

Joint Individual Services Committee Minutes - 6/13/23

Approximately 40 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!)

Shelter Updates:

Amherst: Craig's Doors is relocating its shelter at University Motor Lodge (UML) to the first floor of the Econolodge in Hadley. This is a very exciting move! Better conditions, better access to transpo and jobs, and Valley CDC, the owner, is very happy to have an occupied building. Negotiations continue with the Town of Hadley over the CDC's plan to convert the Econolodge into affordable housing but this is an excellent use of the property in the interim. Thanks to both the CDC and Craig's Doors for their partnership.

Greenfield: CSO will be increasing its shelter beds from 30 to 40 over the next week.

Northampton: CSO reported some movement from shelter to permanent housing, thanks in significant part to the opening up of CHD's low-threshold housing in Holyoke (also moved in Holyoke Motel 6 shelter residents).

Pittsfield: ServiceNet is hoping the new shelter on Fenn Street will be opening very soon, replacing the site at St. Joe's High School.

Holyoke: CHD opened the low-threshold housing - all 43 units are full. CONGRATULATIONS!

(note:Greenfield goal - trying to increase beds to planned shelter capacity from 30-40 beds over the next week

The new CHD triage/outreach program

Theresa Nicholson summarized this new program that is in its start-up phase:

- This outreach/triage program serves people living unsheltered or transitioning out of institutional settings.
- It offers a staff phone line to triage emergency shelter needs.
- **The phone number is 413-867-0398** and at this point is staffed Monday - Friday, 8 am - 6 pm. When more staff is brought on, hours and days will increase.
- It covers all 4 counties of western MA.
- The program also includes a small amount of funds for emergency motel stays (for the most vulnerable), a van for transportation, and funds for outdoor living supplies such as tents and sleeping bags.
- Ultimately there will be 5 or 6 outreach staff - to be determined where they are based across the region.
- Right now, staff includes the program supervisor (John Baker) and a newly hired outreach worker
- An Advisory Committee will be created made up of core partners across the region - Pamela will assist with the scheduling and facilitation - to help guide the program's development, including a system for tracking shelter bed openings; for determining

qualifications for motel stays; for deciding where outreach workers are based, etc. This committee will be convened asap.

- Noted a significant increase in elderly individuals with severe medical needs.
- The contract is for 5 years, with the option to renew for another 5 years (similar to all individual shelter contracts).

The group thanked Theresa for her vision in bringing this program to western MA. Theresa in turn made clear how grateful she is for the partnership and support in implementing this program - it cannot be done without the full team effort! And we acknowledged that all of it will take time and this is very much a work in progress.

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.

Next meeting date: The group agreed to meet jointly again next month in view of this 4 county program in development. We'll take stock after that. For now, we will meet next on: **Tuesday, 7/18, 1 pm.**