

Joint Individual Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 10/31/23

In attendance: approximately 34 partners

Shelter Updates

- Springfield, CSO, Friends of the Homeless: at maximum capacity
- Greenfield, CSO: at capacity, working towards an increase in 5 beds, working with the city on final logistics and approval
- Northampton, CSO - at capacity, working on new site on Industrial Drive
- Amherst, Craig's Doors - at capacity, working on the possibility of opening up the 2nd floor of the Hadley Econolodge for more individual shelter - will keep us posted; preparing to assist with clean-up of Hadley/Amherst encampment in a few weeks
- Pittsfield, ServiceNet - moving to new shelter imminently; in conversation with HLC about the potential of opening up a warming center (the new shelter will have less capacity than the temporary St. Joe's High School shelter)
- North Adams, Louison House - at capacity

CSO Low Threshold Housing: putting a pause on referrals as they do some staff reorganizing (new hires, etc.). Currently approx. 81 people housed in LTH units across their 3 counties. They will let us know when accepting referrals again.

Emergency winter hotel and shelter beds - current status of resources available and in the works:

- Craig's Doors is funded by HLC with \$20,000 to support emergency hotel beds in Hampshire County - working now on creating a plan for access and distribution
- CSO Greenfield is funded by HLC with \$25,000 to support emergency hotel beds in Franklin/N. Quabbin - working now on creating a plan for access and distribution (outreach will be a challenge)
- As of now Berkshire and Hampden Counties do not have emergency hotel funds; however HLC is awaiting the Legislature's adoption of its final "close-out" budget for FY23 and supplemental budget for FY24 which is likely to contain emergency funding for this purpose. We will stay tuned.
- In the meanwhile, the Network has some discretionary funds that it is prepared to use for emergency hotel beds in Berkshire and Hampden Counties if HLC funds are not available. In Berkshire County, Erin Forbush (ServiceNet) and Kathy Keeser (Louison House) will work together to administer any funds; in Hampden County, Theresa Nicholson (CHD) will administer.
- The shelter providers across the region are meeting to plan a shared criteria and other guidelines for use of the funds so we can be as unified as possible in the face of these limited resources. We will report back asap.

CHD Outreach/Triage Update

Theresa Nicholson of CHD was not able to attend due to a conflicting emergency family shelter meeting, but based on Theresa's update at a meeting yesterday, Pamela reported that the project

supervisor is leaving his position at the end of this week, so there is hiring for this position and another 2 outreach staff. The program is still entirely operational, however, and Theresa encourages people to call the triage phone number with requests for assistance. **The program # is (413) 867-0398.**

Springfield Encampment

We learned that earlier today the police "cleaned up" the encampment, throwing out people's personal items, including tents. This is days before several individuals are moving into MHA low threshold units, as the temps markedly drop. It was noted that this city action is a reflection of different view points among city agencies (e.g., the Housing Dept. is not supportive!). Pamela offered any convening or facilitation support if people want to discuss follow-up action further.

MHSA Report

The Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA), a statewide advocacy group focused on individual homelessness, held its annual retreat last week. They are working on a joint letter with other statewide partners to the Administration to urge collaborative work to protect ALL vulnerable individuals during this winter season. Pamela will keep you posted if/when this is released.

Housing Bond Bill

Pamela reported out on the Administration's recently released housing bond bill, The Affordable Housing Act. It's a significant proposal, totaling \$4.1 billion in housing programs (more than double the housing bond bill of 5 years ago) and 28 new policy proposals (including real estate transfer fee, eviction record sealing, accessory dwelling units (ADU) as a matter of right, etc.). The next step is legislative hearings - in the Housing Committee and more - and this is when it is crucially important for us to be heard. We will have proposed amendments with vital improvements to the bill, so please stay connected via the Network blog ([subscribe here](#)). Read more about the housing bond bill [here](#).

Organizational Sign-On Letter in Support of Recommendations to Address Family Shelter Crisis (while this is not "our" population, there is inevitable cross-over). See the [letter here](#) - sign on by Nov. 15.

Please complete the Network survey! The Western MA Network to End Homelessness is asking for your input as we approach our 15th anniversary. What works for you and what could work better. Please let us know! The survey is anonymous and will take less than 15 minutes. Go here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LG8ZBRH> Thank you!

Next meeting date: Tuesday, Nov. 28, 1 pm