

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Meeting Minutes

May 15th, 2014

<i>Bob Duranleau</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division
<i>Aaron Geyer</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Home To Stay
<i>Josh O'Brien</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Oxford Street Shelter
<i>Jeff Tardif</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Family Shelter
<i>Amanda Doyle</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Refugee Services
<i>Ali Lovejoy</i>	Preble Street- CLIP
<i>Ashley Gorczyca</i>	Preble Street/HVJ
<i>Tom Ptacek</i>	Preble Street
<i>Norman Maze</i>	Shalom House
<i>Bob Dodge</i>	LearningWorks
<i>Jim Devine</i>	Homeless Voices for Justice
<i>Vickey Rand</i>	CHOM
<i>Cullen Ryan</i>	CHOM
<i>Amy Faulkingham</i>	2-1-1 Maine
<i>Mary Ellen Welch</i>	PPD Community Policing Midtown
<i>Peter Driscoll</i>	Amistad
<i>Carol Schreck</i>	Portland Community Health Clinic
<i>Jenny Stasio</i>	Family Crisis
<i>Elizabeth Szatkowski</i>	The Opportunity Alliance
<i>Kathleen Babeu</i>	City of South Portland
<i>Cindy Namer</i>	Maine Housing
<i>Judy Newell</i>	Homeless Voices for Justice
<i>Jeff Vane</i>	Homeless Voices for Justice
<i>Joe McNally</i>	Milestone Foundation
<i>Shana Pike</i>	Stepping Stones

I. Introductions

Introductions were made.

II. April 2014 Bed Usage Statistics – Bob Duranleau

See packet. Bob reviewed shelter statistics for the month of April. Kathleen gave a brief update regarding the South Portland General Assistance (GA) and how they are seeing some of the asylum seekers. He added that the number of women in the shelter is on the rise. Cindy asked Josh why the same amount of people returned to the Teen Shelter and Florence House that had left. She is surprised at that with the amount of help the City of Portland provides such as Home to Stay (HTS) and vouchers. Josh stated they do track the reasons why people return, there are many reasons. Cindy asked why people from towns that have shelters in them are coming here to the Portland shelters. Bob updated the group on the recent Continuum of Care (COC) meeting and addressed all questions on HUD's award process. Those awarded funding are: DHHS Shelter Plus Care Programs; Avesta Housing Logan Place and Florence House. Renewal projects not refunded include: HMIS and Employment Assistance; but Bob is working with HUD on resolving this discrepancy. He reiterated that Rapid Re-Housing projects are not renewals, but new programs, as well as the new Preble Street program for permanent housing. The Planning Grant is not included.

III. OSS Long Term Stayers Housing Placement Update – Josh O'Brien, Rob Parritt

See handout. Josh explained 2013 had the highest number of housing placements ever. He and Rob have been looking closely at what the processes are at the shelter and they are looking to make some

changes starting with focusing on the top 30 bed night stayers getting them housed and hoping to see overall bed night reductions. Previously, 29 of the top 30 were men. That number is going down but the number of women is going up. Cindy mentioned the shelter is trying to be everything to everyone and it is good to see them trying to cut the excess work and focusing on the 30 top bed night stayers. She also liked the idea that the shelter is going out to the community to help them. Cindy believes it is excellent way to get people out of the shelters. Elizabeth added that she thinks it's great that the shelter's focus is based on results and data. Cullen mentioned that the 16 people housed had accrued a total of 50 years of bed nights. Cindy added she was happy to see the shifting of resources, specifically Home to Stay, and thinks it is very helpful in housing families and keeping them housed. Jeff gave an overview of the Family Shelter Long Term Stayer progress. He feels that this is working well, creating less tension for the families and a much better environment for their psyche with more harmony amongst them. Elizabeth asked Jeff if he follows up with clients after they leave the shelter. Jeff responded yes, that Ashley from HTS handles follow-up; it is working well and it is much needed in the process of keeping the families housed. Aaron added that is what HTS is here for.

