

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Meeting Minutes December 18, 2014

<i>Jeff Tardif</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Family Shelter
<i>Aaron Geyer</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Support Services
<i>Rob Parritt</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Oxford Street Shelter
<i>Kelsey Tanning</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Home To Stay
<i>Jeff Vane</i>	Homeless Voices for Justice
<i>Jim Devine</i>	Homeless Voices for Justice
<i>John Monahan</i>	Homeless Voices for Justice
<i>Jamie Lasden</i>	Preble Street/Homeless Voices for Justice
<i>Ashley Gorczyca</i>	Preble Street/Homeless Voices for Justice
<i>Ali Lovejoy</i>	Preble Street
<i>Greg Perchik</i>	Preble Street
<i>Tom Ptacek</i>	Preble Street
<i>Emily Loker</i>	Preble Street/Maine Hunger Initiative
<i>Jen Grobe</i>	Preble Street/Maine Hunger Initiative
<i>Vickey Rand</i>	CHOM
<i>Cullen Ryan</i>	CHOM
<i>Ginny Dill</i>	Shalom House
<i>Norm Maze</i>	Shalom House
<i>Steve Ellis</i>	Frannie Peabody Center
<i>Barbara Sawyer</i>	Goodwill of NNE
<i>Shana Pike</i>	SteppingStones
<i>Elizabeth Szatkowski</i>	The Opportunity Alliance
<i>Wendy Harmon</i>	Southern Maine Landlord Association

I. Introductions

Rob welcomed everyone and brief introductions were made.

II. November 2014 Bed Usage Statistics – Rob Parritt

Rob stated the number of adults served on an average night has gone down from 2013. He applauded the Teen Shelter and Family Crisis on their higher-than-average housing placements for the month. Rob and Jeff both stated the number of intakes from clients originating from Congo is steadily increasing.

III. Shelter Matrix – Update – Rob Parritt

Rob discussed the Oxford Street Shelter matrix and how the average number of clients served on a nightly basis has been holding relatively steady. He pointed out that while the number of placements have gone down since 2013, they are more effective in saving bed nights with the focus on placing longer term stayers.

Jeff discussed the increase in the large influx of intakes and lower housing placements for November. Bednights also increased in November. He addressed the issue of the increasing number of visa holders in the shelter who are ineligible for housing vouchers and other benefits. This only allows them general assistance and this proves difficult in many cases.

Wendy stated that there are issues with landlords wanting to accept STEP vouchers. Because it cuts the individuals off, rather than gradually, many individuals who become 100% liable cannot afford their rent. Landlords now know that on month 13, they are dropping off. Jeff pointed out that if rents were cheaper, and not bumped up over GA guidelines, many of them may be able to get help from GA. Elizabeth stated this was addressed when first establishing the program and is running into similar problems as the WRAP program. Rob suggested Wendy bring this up at the Statewide Homeless Council; Elizabeth suggested this be address with Region One. Cullen stated this program is known to not work since two-

year programs were better with transition. Aaron and Jeff pointed out that individuals used to be able to retain their homeless status to be able to retain a more permanent subsidy, while now on STEP they don't.

IV. OSS Long Term Stayers Report Update – Rob Parritt

Rob discussed the current training going on surrounding VI-SPDAT on how to handle housing case management and higher retention of housing placements. Ali stated this was a great presentation on the housing first model. Vicky confirmed it was good for providers outside of Portland to hear what Portland has been saying to be true, but hearing it from someone outside of Maine has been eye-opening for many.

V. Home to Stay Program Update – Aaron Geyer

Aaron stated that Home To Stay is wrapping up the initial funding ending December 31. Applications were submitted yesterday for the next set of funding. While they obviously have not received notice yet, there is a training is scheduled with MSHA in January. There have been 47 housing placements for the Family Shelter and 67 for OSS to date. Home To Stay has also been focusing on long term stayers and how they have decreased the number of bednights. Rob toted the coordination between Home To Stay, Oxford Street, Family Shelter, Shalom House, and Preble Street, to help house these longer term stayers.

