

Family Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 11/14/23

In attendance: Anne Barnes, Bridge Family Resource Center, Tana Bloom, FCRHRA, Amy Breton, Ware Family Resource Center, Shaundell Diaz, Three County CoC, Erin Forbush, ServiceNet, Marcella Gonzalez, Alianza, Lynn Guertin, Ware Family Resource Center, Jennifer Kimball, Amherst Family Resource Center, Theresa Nicholson, CHD, Matt Montanaro, Greenfield Family Inn, Stacy Parsons, DESE Berkshire County liaison, Sarah Pena, Way Finders, Dorothy Prieto, ERSEA, Ana Rodriguez, Care Center, Jasmin Rojas, Way Finders, Heather Roy, DTA DV, Jolanta Rumierz, DCF, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Jodi Smith, Way Finders, Amanda Watson, FCRHRA, Melissa White, Valley Opportunity Council, Janette Vigo, Way Finders

Family homelessness update

- Over 1,000 families in motels across the state. CHD: 116 families; ServiceNet: 45 families; VOC; 81 families; then without providers: Pittsfield (Hilton Garden Inn): 15 families; Great Barrington: (Quality Inn) 15 families; Hadley (Knights Inn - CHD waiting to be assigned as provider)
- Family shelter beds are full all over the region.
- Waiting on the Legislature to act on the Administration's proposed \$250 million supplemental budget to fund the EA system - negotiations happening between House and Senate versions - House budget requires \$50 million to be allocated to overflow shelter; Senate version provides complete discretion to Administration. Vote should take place before the end of Wed. 11/15 (note: that did not happen - the Legislature could not resolve differences; now in "informal session" which means must get unanimous consent - this could be challenging)
- Providers discussed the challenge of shelter unit turnover - state requirement to get all repairs done within 7 days (or lose payment) while it can be difficult to find contractors and get the job done.

RAFT Update:

The volume continues to be high in all 4 counties.

Hampden/Hampshire data (Way Finders): over the last 7 weeks, 700 applications have been processed. Seeing roughly 140 people per day in their lobbies. Utilities moratorium begins 11/15 - seeing shut-offs and staff are working hard to resolve them (as long as application is in by 11/15, can be addressed). Seeing a high number of moving requests. Franklin County (FCRHRA) is seeing the same thing along with high numbers of applications.

State Legislative Update

- Today the Joint Housing Committee is holding a hearing on the local option for rent control and the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act. The Network is providing testimony on both bills. Please consider submitting written testimony - you can use this handy tool from Homes for All MA here: <https://www.homesforallmass.org/act/email/>

- The Healey Administration filed the Housing Bond Bill last month, which includes \$4.1 billion in housing investments and extensive policy proposals - very exciting for meaningful investment and change. Policy proposals include the transfer fee for affordable housing, eviction record sealing and the allowance of accessory dwelling units as a matter of right. See an overview here: <https://www.westernmasshousingfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023.10.18-Housing-Bond-Bill-Overview-vOutreach.pptx>. This is the very start of a lengthy process - there will be multiple legislative hearings - and it will be key for us to get involved (amendments are needed, e.g., the transfer fee threshold is too high - home sales over \$1million - to be useful for western MA). Lots of important work ahead! Stay tuned via the Network blog at: <https://www.westernmasshousingfirst.org/sign-up-for-the-network-blog-to-get-updates/>

Announcements:

The Three County CoC has referred 14 federal Moving to Work housing vouchers to domestic violence survivors (utilizing CoC DV case conferencing to identify recipients); 6 additional vouchers to refer out.

Next meeting date: Tues., 12/12