspective to it.

**Thank you to Jane Lindfors!** We had the opportunity to celebrate the enormous contributions of Jane Lindfors of the DTA -DV unit (for 24 years) as she retires this month. We are so grateful for her tremendous work and partnership. She may still pop in on us (please do, Jane) and for now, HAPPY NEXT CHAPTER with our deepest gratitude!

**Announcement:** HCS Head Start is enrolling for our 2023-2024 school year! We serve pregnant moms and children 0-5. We have homeless spots that offer free child care from 8-2. Please call 413-417-7779 or go to [www.hcsheadstart.org](http://www.hcsheadstart.org) to apply!

**Next meeting date: Tuesday, July 11, 12 noon**