



**BARNSTABLE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

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MEETING MINUTES

CAPE & ISLANDS REGIONAL NETWORK ON HOMELESSNESS POLICY BOARD MEETING

Monday, September 28th, 2020

9:00am-10:30am

Meeting Held Using Microsoft Teams

Members Present: Beth Albert, Leo Blandford, Fran Bradshaw, Martha Burzycki, Cassi Danzl, Maggi Flanagan, Suzie Hauptmann, Lysetta Hurge-Putnam, Hadley Luddy, Jan Kendrick, Heidi Nelson, Edythe Nesmith, Greg Quilty, Dr. Arlene Rodriguez, Paula Schnepf, Karen Tewhey, Mary Waygan, Maybelline Willner, Erika Woods

Members of the Public: None

Barnstable County Staff: Dan Gray, Martha Taylor

Guests: Andy O'Dell, Father Bill's/Mainspring Tenancy Preservation Program

Unable to Attend: Beth Bowman, Andy Clyburn, Cathy Gibson, Taylor Hilst, Megan Homer, Gina Hurley, Jacqueline Lane, Susan Mazzarella, Walter Phinney, Eddie Murphy, Joe Taylor

Elected Officials: None

Assembly of Delegates: None

County Commissioners: None

1. Welcome and Introductions:

- a. Heidi Nelson, Vice Chair, facilitated the meeting which began at 9:05am. Dan Gray read the following statement: *The meeting will be held through remote participation pursuant to Massachusetts Governor Charles D. Baker's Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law on March 12, 2020. The public will be allowed to view the meeting; but no public comment will be taken. This meeting will be recorded.*
- b. Dan completed a roll call of attendees.

2. Approval of Minutes:

- a. Vice Chair asked for motion to approve meeting minutes from June 17th, 2020- so moved by Beth Albert with a second motion by Edye Nesmith.
- b. **Roll call vote-** all in favor, none opposed, Fran Bradshaw and Karen Tewhey abstained as they did not attend June meeting.

3. Policy Board Changes- Heidi Nelson

Creating a Healthy Connected Cape Cod

The Mission of the Department of Human Services is to plan, develop, and implement programs which enhance the overall delivery of human services in Barnstable County and promote the health and social well-being of County residents through regional efforts that improve coordination of services.

- a. Taylor Hilst, Nantucket Human Services Director, has been added to the Policy Board. Paul Niedzwiecki is leaving Cape Cod Healthcare and there has not been a replacement identified for the CCHC seat on the Policy Board. Gene Carey has retired from Vinfen and Fran Bradshaw has been named to sit on the Policy Board until Gene's replacement is hired. Additionally, Beth Bowman has left the United Way for a position at We Can.
4. **Coordinated Entry System (CES) Policies and Procedures Update-** *Dan Gray, Barnstable County Dept. of Human Services*
- a. At the beginning of the pandemic, HUD promulgated guidance for CoCs to adjust prioritization of individuals and families entering CoC funded housing programs to allow those at highest risk of poor COVID outcomes to be moved higher on the prioritization list. As a result of this guidance, BCDHS, as the CES lead met with the CES Steering Committee and drafted the following statement as an update to the Policies and Procedures, which will need to be approved by the Policy Board:
 "In the event of an emergency declaration, the Cape and Islands CoC/CES will consider guidance and waivers of regulations promulgated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, its state designee or local emergency management entity, in modifying CES Policies and Procedures".
 - b. Motion to approve change to the CES Policies and Procedures was made by Dr. Arlene Rodriguez with a second motion by Mary Waygan.
 - c. **Roll Call Vote-** all in favor, none opposed.
5. **Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP)**– *Andy O'Dell, Father Bill's/Mainspring*
- a. In February 2019, TPP expanded to the Cape and Islands to help the community avoid evictions and threats to tenancy. They are tasked with identifying at-risk tenancies when there is no fault by the tenant and engage the tenant and landlord to alleviate concerns.
 - b. The Housing Court on the Cape also opened in February 2019 and collaborates with landlords, housing authorities and social service agencies to arrange solutions for those facing housing instability.
 - c. Eligibility for TPP is as follows:
 - i. The housing is deemed preservable by both the tenant and the landlord.
 - ii. Someone in the household has a disability. TPP tries to have as loose of a definition for disability as possible. For instance, the current stress and mental health concerns related to the pandemic can be considered a disability. The tenant must have some evidence that they are actively trying to address the disability if possible (i.e. seeing a therapist if feeling stressed or experiencing a mental health crisis). Andy reported that they were not able to work with about 15% of individuals referred to TPP because there was no disability identified.
 - d. Referrals can come from any source but primarily come from the court. Currently, Andy provides weekly question and answer sessions through the "Virtual Counter".
 - e. Many referrals are now coming from previous clients including landlords and tenants.
 - f. When a referral is received by TPP an assessment is completed to determine course of action. Some reasons for referrals include lease violations, non-payment and hoarding. Andy then has a conversation with all parties to ensure there is buy-in for the process.
 - g. Once the assessment is completed they move forward on case planning which can be as simple as a referral to resources like Housing Assistance Corporation for RAFT funds. Some cases, including hoarding, can be much more time consuming with months-long multi-step processes.

