



**BARNSTABLE COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

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**MEETING MINUTES**

**CAPE & ISLANDS REGIONAL NETWORK ON HOMELESSNESS POLICY BOARD MEETING**

**Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020**

**9:00am-10:30am**

**Meeting Held Using Microsoft Teams**

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**Members Present:** Beth Albert, Cassi Danzl, Cathy Gibson, Suzie Hauptmann, Lysetta Hurge-Putnam, Chris Lawson, Hadley Luddy, Susan Mazzarella, Eddie Murphy, Heidi Nelson, Edythe Nesmith, Paula Schnepf, Maybelline Willner, Erika Woods

**Members of the Public:** None

**Barnstable County Staff:** Dan Gray, Martha Taylor

**Guests:** Jooyi Ryan, Massachusetts Military Support Foundation and Jenn Cummings, Cape Cod Healthcare

**Unable to Attend:** Leo Blandford, Fran Bradshaw, Martha Burzycki, Andy Clyburn, Megan Homer, Gina Hurley, Jan Kendrick, Jacqueline Lane, Walter Phinney, Greg Quilty, Dr. Arlene Rodriguez, Karen Tewhey, Mary Waygan, Joe Taylor

**Elected Officials:** None

**Assembly of Delegates:** None

**County Commissioners:** None

**1. Welcome and Introductions:**

- a. Cathy Gibson, 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. Policy Board Changes- Cathy Gibson**

- a. Chris Lawson from Cape Cod Healthcare was introduced as a new member of the Policy Board. Jenn Cummings from Cape Cod Healthcare will also be participating in Policy Board meetings.

**3. Approval of Minutes:**

- a. Chair asked for motion to approve meeting minutes from September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020- so moved by Beth Albert with a second motion by Cassi Danzl.

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***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.*

b. **Roll call vote**- all in favor, none opposed.

4. **Winter/Emergency Response Update**- *Beth Albert, Barnstable County Dept. of Human Services and Heidi Nelson, Duffy Health Center*

- a. The Regional Network on Homelessness Policy Board Emergency Planning Committee has been meeting regularly since March to coordinate a response to the pandemic. The committee has changed the frequency of the meetings in response to changing needs and is meeting twice per month entering the winter season.
- b. The committee is comprised of providers, community health centers, Cape Cod Hospital, first responders and outreach and engagement teams.
- c. There remain gaps in resources that are needed, including:
  - i. The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) has been in Contact with the Barnstable County Dept. of Human Services (BCDHS) and Incident Command team. They have asked to identify potential shelter sites for the homeless in response to the de-population in individual shelters across the state due to the pandemic. Potential sites have also been discussed with the Chamber of Commerce.
  - ii. The team continues to look for a motel that will allow unaccompanied 18-21 year-old individuals to stay.
  - iii. The Massachusetts Dept. of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has contacted multiple providers looking for sites and a lead provider for 10-15 additional shelter beds.
  - iv. A site needs to be identified to locate the mobile shower unit during the winter.
- d. Duffy continues to provide a motel response for COVID testing, isolation and quarantine that has been funded by Cape Cod Healthcare through December 31<sup>st</sup>. There was a period when the number of individuals who utilized this resource decreased significantly, but there has been a recent uptick including two individuals who tested positive and several who were symptomatic.
- e. The COVID motel program has also been used for medical clearance for individuals entering St. Joseph's shelter, Champ Homes and Homeless Not Hopeless. Duffy has been using a combination of Antibody and PCR testing in these instances, depending on the program the individual is entering.
- f. Recently, there have been efforts to explore access to rapid testing, which would be the most effective method. If rapid tests were available a person could go for a nurse visit at Duffy and the results of the test would allow for admittance to a program with confidence that they would not expose others to COVID.
- g. Duffy has received a contract through DHCD for use of Emergency Solutions Grant- Coronavirus (ESG-CV) Rd. 1. This will be used in place of state and town funding for In From the Streets (IFTS) available during previous winters as an emergency response for weather and those who are medically frail.
- h. Additional funding through DHCD, ESG-CV Rd.2 has been awarded to Duffy to address the overflow beds that will be lost due to DPH guidance on de-population. The guidance has resulted in 20 less beds available to those experiencing homelessness on the Cape during the winter months. Duffy's program will specifically address the 10 bed overflow capacity and BCDHS and other agencies are continuing to work on the gap created by the decrease of 10 beds in the shelter. Duffy is looking to hire 2 staff persons to run this program.
- i. Funding for ESG-CV Rd.2 will be accessed through a portal connected to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for reimbursement.

