

Meeting Minutes

Rebuilding Lives Funder Collaborative Meeting

Monday, November 14, 2016

11am – 1pm

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission

Attendees

Rebuilding Lives Funder Collaborative (RLFC) Members: Antonia Carroll, Becky Westerfelt, Carl Landry, Ron Lebsack, Christy Hendricks, Foster Ugbana, Val Harmon, Jeff Cutlip, Jeff Pattison, Mark Paxson, Jonathan Welty, Lisa Defendiefer, Kim Stands, Mary Vail, Mary Wehrle, Michael Brooks, Michelle Heritage, Nancy Case, Patrick Jarvis, Rhonda Grizzell, Steve Gladman, Steve Sielschott, Sue Darby, Terri Power, Veronica Lofton

Community Shelter Board (CSB) Staff: Lianna Barbu, Amy Price, Heather Notter

Welcome and Agenda Review

Michelle welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda.

Administrative Issues

Michelle asked if there were any corrections to or comments on the minutes from the September 7 RLFC meeting. Jeff P. moved to approve the minutes, Mary V. seconded, and the RLFC agreed.

Kim described the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program, a federal funding opportunity from HUD to address youth homelessness. HUD will select only six urban areas, so the process is highly competitive. The City of Columbus, Franklin County, and CSB are collaborating on the application, which is due November 30. Michelle and Kim noted that even if our CoC does not get the funding, the process of gathering partners and creating a plan to prevent and end youth homelessness is useful.

- < Michelle reviewed proposed changes to the RLFC membership to support the application. The proposal adds a seat on the RLFC for the Youth Advisory Board and designates Franklin County Children Services – already an RLFC member – to also represent the Committee to End Youth Homelessness. The RLFC Board previously reviewed the changes and recommended that the RLFC approve them.
- < Lianna reviewed proposed changes to the Continuum of Care Governance and Policy Statements. The RLFC would oversee development and implementation of the Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness. The Committee to End Youth Homelessness and Youth Advisory Board would be standing committees under the RLFC. The RLFC Board previously reviewed the changes and recommended that the RLFC approve them.
- < The RLFC Board also recommended that the RLFC add the Committee to End Veterans Homelessness as a standing committee under the RLFC.

- ⟨ Lisa moved to approve the resolution on changes to CoC governance and membership, Carl seconded, and the RLFC agreed.

Michelle informed the RLFC that winter overflow is open. The Exit Program will provide overflow services for sex offenders. The Exit Program works with and provides services to sex offenders released from prison. If the Exit Program is not able to shelter a sex offender who contacts the Homeless Hotline late in the day, Lutheran Social Services Faith Mission will provide a chair for the night. Lisa thanked the YMCA for keeping overflow open throughout the winter, instead of opening and closing it depending on the temperature.

Michelle informed the RLFC that CSB Director of Programs and Planning Amy Price will be starting a new job with Access Ohio after Thanksgiving.

Jon asked about potential impact on our system from the recent elections. Michelle expressed CSB's concern that funding for HUD and Health and Human Services will decrease, making it more difficult to help our clients.

Strategic Issues

Lianna reviewed the annual System and Program Indicator Report.

- ⟨ Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) providers were selected as programs of excellence: Columbus Area Integrated Health Services (CAIHS), Community Housing Network (CHN), Maryhaven, National Church Residences (N^^), Volunteers of America Greater Ohio (VOAGO), YMCA, and YWCA. PSH programs are very successful, with 92% of clients served successfully existing or remaining in PSH, and the programs maintaining 94% occupancy.
- ⟨ The family system served approximately the same number of families this year as last year, but there has been a 65% increase over the last 5 years. The success rate is starting to increase, but the average length of stay has increased slightly. At 26 days the average length of stay is far below the national average of 94 days, but we would like to reduce it further. The system consistently runs at capacity.
- ⟨ The number served in the men's system increased by 9% as a result of a decrease in the average length of stay. A lower average length of stay allows shelters to serve more people. The success rate is starting to increase. Income at entry increased 24% over last year.
- ⟨ The number served in the women's system decreased by 3% compared to last year because last year the system had flexible capacity at Van Buren that does not exist this year. The success rate is increasing and the average length of stay is decreasing.
- ⟨ Outcomes for the Navigator Program are improving. Successful housing outcomes are at 36%; the 10-year goal is 40%. The average number of shelter visits (1.4) is already below the 10-year goal (1.5). The average length of shelter stay needs additional work – it is currently 53 and the 10-year goal is 30.
- ⟨ The Diversion Rate at the Homeless Hotline is improving – the rate started at 14% and is now 22%. The 10-year goal is 30%.