Some cases are 3-6 months and some can stretch to over 9 months when there are mutually identified needs.

- h. Case are closed when the tenancy is no longer at risk, but TPP errs on the side of caution and would prefer to keep the case open longer if needed in order to ensure stability.
- i. Andy shared some statistics from the beginning of the program:
 - i. 178 referrals have been received (about 10 per month)
 - ii. Of the 178, 32 cases were opened (18%)
 - iii. 72 other referrals were not opened but were deemed “actionable”, which includes providing guidance or other intervention
 - iv. TPP made 74 referrals out to other agencies
- j. Currently referrals are coming in telephonically, but Andy has been meeting with clients in outdoor locations.
- k. TPP has been doing no touch paperwork exchanges- Andy will drop off a packet at the person’s door and then walk them through the documents during a call, and then pick the packet back up.
- l. Evidence of a disability has been a barrier to eligibility. Some individuals are influenced by the stigma of seeing a therapist or other professional.
- m. Housing court is taking place but are only hearing cases that meet the exemption for the Eviction Moratorium. The cases being tried are blatant instances of health and safety violations toward other tenants or the landlord. There is a Housing Specialist available 5 days per week.
- n. During recent months, tenants have been receiving letters from landlords threatening eviction without court involvement. In these instances, TPP can help mediate and inform client of their rights.
- o. Jan Kendrick from South Coast Legal Services stated that it is a difficult decision to take a case to court because it is not helpful to have an official eviction on someone’s record. However, you have to balance a record with someone being forced into homelessness. The goal is frequently to get the client as much time as possible in a unit.

6. Regional Network on Homelessness 2020 Annual Priorities Update

- a. Youth and Young Adult (YYA) Homelessness- *Beth Albert*
- b. Elder Homelessness- *Beth Albert*
- c. Employment- *Beth Albert*
 - i. In the areas of YYA and Elder Homelessness and Employment, the Dept. of Human Services and Executive Committee are reviewing data to set measurable targets for the annual priorities. This data is tracked through HMIS and the quality of the data will be a focus. In YYA Homelessness the goal will be to increase the number of YYA entered into HMIS. For Elder Homelessness the goal will be to increase individuals over 60 referred to Permanent Supportive Housing through the Coordinated Entry System. The overall goal, which also relates to Employment is to improve the quality of data collected.
- d. Engagement with the Islands- *Beth Albert, Barnstable County Dept. of Human Services*
 - i. Karen Tewhey is now the Executive Director of Harbor Homes and is no longer working for Dukes County but will continue to sit on the Policy Board. As mentioned earlier, Taylor Hilst has been added to the Policy Board representing Nantucket. Staff from BCDHS will connect with Taylor on the YYA grant and further engagement with the Nantucket community.
- e. Emergency Response, including ongoing response to COVID-19- *Beth Albert and Heidi Nelson, Duffy Health Center*