- j. Duffy is also providing bagged breakfasts at the Federated Church and cards for dinners at local restaurants. These programs are funded through the Town of Barnstable Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).
- k. Duffy has a mobile shower unit that was provided by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) as a hygiene solution for up to 30-35 individuals per week. They have also connected individuals with Case Management activities while they were on site for a shower. As mentioned by Beth, there is still a need for a facility that has showers for use or a large space with electricity and water where the mobile unit could be parked.
- l. As previously stated, there is also need for a daytime solution. Currently, the Coffee House is not operating and the day program at St. Joseph's is not able to accommodate individuals who are not staying at the shelter. A central location in Hyannis would be preferable. Staff from various agencies would likely have the capacity to run a program similar to the Coffee House.
- m. Edye Nesmith asked whether government mandates around gatherings of people would impact the planning for a shelter or day programming. Susan Mazzarella reviewed the guidance around shelter capacities. The guidance for day programming would be based on the size of the space used.

5. **Housing Assistance Corporation Resources**— *Cassi Danzl, Vice President of Programs and Clients*

- a. Gov. Baker's administration released information on Columbus Day about a number of eviction diversion programs to support households impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Several of these programs are still in development.
- b. The programs and resources include:
  - i. Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC) and 211- HAC received additional funding available for a Special Services Coordinator position for easy access to triage and referrals. This position will provide "light" case management to assist with navigating services and will be launched in early December. There is also a contract with 211, which is a state-wide line open 24/7 for triage and referrals. Historically, there has been difficulty with 211 when trying to access it from the Cape because of issues with cell towers. They are working to have this issue fixed.
  - ii. Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) and Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance (ERMA)- These are financial assistance and Rapid Rehousing (RRH) programs. ERMA was launched in July and services households between 50-80% area median income (AMI) impacted by the pandemic. ERMA can provide up to \$4000 for rent or mortgage arrears for those remaining in their housing. RAFT is available for those households under 50% AMI. RAFT benefits increased to \$10000 for renters able to maintain housing for an additional 6 months or until June 2021 if the household has school aged children. For homeowners or those with landlords that will not commit to the 6 month/June 2021 timeframe, the benefit is capped at \$4000. Applicant documentation requirements have also been slimmed down. HomeBASE RRH has received additional funding but has not made programmatic changes. The Massachusetts Evacuee Transitional Assistance Reserve (METAR), first developed after hurricane Maria, is being brought back and will provide up to \$10000 for households with dependents under age 21 who have not engaged with Emergency Assistance program before. A gap in the system is that these RRH programs are only for those households with dependents under 21 and there are no resources for households with other compositions.
  - iii. Legal Services, Community Mediation and Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP)- Legal services programs received additional funding to hire attorneys to represent low-income

households and will have an open referral process. Community Mediation Centers is a new program to the area to provide no cost services to mediate tenant and landlord disputes. Mediation services can be accessed outside of the court system and will be an upstream intervention. Cape Mediation will be covering Barnstable and Nantucket counties and Martha's Vineyard Mediation will cover the Vineyard and Bristol counties. These services are also open referral. Tenancy Preservation is being expanded to assist households with dependents and low-income elders regardless of disability status.

Referrals must come from 211 or the HCEC for the expanded eligibility criteria.

- c. HAC has provided services to 776 households between 7/1/20 and 10/31/20 through the HCEC including clients from all towns on the Cape and both islands, with the exception of Wellfleet, which has its own rental assistance program through the housing authority.
- d. In October 2020, 52% of requests were for rent arrearage financial assistance. HAC received 13% of calls for the same reason in October 2019.
- e. Since March 21, 2020 HAC has administered \$622,136 of financial assistance on behalf of 229 households across all funding sources.
- f. Since July 1, 2020 HAC has utilized \$366,820 for 94 households using RAFT/ERMA. HAC entire FY2019 budget was \$359,863.
- g. In addition to RAFT and ERMA, HAC is administering funds on behalf of Barnstable County (HOME), the towns of Barnstable, Brewster, Chatham and Yarmouth as well as donations through the Workforce Housing Relief Fund (WHRF). Use of WHRF has been slow due to the expansion to RAFT and ERMA. When WHRF fund was started it was the only funds available to households above 50% AMI. Once ERMA was launched there was a state resource that could provide funds up to 80% AMI and HAC uses state and federal funding before using town funds. HAC is expecting a second wave of applications as households that continue to experience instability will apply again.

