

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Meeting Minutes

June 20th, 2013

Bob Duranleau	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division
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
Harrison Deah	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Oxford Street Shelter
Jeff Tardif	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Family Shelter
Aaron Geyer	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division
Patty Robinson	Preble Street
Jon Bradley	Preble Street
Brian Townsend	Preble Street
Amy Regan	Preble Street
Therese Johnson	SSVF/Veteran Housing Services – City of Portland
Kendra Danse	Opportunity Alliance
Cindy Namer	MaineHousing
Ginny Dill	Shalom House
Tom Ptacek	Homeless Voices for Justice
Jim Devine	Homeless Voices for Justice
Ashley Gorczyca	Homeless Voices for Justice
Betsy Whitman	First Parish UU
Bob Dodge	LearningWorks
Cullen Ryan	CHOM
Jenny Stasio	Family Crisis Services
Carol Hutchins	Bayside Neighborhood Association
Amy Faulkingham	2-1-1 Maine
Peter Rand	SteppingStones
Joe McNally	Milestone Foundation
Wendy Harmon	Southern Maine Landlord Association
Sherrin Vail	Avesta Housing
Dan Coyne	United Way of Greater Portland
Amy Grommes Pulaski	City of Portland, Housing & Community Development
Kathleen Babeu	City of South Portland
Melissa Skahan	Mission Mercy

I. Introductions

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

II. May 2013 Bed Usage Statistics – Bob Duranleau

Bob reviewed the monthly shelter statistics for May 2013 (see attachment). Bob reviewed the Warming Center handout. There was discussion regarding the proposed new ESAC Shelter Stats format and structure. Cullen mentioned including the highest bed night and the lowest bed night in addition to the totals and nightly averages for each shelter individually and each type of shelter (Adolescent, Family and Adult). Bob stated that he would add the Family Shelter and Oxford Street Shelter Matrixes and housing placement detail to next month's ESAC Agenda; he stated that other agencies may find this to be a useful tool.

III. Portland CoC Update

Bob, Jon and Cindy provided a brief overview of the past two days of HUD TA meetings. Bob stated

that at the CoC meeting yesterday there was a discussion regarding possible TA around ServicePoint and evaluating our needs and wants with HMIS software. Jon stated that the group yesterday did decide to continue looking into the process and cost of integrating the current database software agencies are using into ServicePoint via an upload. There will be another meeting with Bowman and MIS staff from all interested agencies to participate and gather information. The next step would be for interested agencies to have a longer meeting with Bowman individually to sort out the details and specific costs based on the current software system being used and how easily it will integrate into ServicePoint, along with the associated costs.

IV. *Oxford Street Shelter – Client Support & Services Plan - Update*

Josh stated that the plan continues to be very successful; housing placements are up and recidivism has stayed the same or decreased which demonstrates the quality of housing placements. Josh added that very few people have had to begin down the path of possibly losing access to the shelter due to non-compliance, and of those that have 2/3's or more have become engaged at this point. Overall everything is going well and making positive impacts. Patty stated that the plan really helps people understand that shelter is temporary and not meant for long term use. She stated that it is still a complicated process because the vast majority of women have a higher level of housing needs and thus cannot simply rapidly transition to housing; until they can they have a safe space at the shelter. Patty added that one of the biggest barriers is not having enough subsidies. Bob added that at Oxford Street we had predicted an additional 38 housing placements made by Oxford Street staff, outside of all the new programs/services available, through the end of 2013; as of the end of May Oxford Street staff have exceeded the projection for the entire year. Jon stated that there are a lot of different levels of care available which is pretty exciting.

V. *Client Support & Services Plan – Outside Provider Involvement*

Jim stated that it is with interest and concern that HVJ has been involved with the formation of this policy since the beginning. They feel very positively with how this can be very helpful for people but remain cautious about people falling into different cracks in the system. Jim stated that they would like all providers to be invited to the table and be part of this process. ESAC is the perfect place to get an array of providers to provide insight and feedback. Tom stated that they want to ensure that if other providers are working clients they should know if their clients are staying at Oxford Street or Florence House and know what the clients are being expected to do regarding housing plans; other providers may have insight into individual client barriers to engaging and working towards a housing goal. Tom asked the group to relay this to other providers who are not around the table today. Jon stated that what is being discussed is good practice for providers on the whole and ideally should be occurring already.