IV. *MaineHousing Update – Cindy Namer*

Cindy reminded everyone that on ~~June 9th~~ (changed to June 16th after this meeting) there is a joint CoC and stakeholder presentation. Currently, MaineHousing is trying to pull together a shelter forum tentatively scheduled for June 23 in Augusta for Shelter Directors. They will try to get a web broadcast, covering lots of topics including new ESG monitoring and why the shelters need to be involved in the CoC initiatives and other informative issues. In working with the Statewide Homeless Counsel, DHHS and MaineHousing, a long term stayers data approach initiative to help identify some of the folks that are long term stayers at the shelters is being developed. There have been a couple trainings held, one for the Local Administrative Agents (LAA) held by DHHS and one for the shelter staff held by MaineHousing. These trainings taught how to run the reports which show how many long term stayers there are, and that is based upon the Statewide Homeless Counsel's definition of the 180 day stayers. The overall point is to connect DHHS, LAA, and shelter staff to help build communication and data. There is a project based voucher pilot that MaineHousing is working on with DHHS that has slowed down due to the fact that DHHS needs MaineHousing to collect more data on the homeless folks which is a slow process due to the fact that most shelters don't participate in data sharing. MaineHousing put together a survey for DHHS to get some universal data about levels of acuity of the folks in the shelters to help figure out which pot of money they would have to use to help those folks. MaineHousing is hoping to put up more vouchers. So far there are 12 shelters across the state agreeing to do the survey. Starting last fall, shelter directors started talking about shelter funding, prompting the Statewide Homeless Counsel put together an ad-hoc group of shelter directors to discuss funding in the shelters in general. That group then split into two groups to discuss incentives, funding, and a long term approach for system changes. Also, MaineHousing is starting to do program evaluations around Home To Stay. Jeff stated he thinks we are behind on the datasharing. Cindy answered yes we are because a lot more people need to be on board first. Josh stated that if MaineHousing went through with it we would all be on board to support data sharing. Elizabeth mentioned having accountability and needing to understand that it's not just your area that needs your info, it's the whole state system. Cindy added that it's important in datasharing to have not just data but good quality data. Bob suggested having a small group, such as this one, start it first then maybe the rest will follow throughout the state. Cindy agreed.

V. *Amistad Annual Survey on Homelessness – Peter Driscoll*

Peter suggested working to try and capture the numbers of the actual homeless population, not just the individuals in the shelters. Peter discussed the survey that Amistad is putting out called "The Survey of Homelessness" which Amistad puts out every year to get an idea of the demographic information and also to find out how well they are doing serving their members. Amistad's focus is mostly on the homeless that have serious mental illness. They have found that the number of people who report being homeless is much higher than that of previous years. Peter mentioned a statistic that shocks him is that almost 50% of homeless people don't have case management and he believes that there are a lot of folks falling through the cracks. Peter stated that he thinks there needs to be more of an effort to serve those people. Also Peter added that according to the surveys put out, people feel welcome at Amistad and feel

a great sense of community. Once the survey is completed and the results tabulated, Peter will present to ESAC.

VI. *Home to Stay Program Update – Aaron Geyer*

Aaron gave an overview of the Home to Stay (HTS) program. HTS has housed 35 individuals with the vouchers that came with HTS, but 44 with others with different vouchers and other resources. He feels the program is going well. Cindy asked how the handoff is. Can people get the services they need? How? Aaron responded the handoff is going well, the case workers connect with the clients while still in the shelter and form a relationship. They follow the client and assist them throughout the individual process and when they get housed the case manager still does more follow up to keep that client housed.

VII. *Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program – Aaron Geyer*

Aaron gave an update on the Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program, explaining that it provides short term rental assistance such as security deposits, or utility help to the amount of about \$136,500 in one year's time. To this point since it started in April approximately \$11,951 has been spent to help 15 households for 36 unduplicated individuals. Aaron urged anyone to reach out if they have anybody who needs help with a security deposit or first month rent they just have to be homeless. The program is going well.