- i. Beth relayed that the Emergency Response meetings had shifted focus in response to the COVID-19 pandemic with extensive assistance from many members of the Regional Network Policy Board.
- ii. Heidi detailed three separate initiatives that have provided services and resources:
 - 1. COVID-19 Response- The motel testing/isolation program funded by Cape Cod Healthcare has served over 100 people. Over the past few weeks numbers have been very low so the motel has been used as needed and for medical clearance for individual accessing other housing. Antibody testing has decreased the number of individuals in the motel even further. The contract with Cape Cod Healthcare ends on 9/30/20, but discussions are ongoing to extend the contract.
 - 2. Duffy also operates a hygiene program with a mobile shower unit which is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday and typically has 30-35 individuals utilizing the resource. The shower unit is heated, so can continue usage and Duffy is in process of establishing protocols to resume use of the shower inside the building. There are also 20-25 individuals who come to Duffy for Case Management encounters including problem solving and referral to resources such as detox placements.
 - 3. Duffy has also offered additional food access through a breakfast program for 10-12 people daily and meal cards for dinners for 5-6 people.
- f. Increase capacity to respond to funding opportunities- *Heidi Nelson, Mary Waygan, Town of Yarmouth and Paula Schnepf, Sandwich Housing Authority*
 - i. Emergency Solutions Grant- Coronavirus (ESG-CV) Round 1- Duffy been awarded ESG-CV Rd. 1 funding through the Massachusetts Dept. of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for their In From the Streets (IFTS) program. IFTS is targeted to those who are medically fragile and for weather emergencies and additional funding was needed due to de-population at the shelter and the likelihood that funding from the state and towns could be effected by the financial impacts of COVID. Duffy has secured \$90K from DHCD and additional funds from the United Way, some towns and the Yawkey Foundation.
 - ii. ESG-CV Rd.2- DHCD has recently closed its application window for ESG-CV Rd.2. These funds are targeted for shelter providers or other Not For Profit agencies to address beds unavailable because of de-population. Duffy's application was submitted to address the decrease in total and overflow beds available at St. Joseph's shelter due to DPH guidance on de-population (20 total beds). If awarded, ESG-CV funds would be used to increase the capacity of motel beds between November 1st and March 31st for responding to winter weather.
 - iii. Community Development Block Grant- Coronavirus (CDBG-CV)- The towns of Yarmouth and Barnstable are entitlement communities for receiving CDBG funding directly. The CARES Act allowed eligible communities to apply for funds to prepare, prevent and respond to COVID. Yarmouth has been allocated \$318K and Barnstable has been allocated \$682K, which are almost triple the amount of normal annual entitlements. Yarmouth will be prioritizing public services (food security, mortgage assistance, rent assistance, utility assistance, child care, internet access and public health initiatives) and economic opportunities for small businesses in Yarmouth to remain open. Kathleen Girard from Barnstable reported to Mary that their priorities will be public services, homelessness services and small businesses. Mary can be contacted by e-mail at mwaygan@yarmouth.ma.us or calling (774) 212-1668. Kathleen Girard can be reached at (508) 862-4678. Public services must be delivered in the town of entitlement. If

agency is providing case management into Yarmouth, Mary can discuss ways to meet requirements. Other towns can access CDBG funds through DHCH. Yarmouth will use the same RFP that they released in the prior application process on a rolling basis.

- iv. Mainstream Vouchers- As part of the CARES Act, the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) received additional funding for housing vouchers under the Mainstream funding stream which serves non-elderly households (under 62) with an adult in the household with a disability. The individual with a disability does not need to be the head of the household. This round of funding was non-competitive, so any housing authority (HA) with a Section 8 portfolio is eligible to request vouchers. There are 6 eligible HAs on the Cape- Barnstable, Bourne, Dennis, Falmouth, Sandwich and Yarmouth- and they can request up to 40 vouchers each. The HA directors have met recently and Sandwich and Falmouth will be requesting vouchers. Dennis is also strongly considering requesting vouchers and it is unclear at this time whether Barnstable or Bourne will do so. It is unknown at this time if Housing Assistance Corporation will receive vouchers through DHCD. There could be up to 200 new vouchers for the region. There are three different application mechanisms for the Cape; Dennis and Bourne participate in a centralized wait list, Falmouth and Sandwich manage their own wait lists and Yarmouth and Barnstable run through the DHCD wait list. Paula can send the Sandwich HA one page pre-application to anyone who needs it.

7. CoC and HMIS Program Manager Updates- Dan Gray and Martha Taylor, Barnstable County Dept. of Human Services

- a. The annual HUD Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) which funds the CoC Permanent Supportive Housing programs has not been initiated due to the pandemic. There has not been any clear direction to date, but HUD has recently stated that any NOFA would be significantly decreased in scope with the hope of level funding all projects. Enacting this change would need congressional confirmation.
- b. The Cape and Islands CoC has had use of the DHCD Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) platform for data collection and have been informed that DHCD will no longer be hosting the enterprise as of 12/31/21. BCDHS has been approved for technical assistance on procurement through HUD and have been in contact with other CoCs that also will no longer have access. These are beginning stages to the process, but this procurement is very important and needs to be addressed immediately despite the end date being more than a year away.
- c. Progress on participation in the Rehousing Data Collective (previously approved by the Policy Board) has been slowed by COVID, but it is now ready to open for CoCs to upload data. Next steps include planning for all clients to sign a release of information for data migration, which will be a time intensive process. BCDHS is in process of determining a workflow

8. Partner Updates

- a. Mary Waygan announced that Yarmouth's Cape Cod Ready Renter list is accepting applications. There are two bedroom units in Falmouth and Dennis and a studio, one bedroom and four bedroom in Yarmouth. Mary can be contacted for an application.
- b. Karen Tewhey announced that Harbor Homes purchased a property in February and opened the house in June for 6 male residents. They are also currently fundraising with the goal of opening a similar program for women in 2021. Information on the program can be found at www.harborhomesmv.com.

9. Adjournment

- a. A motion to adjourn was made by Mary Waygan with a second motion by Beth Albert.
- b. **Roll Call Vote**- all in favor, none opposed.

Respectfully submitted by: Dan Gray, Barnstable County Dept. of Human Services