VI. *New Security Procedures – Oxford Street Shelter & Community Overflow Baggage Checks*

Josh stated that they've been struggling with the increase in very serious incidents at the shelter since January; critical incidents peaked this winter and into the spring time. Josh provided examples of some critical incidents that have recently occurred at Oxford Street, including serious physical altercations, fights, threats, and incidents where weapons have been involved such as bricks, needles and tasers. Josh stated that in addition to maintaining the police presence there will be two uniformed Level 2 security officers from Command Security on duty from 6PM to midnight starting Tuesday of next week; there will be random baggage checks in conjunction with random security wand usage. Josh stated that they want to maintain a comfort level within the neighborhood as well as the safety and well being of staff and consumers. Rob stated that they have had several meetings with Command Security and they are hiring specifically for these positions and intensive training will be involved. Josh stated that the increase in critical incidents have increased as the numbers have. He added that the addition of the CLIP team has most likely prevented even further critical incidents from occurring. Rob stated that they're seeing more hand IV drug usage than ever before. Jon and Rob stated that there a lot of young people who aren't as invested in the shelter system and the services which is adding to the overall issue. Betsy asked what happens if contraband is found. Josh stated that if something illegal is found it will be reported to the police; if contraband that is legal but prohibited from the shelter is found the client will be asked to leave and return at another time. Josh added that they're working with the Needle Exchange to

ensure that the current system of Needle Exchange users remains in place. Betsy stated that the increased security presence could deter people from going to the shelter out of fear and cause more people on the streets. Josh stated that this is a possibility, but they're doing the best they can to minimize this feeling and it may actually encourage people to come to the shelter that hadn't previously because of the dangerous climate and ever-increasing number of serious incidents. Jon stated that it's a system approach and we'll have to look at the impact on the whole. Jon added that people in other communities are amazed that we haven't had security on site. Jon stated that it sounds like we've held off for as long as possible but safety is paramount. Rob added that they've always been proud that they haven't needed these additional security measures in the past, but with the sheer number of incidents, which have more than doubled, it has become an unfortunate necessity. Jim stated that there are requirements to address people's safety, even in a low-barrier City such as Portland. Amy asked if anyone will be exempt from this process, such as severely mentally ill people who we know aren't dangerous. Rob and Josh stated that this was their first question as well; unfortunately with randomization legality and liability comes into play and randomization has to be just that, random. Bob stated that we have to document the randomized checks very carefully, and they must stick to the system that is decided (every 5th person, every 7th person, etc.) or the door is open for liability.

VII. *Portland Homeless Task Force – Update*

Josh and Jon stated that there are no new updates. Bob stated that there was a recommendation to eliminate the use of per diems and hire more full-time shelter attendants. Bob stated that 6 new Shelter Attendants have been included in the budget request; the City Council will vote on the budget this Monday, June 24th. Jon stated that a lot of the work done on the Task Force will be very helpful with the work being done with system mapping and performance outcomes within the Portland CoC and the Maine CoC as part of the HUD TA process.

VIII. *Preble Street Clinical Intervention Program (CLIP) – Update*

Brian gave a program update. He stated that there have been 11 vouchers issued thus far; the first was housed last week at Elm Terrace, and the second was housed yesterday. Brian and Rob stated that this is very exciting. The team is very efficiently and effectively functioning and everything is going very well. Brian stated that the CLIP collaboration within Florence House and Oxford Street has been great. As a community we're facing a huge demand for services and we're examining the best, most efficient ways combat this. Cindy asked what the average length of time was in the shelter prior to housing. Rob stated that we're talking about thousands of bed nights for these individuals. Tom stated that this has three important parts: getting them housed, keeping the housed, and using these success stories to illustrate to consumers, stakeholders and the legislature that with the right tools – most importantly the subsidies – success is extremely possible. The success of this program and these dedicated PHA vouchers coupled with bringing services to the individual will advocate well for future similar programs.