VI. Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) Program – Aaron Geyer

TBRA helps with short-term rental assistance, including electric, security deposits, etc. Aaron reported referrals have increased since last ESAC, but they can still take more. They are about half way spent on their funding with July funding about to added to it. The one largest requirement of the client is they be verifiably homeless. Ali asked about individuals with Shelter+Care, with a landlord requiring first, last, security. He stated TBRA does work with those individuals as well.

All referrals may be sent to:

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

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

VII. Food Supplement Changes – Jen Grobe/Emily Loker, Maine Hunger Initiative

In years past, the state of Maine applied for a waiver on the work requirement for able-bodied individuals to receive SNAP benefits. This year, Maine did not apply for the waiver. Emily addressed the new work/volunteer requirements surrounding SNAP benefits (see attachment). Jen reviewed the waiver based on ability to work (see attached form). Those who do not act by January 1, and do not have proof of work/volunteer requirements or disability status, will lose their benefits. They are allowed to reapply, but cannot receive retroactive benefits for the time lost. The exemption form must be filled out by a doctor or LCSW. Elizabeth asked for concrete statement from DHHS on what is considered a disabling condition, as the state does not normally recognize substance abuse as a disabling condition.

VIII. Homeless Voices for Justice Update

John discussed the HVJ rally regarding current issues surrounding the homeless population. HVJ has been meeting with Portland Police Department and OSS staff on storage possibilities at the shelters. The Logisticare meeting has been rescheduled from today to mid-January to discuss the bus passes. Contact Ashley Gorczyca for more information.

The Homeless Vigil will be held on Monday, December 22. It will start at 4:00 pm at Preble Street.

IX. Federal and State Legislation – Cullen Ryan

Cullen stated that the Federal government is open for business, including HUD. A measure was passed to extend with modest changes to: increase HCV and McKinney Vento by 1% each; HOME/STEP was cut by 10%; Section 8-11 (disabled individuals) increased 11%; Project-based Section 8 increased 11%. Homeless Youth Initiative was flat-funded.

Rental assistance regulation surrounding public housing through local Housing Authorities was expanded to convert to project-based housing. McKinney Vento has been expanded to nonprofit delegations, which was an oversight in the last round. On December 11, the National Housing Trust Fund was funded by the surplus by Fannie/Freddie. This is its first funding since 2008. In addition, there was a small state minimum placed into the legislature. Maine anticipates receiving approximately \$3M for extremely low-income populations. This won't be in the form of rental assistance, but rather a brick-and-mortar approach. This funding will go into MSHA, with an RFP most likely be developing within in a year.

Senator Collins was previously the ranking member of the T-HUD committee, and now sits as Chair. In addition, the House and Senate are both Republican majorities but not two-thirds, so we may see a more middle-ground approach. Right now, everyone is preparing for a "What You See Is What You Get" situation for the next 2-4 years.

On the state level, the City of Portland is being financially squeezed by the state regarding the lawsuit. The state has not reimbursed the City since June. This impact could equal up to \$6M, requiring the City to have significant cutbacks and freezes.

X. Other Business

Ali addressed current trends at Preble Street.

The Kitchen hit a high of 30,000 meals for November. The Pantry was helping approximately 100 households per week, but is now hitting 150. Jeff stated the increase may be due to GA with Rent increasing, but not overalls. The Family Shelter is seeing people move people out with as low as \$78 left for the month for utilities, diapers, and food.

The Teen shelter has noticed an increase in the number of youth turned down and sent to Oxford Street, as well as a severed lack of follow-up from DHHS when calls are made. Rob clarified whether it is no call, or just delayed. The Resource Center is looking to help sober sex offenders state-wide (Hope House in Bangor only has 17 beds). In addition, they are looking for places to send those restricted from Milestone and Oxford Street.

Tom discussed the ACA clients transitioning back to work. Any plans that are purchased during open enrollment are safe, as the Supreme Court won't hear it until after open enrollment and won't have a decision until June or July.

NEXT MEETING:
Thursday, January 15, 2015
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.