

Individual Services Committee Meeting Minutes - 3/26/24

Approximately 44 providers attended from across the four western counties

Shelter Updates

Springfield CSO - shelter is basically full (spaces each day, but then quickly filled same day); **CSO's low-threshold housing program** - 125 slots - is pausing referrals because at max capacity for processing them right now. Will open it up again when more capacity.

So far this month, CSO has housed 20 people - good movement to housing!

Holyoke CHD - motel is full; current LTH program is at capacity; working on opening additional temporary LTH program in Springfield

Holyoke-based CHD Outreach and Triage program - hiring new staff - continuing to recruit for Berkshire and Franklin County

Amherst - Craig's Doors - at full capacity; expanded capacity by 20 beds over winter - now exiting winter season (end of month) and no additional funding so working hard on rehousing and reducing risk for these 20 individuals.

Northampton and Greenfield CSO - shelters are full consistently; turn-aways are a little lower

Pittsfield - at capacity and beds filled as soon as open. Warming center will be open for one more month. The transition to the new shelter is going great - there is a lot of community pride and community connection around the creation of this new, much improved space.

Hampden County CoC Update:

There is a Housing First training in the works to increase capacity to understand the challenges to truly implement this model in a way that is person-centered and trauma-informed. Programs will be asked to do a self-assessment prior to the training. All western MA programs can join in the training part and Gerry will share the assessment tool for other programs to utilize. Stay tuned on dates.

Three County CoC Update:

First Spring Racial Equity Training in series occurred last week. Another training scheduled in April ([go here](#) for more info). AG partnership trainings happening - [click here](#) to learn more. The CoC Annual meeting is coming up on 6/17 - save the date! Working to get more Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) - have received 90 so far and they are making a big impact.

Budget and Policy Updates

Pamela updated the group on the FY25 budget process - [see Network budget priorities](#) here. The House will release its budget in mid-April and that will set off a flurry of activity around House budget amendments to better address our priorities. Please stay connected on the Network blog ([subscribe here](#)).

The Affordable Homes Act (housing bond bill) got reported out favorably by the Housing Committee and is now in the Bonding Committee. It will likely get reported out there and then the real advocacy focus will be on the House Ways and Means Committee to push for the amendments we need. Read more at our [blog post here](#) and for more detail on the [eviction record sealing bill here](#).

SSI Benefits Mini-Training for People Experiencing Homelessness

Big thanks to Cailin Thomas, an SSI advocate, for sharing some important tips about how to maximize access to SSI benefits for people experiencing homelessness. While complete notes are not available, Caitlin's talking points are [here](#) and a summary of emails relayed with important information which is captured [here](#).

Network Annual Gathering: May 31

Let's gather to celebrate your amazing work and make our needs known to our western MA legislative delegation (it's a two-fer!). Join us at Holyoke Community College on Friday, May 31, 10 am - 11:30 am. See the [flyer here](#) or you can just go straight to [register here](#).

Next meeting date: Tuesday, April 23, 1 pm.