#### 6. **Massachusetts Military Support Foundation (MMSF)– Jooyi Ryan**

- a. MMSF is a non-profit agency located on Joint Base Cape Cod and works in conjunction with the Cape Cod Military Support Foundation and USA for Vets. The foundation has 3 brick and mortar empowerment centers across the Commonwealth where they provide support to military and veteran families including bi-weekly food distribution.
- b. COVID shut down the empowerment centers and they shifted to a drive through model and have distributed more than 5M pounds of food including 5000 food boxes on Cape to military and veteran families.
- c. The Farmers to Families program is running weekly at Cape Cod Community College and at the Cape Cod 5 building, 18 West Rd. Orleans and have been distributing 2100 boxes of food per week. These two distribution sites have been extended and MMSF is looking for additional sites to expand their reach, including in Bristol County and Rhode Island.
- d. Other MMSF projects include Thanksgiving meal kits on the Cape and “Coats for Vets” in conjunction with the Kraft Foundation to distribute special “sleeping bag” coats and other cold weather gear to unsheltered veterans. Last year they distributed 12,000 coats and they have 35,000 this year to be distributed with assistance from local Police Departments.
- e. MMSF has about 700 volunteers that assist with food distribution and “Project Santa” that provides gifts to military families. More information on all of the programs can be found on their Facebook page.
- f. A new MMSF initiative that will be launching in the next 6 months is called “Patriot Farms”. One of the goals of MMSF is to assist with the transition as an individual is leaving the military because of the shift in culture and structure. When they become civilians there is limited

direction on how to navigate the community now that they are “free”, which has led some to homelessness. Patriot Farms will be a working farm where veterans can live and provides structure similar to what they experienced in the military. They will also receive vocational training, social skill training, therapy, peer support and other services. There is evidence that this model can be helpful for veterans experiencing PTSD.

- g. MMSF received a new grant in the Summer 2020 for Homeless Veterans Reintegration program, called Jobs4Vets, through the Dept. of Labor. The program connects homeless or formerly homeless veterans to sustainable employment. Supportive case management is initiated upon enrollment and can begin with access to immediate resources ,such as food, before moving to employment needs like resume development, cover letters, job search and skill development and connecting them to the employer network. The goal of the program is to secure sustainable employment related to the areas of expertise learned in the service. They provide 270 days of follow up for post-employment support.
- h. MMSF is hoping to do a “Stand Down” on the Cape when restrictions ease.

#### **7. CoC and HMIS Program Manager Updates- *Martha Taylor and Dan Gray***

- a. The US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) annual Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) which provides funding for the Continuum of Care has been on hold since July. HUD has not yet supplied any information about when or how submissions will occur. HUD has stated that the response will contain significantly less information and it would be a non-competitive application to level fund all programs. Changes to the NOFA process are required to have legislative approval and would likely be included in negotiations on a stimulus package.
- b. BCDHS conducts the annual Point In Time Count (PIT) and Housing Inventory Count (HIC) as required by HUD during the final week of January. The PIT includes a count of both those who are in shelter and those who are unsheltered. HUD has recognized that face to face interaction, which are traditionally part of the unsheltered PIT, is not safe during a pandemic and has provided guidance for conducting the count safely. CoC’s will be allowed flexibility in completing the count and exemptions can be requested for any data elements that cannot be collected given the current recommendations on distancing. If necessary, CoCs can request to be exempt from conducting the unsheltered count in its entirety. The Outreach Teams on the Cape have considerable information on those experiencing unsheltered homelessness and the hope is that BCDHS can work with them to get as accurate a count as possible through observation. The count is still on track to occur at the end of January.
- c. The CoC has been operating its Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) platform with permission to use the system run operated by DHCD. However, as of 12/31/21, DHCD will no longer support CoCs in using their enterprise. As such, BCDHS will be procuring its own enterprise and have received technical assistance from a HUD consultant. BCDHS plans to release a Request for Proposal (RFP) by December 15<sup>th</sup> with an implementation target date of July 1, 2021. The enterprise should be up and running by December 31, 2021 with the largest task being the migration of data from the current HMIS projects.
- d. The HMIS Policies and Procedures have recently been reviewed and updated with no changes to policy. There have been minor edits and formatting changes and language added to the Security and Privacy section to reflect the electronic transfer of data. The Policies and Procedures are available on the BCDHS webpage.

#### **8. Partner Updates**

- a. Paula Schnepf announced that HUD has awarded Sandwich Housing Authority an additional 40 Mainstream vouchers which serve households that include a person with a disability between

the ages of 18 and 62 with preference going to those who are homeless, institutionalized or in a Permanent Supportive Housing program. Falmouth Housing Authority will also be receiving 40 vouchers in March. Applicants have been receiving vouchers very quickly as there is not currently a long waiting list, so all eligible households are encouraged to submit a pre-application.

- b. The Dept. of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is still using waivers and changes to Policies and Procedures enacted in response to COVID. Clients are receiving a simplified form for re-certification and interviews have been waived unless there is conflicting or missing information, such as earned income that DTA cannot verify. TAFDC and EAEDC can be filed online or through phone access by calling (877) 382-2363. The Employment Services program has been linking clients to online license and certification programs and trainings. Access to these resources is only available through 12/31/20.
- c. Hadley Luddy announced that Homeless Prevention Council is enrolling families for their “Adopt a Family” program for the holidays. Any family living from Harwich to Provincetown can be enrolled.

#### 9. **Adjournment**

- a. A motion to adjourn was made by Lysetta Hurge-Putnam with a second motion by Heidi Nelson.
- b. **Roll Call Vote**- all in favor, none opposed.

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