- ⟨ There are no significant changes in the PSH programs – they are performing well. Terri asked if CSB collects data on where clients go when they exit from PSH. Lianna replied affirmatively and will bring the data to the next RLFC meeting, along with comparisons between local and national data.

Lianna reviewed the Occupancy Report, reminding the group that we want to see 95% occupancy or above for all programs. Short-term drops in occupancy are normal, but we become concerned when there are patterns of low occupancy over multiple months.

- ⟨ CAIHS Scattered Sites program is at 85% occupancy because of funding limitations.
- ⟨ N^^ Commons at Livingston I and II have been under-occupied for the past three months because we are having difficulty identifying veterans who are eligible for the program.
- ⟨ YWCA WINGS is below occupancy because of their building renovation. They will begin leasing up the new building this month.
- ⟨ Amethyst's occupancy rate is very low and they are working to increase it. Changes in program eligibility and direct outreach to shelters are in place to help increase occupancy.
- ⟨ Mary V. asked if there are any updates on efforts to increase affordable housing. Michelle responded that the Affordable Housing Alliance will release a report with data and recommendations in January 2017. The report will address the current supply of affordable housing, the gap between what the community has and what the community needs (including gaps for specific sub-populations), and opportunities to increase affordable housing using strategies adopted by other communities. Mary asked if there is a difference between affordable housing and rental assistance. Michelle responded that they are not necessarily separate – some individuals need access to more affordable housing, but also still need some rental assistance.

Lianna reviewed the annual financial report for FY16.

- ⟨ Actual CSB sources of revenue were 85% of projected revenue because the system did not spend all available federal funds in FY16. CSB and providers are working to improve use of federal funds.
- ⟨ For expenses, CSB reviews the variance columns to assess why programs did not use funds as projected. Sometimes using fewer funds than projected is good and sometimes it's not. For example, Van Buren Family Shelter used fewer funds than projected partly because of the cost savings from transitioning the shelter from Volunteers of America to YMCA. CAIHS, on the other hand, was not able to use all federal funds because of delayed contracting from HUD and the initial lease up process.
- ⟨ CSB also reviews cost per household served to assess whether programs are spending funds efficiently.

Updates on Rebuilding Lives Strategy Progress

The group reviewed updates on progress toward Rebuilding Lives Plan strategies.

- < There are no updates on Strategy 1 – Coordinate Emergency Aid.

- < Amy reviewed Strategy 2 – Increase Access to Benefits and Income, reminding the RLFC that YWCA discontinued the Benefits Partnership and no other provider volunteered to take the program. COHHIO is stepping in to provide similar services and will select a local provider to administer their benefits program. HUD emphasizes use of the SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) program as a best practice for increasing SSI/SSDI rates.

