

Western MA Task Force for Housing First Meeting Minutes - 4/23/26

In attendance: Approximately 40 partners, including homelessness and housing and community service partners and legislative and city and town staff

State FY27 House budget update and amendment advocacy

We discussed the FY27 state budget. The House Ways and Means Committee released its proposed budget last week and this is the week to push for co-sponsorship of priority amendments. [Go here](#) for the Network's action alert - please take these quick actions to be heard.

Kelly Turley of the MA Coalition for the Homeless shared updates around their priority amendments (overlapping with the Network's - see [Network blog post](#) for that summary as well). She also provided an update around the FY26 Supplemental Budget that is in process and the changes that would impact family homelessness, including a potential extended stay (to 9 months) and an increase in income allowed for EA eligibility. We will stay tuned on these outcomes.

CoC updates

- Gerry McCafferty of the Hampden CoC: HUD announced that it will release its new Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) on May 29, responses due end of August and awards by December 1. All indicators suggest this NOFO will include the same restrictions for CoC spending on permanent supportive housing that were attempted this year (but stopped at least temporarily through litigation). If adopted, this would result in dramatic cuts across all CoCs, here and nationwide. Response strategies are under consideration (but this year's litigation strategy will not work because HUD is effectuating this change through standard processes). We know state "defense" (i.e., funding) will be vital.
- Shaundell Diaz of the Three County CoC: The CoC applied to HUD for Unified Funding Agency (UFA) status which, if granted, would provide greater funding for the CoC (Hampden already has this status). Three County already effectively operates as a UFA so gaining this status would be exciting.
- The Three County CoC is hosting its **annual gathering on June 18, 11 am - 2 pm (lunch included), at Greenfield Community College**. Stay tuned for registration details.

Submit Your Comment on HUD's Proposed Regulations: Pamela shared information regarding the opportunity to comment on HUD's proposed harmful regulations - ending 30 day notice of eviction rule (comment deadline 4/27) and the work requirement rule (comment deadline 5/1). Please see CHAPA's excellent [Response Resource Guide](#) for very clear steps for commenting.

Program Updates

- **RAFT:** Jodi Smith of Way Finders reported that RAFT application numbers keep going up: this past week 998 applications, the week previous 935 applications. Utility shut-off

notices have increased markedly (since end of moratorium). This past week 250 people were in the lobby of HCECs. Higher numbers than Boston. Note: These numbers tell a powerful story and can be the basis of our advocacy as we push for a stronger RAFT program (starting with the RAFT budget amendments that are on deck right now).

- **Craig's Doors, Amherst:** The Econolodge is closed. Their congregation site at the church has 35 beds and the good news is that the 7 "winter expansion" beds will stay available all year long. The Resource Center is continuing to see high demand.
- **Center for Human Development (CHD), Springfield/Holyoke:** a small number of incoming families to the system - high number of empty beds continues; large stabilization case loads. Individual shelter is full.
- **Clinical & Support Options (CSO), Springfield, Northampton, Greenfield:** using attrition to reduce numbers as the winter overflow contract comes to an end (will be back down to 36 in Northampton, from a high of 80). Exciting news in Greenfield and Springfield: two new supportive housing buildings opening up this summer, 36 units each - there will be ribbon cuttings for each - stay tuned!
- **Catholic Charities, Springfield:** starting a new Rapid Rehousing (RRH) project focused on housing people who are 62 or older because they are eligible for public housing and are likely due to their elder status to get into it before the end of the RRH funding period. 20 elderly individuals will be housed, some straight out of shelter.
- **ServiceNet, Pittsfield:** Two months ago opened a community engagement center, called The First - open 7 days week/ 8:30 am - 4:30 pm, offers immediate services (showers, public facilities, lockers, community support). Seeing roughly 50 people/day, both individuals and families. A much needed resource! Re: winter warming center - closed last Friday, utilized by 40-50 people each night (250 unique individuals in total). Providing support to individuals in transition.
- **Louison House, North Berkshires:** received foundation funding to continue the winter beds, assist with staffing, housing a couple of individuals in new Hearthway housing in Pittsfield.
- **Hearthway, Berkshire County:** opened up new permanent supportive housing in Pittsfield- 9 units in one location, 28 in another. Using CoC coordinated entry for housing placement.
- **Providence Ministries, Holyoke:** looking to support rehousing of men in Loreto and Broderick House into independent living situations (out of the sober living program which is not as well suited). Welcoming connections to housing units.

We noted the positive housing news in the region - more supportive housing is here or about to be here. This is progress amid the overwhelming need.

The Network Annual Gathering - May 29, 9:30 - 11:30 am, Holyoke Community College - [Go here to register!](#)

Next meeting date: June 25 (the May meeting will be in person at our annual gathering!).