

EMERGENCY SHELTER ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

REFUGEE SERVICES CONFERENCE AREA
190 Lancaster Street

Thursday, February 18, 2016
8:30am – 10:00am

Minutes

Vicky Rand	CHOM
Aaron Geyer	City of Portland
Peter Driscoll	Amistad
Ginny Dill	Shalom House
William Higgins	HVJ
Joanie Klayman	Preble Street
Steve Hershon	Bayside

Ali Lovejoy	Preble Street
Nicole Evans	United Way
Norman Maze	Shalom House
Patty Robinson	PS: Florence House
Thomas Ptacek	Preble Street
Wendy Harman	SMLA
Cullen Ryan	CHOM

I. Introductions

II. January Shelter Bed Usage Statistics

Jeff Tardif explained the January 2016 statistics ([see statistics](#)); overall average bed nights were down compared with last year. Home to Stay funding was released on the first of the year and clients are applying for STEP and Housing Choice vouchers. Tennant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) has exhausted its funding; it is scheduled to be refunded with the new fiscal year on July 1st. TBRA was able to serve 190 families, greater than their original projection of 110. Bill Higgins asked why single individuals count as family households at Family Crisis. Jeff responded that it is due to family crisis serving survivors of domestic violence.

III. Shelter Matrix

The Family Shelter used the warming center for 13 days in January. Jeff described how families that need the warming center have nowhere to go during the day. He said the YMCA may provide day space and programming for warming center families. He said that faith based entities, Yarmouth faith community and Family Promise, are looking to host families as an option when overflow is exhausted. Donna Yellen asked about showers for families, as people ask to take showers at Preble Street. Jeff thinks the Y may be the best option for warming center clients to take showers during the day. Dave was asked if there are plans to increase hotel overflow at the family shelter and he said he was not aware of any. Aaron is going to speak with MSHA about VISPDATs and asylum seeking clients, as the population often requires extensive use of the language line to complete the SPDAT when many won't qualify for MSHA funded services based on their immigration status regardless of their vulnerability score.

IV. OSS Long Term Stayers Report Update

Brian went over the OSS matrix and gave the LTS update. He said the average bed nights are down from last year, but up from last month, possibly due to the colder weather. Vicky explained that the increase from last month coincides with many restrictions being lifted and the OSS team prioritizing VISPDATs; despite the uptick from last month the numbers still represent a three-year low. Dave said that the division was successful in adding and redistributing staffing resources to meet the VISPDAT requirements of the new funding formula.

V. Homeless Voices for Justice Update

Jim distributed the results to a surveys completed by homeless individuals that detailed their concerns and priorities. HVJ held a community yesterday meeting to discuss the results. HVJ will speak at the housing committee meeting on February 24th, at 5:30 pm. This afternoon, HVJ will head to the statehouse to testify in support of LD1488, the \$2 million Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion bill; Mike smith, a new HVJ member, will testify on their behalf. The bus pass demonstration project will continue into March. HVJ will tour the statehouse and meet the governor on March 18th. The HVJ is looking into the Grant Street evictions with Preble Street and Pine Tree Legal.

VIII. Federal and State Legislation

Federal:

The presidential budget was released and includes an increased funding to several program; the budget is provisional as it must be passed by congress. The Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016 passed the House of Representatives.

State:

LD1488, as mentioned by Jim, will increase access to opiate treatment by diverting users from entering the prison system into treatment. Expanding MaineCare (Medicaid) is up again at the legislature.

IX. Format Review

Dave said he has received comments on the length of time spent on statistics and the amount of paper used for ESAC handouts which largely go unused prompted the testing of the overhead projector in lieu of paper handouts. He asked if there were objections to using the projector in future meetings and there were none. A limited number of paper handouts will be printed for walk-in community members.

X. Other Business

• Unsheltered Survey

Allie shared the unsheltered homeless subcommittee survey results. The survey of 42 individuals looked at the reasons people go unsheltered. Respondents cited being restricted from shelter, bed bugs, crowded conditions, security, kept them from accessing shelter. 86% cited access to financial assistance was one of the biggest barriers to housing: lack of income, subsidies etc. She explained the demographics of the survey, including that 1/3 of respondents were over 50 years old. A primary barrier identified is the paperwork and documentation individuals need to obtain in order to access vouchers and assistance; this is compounded by the lack of availability of these documents for unsheltered individuals. Shelter Plus Care and BRAP are available but present applications and follow-ups that can be challenging for the unsheltered. Members discussed asking MSHA which data on the applications are required to release funds and which are things the state would like to know. Shalom House hasn't received many Shelter + Care or BRAP applications despite there being funding; Cullen followed up that these applications may need hands on help filling out the applications from a group similar in the way the LTS initiative works.

• PIT

Preble Street expects about 60 individuals who completed Point in Time surveys for sleeping out on the night of January 27th. The final count may be lower due to people not giving full names.

• Grant Street Evictions

Pine Tree Legal is working with tenants facing eviction, many of whom are former long-term homeless.

• Florence House

As of March 1st, women will be able to sign up for the waitlist by phone or in-person.