

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Meeting Minutes

March 15, 2012

Bob Duranleau	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Department, Social Services Division
Cindy Namer	MaineHousing
John Shoos	United Way
Dan Coyne	United Way
Bob Dodge	LearningWorks
Josh O'Brien	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Oxford Street Shelter
Rob Parritt	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Oxford Street Shelter
Jeff Tardif	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Department, Social Services Division, Family Shelter
Aaron Geyer	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Department, Social Services Division
Leah Bruns	The Opportunity Alliance
Sarah Lundin	City of Westbrook
Shana Pike	StepUp!
Christa Haberstroh	Mercy Recovery Center
Phil Allen	Preble Street Veteran Housing Services
Therese Johnson	Preble Street Veteran Housing Services – City of Portland
Jon Bradley	Preble Street
Elizabeth Szatkowski	The Opportunity Alliance
Kendra Danse	The Opportunity Alliance
Tom Ptacek	Homeless Voices for Justice
Patricia Smith	Homeless Voices for Justice
Leanna Bruce	Shalom House
Ginny Dill	Shalom House
Cullen Ryan	CHOM
Mary Ellen Welch	Police Department – Community Policing
Patty Robinson	Preble Street Florence House
Tom Natalie	Milestone Foundation
Joe McNally	Milestone Foundation
Amy Faulkingham	2-1-1 Maine
Heather Rhoda	Frannie Peabody Center

I. Introductions

Tom Ptacek, ESAC Tri-Chair, welcomed everyone and brief introductions were made.

II. February Bed Usage Statistics – Bob Duranleau

Bob reviewed the monthly shelter statistics for February 2012:

	<u>February 2011</u>	<u>February 2012</u>
Adolescents	12 Individuals	14 Individuals
Adults	220 Individuals	251 Individuals
Families	<u>76 Individuals (31 Families)</u>	<u>88 Individuals (36 Families)</u>
Total	308 Individuals	353 Individuals

Adolescent Shelter

The total adolescent bed nights for February 2011 were 335 while the total bed nights for February 2012 were 396. These figures indicate an increase of 18% between February 2011 and February 2012. One

(1) individual stated that he/she were experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Family Shelters

There was a total of 2543 bed nights used for all Family Shelters in February 2012 as compared to 2139 bed nights in February 2011. This represents an increase of 19% in Family Shelter bed usage between February 2011 and February 2012.

The Family Shelter placed 7 families for a total of 21 individuals into housing in February. The Family Shelter received 14 new families (intakes) for a total of 44 individuals in February. Based on self-reporting 8 families for a total of 31 individuals stated they had never been homeless before, of these 4 families for a total of 14 individuals were refugees.

Jeff stated that staff are having an easier time locating apartments compared to fall and early winter.

Adult Shelters

Adult Shelter bed nights usage increased by 18% in February 2012 compared to February 2011. Total bed night usage during February 2011 was 6148 while it was 7279 during February 2012.

During the month of February, there were 159 intakes at the Oxford Street Shelter, 121 men and 38 women. An Intake or New Arrival is defined as an individual that has not stayed at the Shelter for a period of three (3) months or longer. Based on self-reporting, 31 individuals stated they had never been homeless before (19 men and 12 women).

Oxford Street Shelter Support Services team placed 33 individuals into permanent housing (28 men and 5 women), with one (1) individual returning to the shelter within 90 days of housing placement.

Florence House Women's Shelter served a total of 38 women during the month of February, including 6 new intakes. Based on self-reporting, 4 of these 6 intakes stated that they were experiencing homelessness for the first time.

The Shelter placed 5 individuals into housing, with 1 woman returning.

First Time Homelessness

For the month of February 67 individuals, or 31% of all new intakes, reported experiencing homelessness for the first time.

2-1-1 Maine Housing/Shelter Calls

Amy did not have data to provide the housing/shelter calls update for February.

III. Use of Community Overflow – Update –

Josh stated that they've had a reduction in available beds at the main shelter due to individuals with physical disabilities requiring cots, space for wheelchairs, etc. With the numbers being as high as they are for women they've adjusted and the first floor dormitory and the day room are now for women. This has reduced the capacity of men. Men who are capable go upstairs and when that's full they are sent to overflow. Rob stated last night they hit 72 people in overflow, which is an all-time high. If this number climbs any higher they'd be forced to open the warming center in the GA waiting area. They've been stretching their overnight staff to cover, and cleaning the overflow each morning has become an increasing challenge. Josh stated that the change DHHS made to the ICM program will have a tremendous impact on the shelters with a huge reduction in the ability to council people and crisis intervention on site. DHHS has changed the ICM Program and effective 7/28/2012 all ICMs were informed that their positions were ending. Josh and Rob stated that Mike Diemer has been on-site at Oxford Street for seven (7) years and has made a huge impact and will be missed! Patty stated that ICMs have been crucial to help keep the women permanently housed at Florence House. Additionally, Jen Thorne, VA Togus Case Worker imbedded at Oxford Street, is relocating

to Alaska and if her position is filled it will most likely take quite some time.

Jon mentioned that with the climbing numbers it would be a good idea to meet to discuss overflow alternatives. Josh will set up a meeting to discuss this ASAP.

Rob mentioned that the Oxford Street Shelter is looking for skilled Per Diem Shelter Attendants. If anyone knows of anyone that would be a good fit please have them contact Rob at (207) 482-5215.

IV. *Preble Street Veteran Housing Services Program Update –*

Phil stated that they're getting more and more people enrolling in the program from outside of Portland. They've seen some great successes over the past couple of weeks in getting registered for Veteran benefits. Phil mentioned that they've really strengthened the collaboration with Pine Tree Legal Assistance over the past few weeks which has been very helpful. He mentioned that it's astonishing how many issues have been resolved because of this collaboration. Phil stated that this has strengthened the case management that they provide. He mentioned that this program is one of only three in the country that partnered with legal services, and Jon added that because of this the VHS program has been acclaimed nationally.