VIII. *New City Website – Bob Duranleau*

Bob urged everyone to take a look at the new city website. There are separate sections for CoC and ESAC, as well as Homeless Data and Reports. The CoC grant is there as well, along with a news flash on the screen with HUD and announcements and all the meeting minutes and agendas are there for anyone to view. Bob mentioned the website is very user friendly and much more helpful than the last website.

IX. *Federal and State Legislation – Cullen Ryan*

Cullen reported that the legislature adjourned but before they did they worked on overturning as many as they could of the 40 vetoes from the governor in the last two weeks. 15 were successfully overturned. One of those was the supplemental budget. Also in there was funding for a group of people who have been on the waiting list for intellectual developmental services who DHHS had competing against other groups. One Republican legislator worked to make sure funding got in there for this group which allows 800-900 people to get services. They did not allow 70,000 people to get services through MaineCare as of January 1st 2015 because all of the attempts to restore the Affordable Care Act expansion have failed. The State is in a difficult spot when it comes to trying to get resources to those 70,000 people. On the federal end the biggest thing is what is going on at the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) committees. The House version of the HUD committee put forth an appropriations amount that is pretty bad. It flatlined, increasing Section 8 by only 1%, which is not enough to make a difference in terms correcting the effects of sequestration or keeping up with the pace of the cost of getting people housed. Also in that was a 30 % cut for the home program which is the funds for the step program and the low income tax program this is the largest proposed cut since its existence. Ultimately the waiting is on the senate to bring all programs issues to the table. We should hear by early June what the committees put out then it will go to the house and senate. Cullen will keep the group posted.

X. *Other Business*

There has been some media coverage regarding the GA audit, and it was discussed at the Statewide Homeless Council. DHHS found Portland GA non-compliant in their last audit. The City of Portland is in the process of appealing it. The non-compliance issue has to do with GA reimbursing the shelters based on the operating costs for bed nights which has been done this way for 25 years. The department says the cost should not be based on the operating cost which is how it has been done for a long time. Also they are stating that the shelter should not presume eligibility but instead do a very detailed GA assessment and financial application. The City of Portland has previously passed the other audits. The impact would greatly affect the shelter system and the homeless population. There will be updates on this topic as the issue progresses.

Ashley mentioned there have been concerns about the tenants of Bayside Village here in Portland and the fact that Bayside Village is charging their tenants forty dollars a day for late rental payments from clients that are receiving GA and clients cannot get into GA due to the lottery system. She stated that HVJ does not feel that the lottery sign-in system works and needs to be an ongoing topic at meetings. In addition, Preble Street and HVJ have an alternate system which they would like to review with City GA staff, which they feel would greatly improve the process, and requested a meeting with Doug and Bob. Bob offered to schedule a meeting with Doug Gardner, Health & Human Services Director, and Palmer Peters, General Assistance Program Manager, to discuss the lottery process. Bob agreed with Ashley's suggestion to have a GA meeting with HVJ and appropriate city staff; stating he felt this could be more appropriate for GA staff and not ESAC. He explained that speed has gone down recently at General Assistance due to the new paperless system. Once everybody is familiar with the system it should actually speed things up.

Jim discussed the Summer Solstice Event on June 20th it is the longest day of homelessness and urged anybody who can to come. Also Jim invited anybody to come to an event on May 21st at DHHS on Marginal Way from 10:00am to 11:00am to protest the decision to move DHHS to South Portland.

Ashley stated concern about homelessness with women increasing. Bob stated that he and Josh have been looking at the numbers of women on the long term stayers list and are working to resolve the issue. Josh stated a real issue is physical space to place the rising number of women and OSS will be focusing on female long term stayers.

***NEXT MEETING:
Thursday, June 19, 2014
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 if you should have any agenda items for the next meeting.