IX. *City of Portland ESG Program – Update*

Harrison stated that today is the end of the financial portion of the ESG program; they are out of money but they will still continue to work with people. Within the last four months 125 people have enrolled in the program; 93 people have either been housed or prevented from losing housing (30 of the 93 were prevention); and 84 individuals received some sort of financial assistance.

X. *Homeless Outreach Group Discussion*

This is tabled until next month.

XI. *Mainstream Resources Committee Update*

Aaron stated that they usually take July and August off for trainings. The next meeting will be the 3rd Thursday in September and they're planning having this be the re-scheduled TANF Mainstream Resources Training.

XII. *HVJ Summer Solstice Event – Friday, June 21st, 2013*

Jim stated that Friday, June 21st is the longest day of the year, the summer solstice. HVJ is holding their

annual Summer Solstice event and will be spending the day in Post Office Park from sunrise to sunset, rain or shine. The media will be there at 10:00 AM, so having a large presence at that time would be extremely helpful.

XIII. Federal & State Legislation

On the State level, Cullen stated that the Governor vetoed the bill (L.D. 1066) that would have expanded Medicaid (extending health insurance to more than 60,000 low-income Mainers) through the federal Affordable Care Act. Even though the legislature originally passed the bill by a large margin (though not enough to be veto-proof) the legislature failed to overturn the veto yesterday. Hopefully there will be an opportunity to address this in the next legislative session. Cullen added that LD 598, bill to have all State departments to work in tandem with Maine's Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness was initially voted unanimously to pass in the Health & Human Services Committee. Afterwards, an amendment was made: initially the language stated that departments will align their budgets; amended to say will work to align their budgets. Democrats and Republicans ended up caucusing and re-voted; the result was a split vote. Cullen stated that we have work to do to highlight the fact that homelessness is not a partisan issue and it's uniform across Maine's population: homelessness is an urban *and* rural issue. The Governor is stating that he will veto all resolves because they're "unfunded mandates." Cullen stated that he personally advocated for LD 598 with the Governor. They've done their best and we will have to wait and see if he vetoes the bill; thus far he has not.

On the federal level sequestration is unlikely to change in the next few months, and we're starting to see the ramifications: cuts to ESG have already impacted recipients. Cindy stated that ESG funds have been reduced due to the budget reductions and sequestration. In preparation they estimated a 12% reduction, thinking they were airing on the side of caution; the actual cut was 15%. Cindy stated that when you add the budget cuts and the sequestration cuts the overall cut is more along the lines of 24%. Coinciding, payments to shelters for bed nights will be cut and the Home to Stay Program funding available has been cut. An email to all shelters will go out in the very near future detailing the reduction. Bob stated that the City's ESG funding was also cut by 15%. Cullen stated that we need to get messages to our delegation regarding how the cuts from sequestration have negatively impacted the lives of low-income and homeless individuals and families in Maine. If anyone has any client stories regarding this to forward them to Cullen via email: Cullen@chomhousing.org. Cullen stated that they have face-time with the delegation; if there are any issues that should be brought up to the delegation to let Cullen know.

XIV. Other Business

Cullen thanked everyone that came to the Elm Terrace Open House yesterday. Jim stated that the open house was wonderful.

Jon stated that similar to the Portland Housing Authority, South Portland is also dedicating vouchers to the CLIP program. South Portland is setting aside 2 vouchers with CLIP committing the services that go along with them. Bob added that South Portland and Westbrook will be working with Oxford Street to develop a plan to identify clients from Oxford Street originally from their towns so that the towns can begin paying bed nights for South Portland and Westbrook residents utilizing the shelter.

Bob and the group thanked Vickey for her work over the past four and a half years and wished her well in her transition to CHOM.

NEXT MEETING:
Thursday, July 18, 2013
8:30 – 10:00 AM

Refugee Services Area, 190 Lancaster Street

Please contact Robert Duranleau, Health & Human Services Department, Social Services Division at 482-5124; or Tom Ptacek, HVJ at 775-0026; if you should have any agenda items for the next meeting.