V. *Task Force to Develop a Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness – Update*

Tom stated that the last Task Force meeting was a continuation of the first meeting which included information on homelessness in Portland. Jon stated that for the next meeting the group will be broken out into four groups that will analyze four different topics. Tom stated that the next meeting, which is being held on March 29th, is when the Task Force will really get to work.

VI. *Shelter Plus Care – New HUD rental Guidelines – Shalom House*

Leanna stated that the two (2) Shelter Plus Care grants with dates 3/1/0212 were impacted by the change in the HUD FMR guidelines. FMRs usually go up each year, but this year they went down across the state, and have affected Portland dramatically as Portland had a 12% decrease which translates to a decrease of \$89 for SROs. Ultimately this decreased their budget by 12%. At the new funding level the grants couldn't sustain the current tenants and households at their current rents. They were forced to act very quickly to notify tenants of the change. The first response was to send out letters to tenants, service providers that they worked with, and landlords. They got a lot of responses from everyone about the letters that went out. They're now working one-on-one with tenants. Out of 212 households, only 26 households that they haven't completely resolved, 13 are still in negotiations with landlords and 13 will have to move. They're really working on an individual basis, with the tenant, their service provider and landlord and hoping within the next couple of weeks to have these 26 households resolved and transitioned into another apartment is that is the outcome. Leanna stated that everyone they haven't been able to negotiate they'll be making phone calls. The longer term impact for Portland will be fewer Shelter Plus Care openings as Shalom House will absorb the slots through attrition to cover current rental guidelines. Patricia asked how long it will take for someone to let her know what's going on. For those that they were able to negotiate will be receiving letters stating this. Ginny added that multiple clients called representatives in Senator Collin's office and Representative Pingree's office regarding this HUD change which was good for our representatives to understand how federal cuts impact our clients.

Leanna added that they're clearing the BRAP waitlist again.

VII. *MaineHousing HMIS CoC Shelter Stats*

Cindy distributed the Portland CoC Shelter Inventory, Unique Clients and Utilization from January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2011. (See attached). Cindy stated that these are CoC numbers which have to fit into HUD's guidelines and housing inventory chart. HUD wants CoCs to look at their programs and see what is working and what isn't working; these is what HUD is looking at

against the McKinney-Vento measures. Cindy stated that she's been asked to bring this type of report to many groups. If this is something that this group doesn't want to see then she will just present it to the CoCs. Jon stated that he thinks this is more helpful for the CoC, however the CoC is a sub-committee of this group. The CoC can bring information back to this group. Bob stated that he'll add this to the CoC agenda for the next meeting. Cindy stated that another area that they've been able to pull information out of the system is the voucher programs. Cindy distributed housing inventory stats for Shelter Plus Care, BRAP, and the STEP programs. (See attached).

VIII. Federal and State Legislation

Cullen stated on the State level, Governor LePage has released the second addition of the Proposed Supplemental Budget on Wednesday, March 14th. He has proposed cuts to GA such as eliminating the 90% reimbursement which would affect Portland and Bangor, capping housing assistance (including shelter reimbursement) to 90 days in any 12 month period, and making those who receive federal cash benefits such as TANF also ineligible for GA. These were released without warning on Wednesday. The hearings begin on Monday next week. The appropriations committee will be meeting Tuesday-Thursday. Cullen stated that these are really dramatic cuts. He encouraged everyone to go testify at the hearings and illustrate the impact this will have on the community you serve. Bob stated that from the 90 day cap on rental assistance alone Portland would lose \$2.4 million. Dan stated that it's unclear if a 2/3's majority will be needed if it doesn't pass by April 1st. He added that there is a separate bill regarding GA and TANF (making those who are ineligible for TANF because they've reach the 60-month maximum lifetime limit also ineligible for GA) that isn't part of the budget, it's a separate bill and hearings haven't been scheduled for this piece of legislation. Cullen asked how many families in Portland are about to lose their TANF benefits due to the 60-month cap. Bob stated that in Portland there are 237 families, of which 93 families are refugees that will require interpreter services to explain the changes, exemptions and extensions. Jon suggested that everyone go back to the leadership at their agencies. Last time GA cuts were proposed very few people testified against the proposed cuts. Just because GA isn't direct funding for your agencies doesn't mean it won't drastically affect them and the clients they serve. Cullen added that it's very important for people to speak out against these proposed cuts especially considering that many GA administrators in Maine are in favor of them. Elizabeth asked if the group should write a letter speaking out against the proposed cuts. Jon and Cullen stated that a combination of the letter plus physically going to testify would make the best impact. Cullen made the motion to write a letter on behalf of ESAC. Rob, Jon and Heather seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Cullen mentioned the reorganization of DHHS and the impact/significance the changes will have.

On the federal level the president has released his budget. Our delegates have already signed on for funding McKinney-Vento or have written dear-colleague letters. Senator Collins had a hearing that and questioned Secretary Shaun Donovan seeking education about how the homeless system works. The group was in agreement to write thank-you letters to Maine's delegation for their work on homeless issues.

NEXT MEETING:
Thursday, April 19, 2012
8:30 – 10:00 AM
Refugee Services Area
190 Lancaster Street

Please contact Robert Duranleau, Health & Human Services Department, Social Services Division at 775-6315, extension 224; John Shoos, United Way at 874-1000, or Tom Ptacek, Preble Street at 775-0026; if you should have any agenda items for the next meeting.