- < Mary V. provided an update on Strategy 3 – Employment. Goodwill works to develop partnerships with businesses for job training and ultimately hiring, preferably for positions that are on a career track and can lead to higher paying jobs. Goodwill worked with Donatos and Columbus Hospitality Management to train and employ PSH residents, but found that PSH residents are not necessarily interested in employment, possibly because of concerns regarding perceived repercussions on benefits and rent. Goodwill is working to adjust this effort to serve other populations. An Employment Navigator is working with the Navigator Program to connect with clients after they are housed, instead of when they are still in shelter. Prior to obtaining permanent housing, clients are still in crisis and are less able to focus on training and employment. Goodwill will begin to engage them during aftercare services and is working with CSB to identify potential resources for longer rental assistance that would help clients remain housed during job training and internships. Michael noted that Columbus Works – an initiative based on Cincinnati Works – is starting efforts in Columbus. They are focused on getting people into jobs with career tracks and pay higher than the minimum wage. Michelle asked if they work with homeless or formerly homeless people and Michael replied that they do, but they are just getting started in our community. Michelle recommended that Michael give a progress update at the next RLFC meeting.

- < Amy highlighted the outcomes on Strategy 4 – Single Point of Contact for Shelter. CSB and HandsOn Central Ohio are working to reduce Homeless Hotline wait times and implement enhanced family diversion efforts. Providers meet monthly to identify process improvements. Kim asked if the number of families calling the Homeless Hotline has increased and Lianna responded that we don't know because this is the first year we have tracked the data. Terri asked Amy to elaborate on the lessons learned cited in the report. Amy explained HandsOn efforts to improve communication with shelters to make sure the system uses all available beds for individuals on the waitlist. Regarding YMCA's help answering the Hotline during third shift, Amy noted that YMCA usually only handles emergency family placement during those hours. However, during overflow season, everyone is sheltered. Regarding outgoing calls to the waitlist during the busiest Hotline times, Amy explained that HandsOn doesn't have the staff to make outgoing calls to people on the waitlist and answer incoming calls during the busiest Hotline hours. They are only able to fill beds with people who call in, so people on the waitlist have to call in to see if there is a bed available. HandsOn doesn't have enough funding to hire additional staff. During overflow, however, there is no waitlist and everyone is sheltered.

- < Amy gave an update on Strategy 6 – Unified Supportive Housing System (USHS). The update includes data on how long it takes to fill vacancies in each project. The numbers are usually high when USHS doesn't have enough files for people who qualify for the program.
- < Lianna reviewed Strategy 7 – Increase Supportive Housing Units, highlighted YWCA WINGS expansion and CHN Terrace Place, both of which are currently leasing up. CHN Briggsdale II (which received OHFA tax credits and is applying for HUD funding next year) and N^^ Commons at 161 (which received HUD funding and is applying for OHFA tax credits next year) are in the pipeline. CHN St. Clair will be closed in December 2016 and the tenants are being transferred to other residences.
- < Michelle previously discussed Strategy 8 – Affordable Housing.
- < Amy highlighted the data on Strategy 11A – Re-Entry Housing Advocacy for the Incarcerated Population, noting that there is clearly an issue with previously incarcerated individuals finding stable housing. Jeff P. asked what the data looked like before the Navigator Program was established and Michelle responded that we don't know because we didn't previously track the data by sub-population.
- < In Susan's absence, Michelle covered the update on Strategy 11b1 – Re-Entry Housing Advocacy for the Mental Health population. Michelle explained that HUD de-funded Southeast's New Horizon transitional housing program, not the CoC. The CoC also did not rank the program at the lowest ranking option. HUD decided to fund new programs that the RLFC ranked lower than New Horizons instead of funding New Horizons because HUD prefers permanent housing to transitional housing. ADAMH is trying to identify more funding for people discharged from acute care settings.

Michelle reminded the RLFC that the 10-year Rebuilding Lives Plan expires in 2018. CSB and the RLFC Board have begun discussions about a plan update, preferably via a process that is less expensive than the plan development in 2008. Michelle observed that a Plan update may be easier and less expensive than the last one because of the various plans and resources available to leverage, such as the Franklin County-led Prevent Family Homelessness Collaborative, federal Opening Doors goals, Affordable Housing Alliance report, and the upcoming Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness. The Plan can support and align everything that is already happening.

Meeting Adjourned