

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Meeting Minutes

August 21, 2014

Rebecca Dennison	Homeless Voices for Justice
Rob Parritt	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Oxford Street Shelter
Aaron Geyer	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Support Services
Jeff Tardif	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Family Shelter
Mindy Smith	Amistad
Jon Bradley	Preble Street
John Monahan	Homeless Voices for Justice
Tom Ptacek	Preble Street
Norman Maze	Shalom House
Chris Bickwell	The Opportunity Alliance
Jim Devine	Homeless Voices for Justice
Vickey Rand	CHOM
Cullen Ryan	CHOM
Tom Natalie	Milestone Foundation
Elizabeth Szatkowski	The Opportunity Alliance
Shana Pike	SteppingStones

I. Introductions

Rob welcomed everyone and brief introductions were made.

II. July 2014 Bed Usage Statistics – Rob Parritt

Rob reviewed the July 2014 statistics ([see statistics](#)). Tom asked whether the jump from June to July is typical. Jeff stated that the July 4th week is usually the highest, so it is not unheard of. Rob pointed out that 2013 showed a similar trend.

Jeff stated that while the intakes seem low for the Family Shelter, there is low turnover for housing, causing numbers to seem higher. Carol asked whether there has been a trend of women increasing in OSS. Rob confirmed this suspicion and clarified that this can change the way their beds are set up, requiring the use of overflow sites.

III. Family Shelter Overflow – Jeff Tardif

Jeff discussed the overflow issues and using area hotels. Shifting between Portland and South Portland hotels isn't a problem in the summer due to schools. However, school starting creates issues for families not previously established in schools. Because of the drastic increase in overflow usage, the City is renting more apartments, which is more cost-effective than using area hotels. Jeff asked other family shelters to contact the Family Shelter to work on options for difficult clients.

Jeff asked if there were any projects focused on homeless families. Cullen stated there are tax credits to work with families. Family housing is more challenging than elderly housing due to wear and tear and other issues. There are more political pushes for elder housing, but there is a push back and forth on it. It is being developed, but at a crawl. Cullen applauded Jeff for looking for programs in this issue.

IV. OSS Overflow Shelter Update – Rob Parritt

Rob addressed the number of long term stayers decreasing due to housing, allowing for the average number of bed nights to decrease, as well as lower usage of overflow sites. He stated the next goal is to stop the increase of women in the shelter.

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

Aaron discussed the Home to Stay Program and August marking one year of program service. They have served 162 households, accounting for over 200 individuals, with 70 placements. MaineHousing announced additional HTS funding, as a first come, first serve basis. This funding includes security deposits and rent.

All referrals may be sent to:

Aaron Geyer, (207) 482-5131, aeg@portlandmaine.gov

Kelsey Toning, (207) 482-5208, kt@portlandmaine.gov

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

Aaron stated that TBRA has been up and running since March, and they are looking for referrals. TBRA funding is for security deposits, rent, electricity, etc. They have served 34 households, 81 individuals so far.

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VII. *Homeless Voices for Justice*

Jim discussed the monthly protest rally regarding the State moving the Portland DHHS office. There was good press coverage, as well as Mayor Brennan. HVJ will be working to register individuals to vote in Augusta, Portland, and Bangor. There were advocates at the DHHS SNAP hearing, as well as the Minimum Wage hearing. He was happy to see leaders from communities and churches participating and making their voices heard as well. Jon stated this may not change the commissioner's opinion, but education is happening, which is a strong step forward.

VIII. *Federal and State Legislation – Cullen Ryan*

Federal:

Many attended the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) conference in Washington, DC. Sen. King signed onto the Homeless Youth Act. There was a push for Section 8 increases, which may help with housing, but won't help with the housing options. This includes flexibility in where these can be used. MaineHousing is trying to secure more vouchers, where they are short approx 500. Homeless Assistance Grants were discussed, where there may be less funding than desired, affecting Shelter Plus Care.

THUD is stalled, where there doesn't seem to be any true compromise, but rather a stall with less funding and program assistance.

Jon discussed HUD and the issue with CoC funding. HUD has rejected the appeal made by the Portland CoC. However, a follow-up letter has been sent, as Joe Everett from The Opportunity Alliance submitted a statement that tech support, over the phone, told him to submit it as a two-year application, as it would all be worked out during the review process. They are still waiting to hear back follow-up letter. HUD offered to discuss options available, including a no-cost extension. This would allow those programs not funded to still complete APRs and reapply in the 2014-15 grant cycle, with a new program start date of January 1. This would require the loss of funding for approximately three months for the programs, which hopefully can be worked out. The programs losing funding include: The Opportunity Alliance (lost half of their funding), Bell Street, Employment Assistance, Job Training Fund, the Collaborative, HMIS, and the Planning Grant.

State:

The Governor is still fighting with municipalities on funding General Assistance for undocumented individuals. Cullen thanked the cities of Portland, South Portland and Westbrook for their stance on the issue.

Jon Bradley discussed the push to cut 19-20 year olds from Medicaid (MaineCare). This would have a huge impact on the homeless youth population throughout the state.

IX. Other Business

Carol addressed the affordable housing conference in a few months. More details will be provided as soon as she receives them.

Norman stated that while they are trying to move individuals to York County for housing, case management and services are not available. This requires those housed to be put on waitlist. Cullen stated it is not necessarily about stable, but affordable, housing. Rob offered help in advocacy.

Jon discussed the new transitional housing program for youth, with six (6) beds. He asked that we track this in the monthly data.

***NEXT MEETING:
Thursday, September 18, 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.