

Meeting Minutes

Rebuilding Lives Funder Collaborative Meeting

Wednesday, December 13, 2017

11am – 1pm

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission

Attendees

Rebuilding Lives Funder Collaborative (RLFC) Members: Becky Westerfelt, Buck Bramlish, Carl Landry, Ron Lebsock, Deborra Armstrong, Christy Hendricks, Jeff Pattison, Jerome Johnson, Sally Shaffer, Matt Kosanovich, Lisa Defendiefer, Lisa Patt-McDaniel, Callie Query, Karen Koster, Keena Smith, Kim Stands, Mary Wehrle, Michelle Heritage, Nancy Case, Paula Haines, Carl Williams, Rhonda Grizzell, Hank Mylander, Susan Carroll-Boser, Veronica Lofton

Community Shelter Board (CSB) staff: Tom Albanese, Lianna Barbu, Heather Notter

Guests: Ryan Cassell (Community Housing Network), Colleen Bain (National Church Residences Permanent Supportive Housing)

Welcome and Agenda Review

Michelle welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda.

Administrative Issues

Michelle asked for any corrections to or comments on minutes from the September 20, 2017 RLFC meeting. Christy moved to approve the minutes, Lisa D. seconded, and the RLFC agreed.

Tom reviewed changes that CSB is proposing for the HEARTH Policies and Procedures.

- < Much of the information is the same, just trimmed and re-organized to make the document more concise and user-friendly.
- < Shelter service restriction policies, eligibility requirements, appropriate level of care, and transfer procedures were adjusted, in collaboration with shelter providers. Every client in shelter should have a housing plan and be working towards regaining housing, with levels of support and assistance varying according to the client's individual situation and needs.
- < For Direct Client Assistance, CSB recommends removing the maximum amount of assistance and emphasizing a needs-based approach. CSB also added more flexibility to the process and time frames.
- < For rapid re-housing (RRH) programs, CSB recommends using a dynamic prioritization pool based on housing barriers and client needs, to better target RRH resources to the most vulnerable clients. This approach is consistent with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) RRH standards and requirements.
- < Becky asked whether clients who don't agree to a plan will be asked to leave shelter. Case managers and shelter staff will use a progressive engagement approach to determine the most appropriate intervention for each person.

- ⟨ Lisa P. asked whether CSB has an idea of the number of people who decline to work on a housing plan. Tom replied that we don't know yet – the revised service restriction policies have only recently been enacted, but CSB will track this data going forward.
- ⟨ Michelle added that CSB had concerns about discharges from shelter for rule-breaking when the person may have behavioral or mental health challenges that make it difficult to comply with shelter rules. CSB and shelter providers worked together to find a balance between keeping shelter staff and other guests safe while making sure the neediest clients receive the help they need.
- ⟨ Sally asked how shelters handle people who are waiting for SSI or SSDI, which may take a while. Tom explained that clients can still receive RRH assistance and be re-housed while waiting for SSI or SSDI to come through.
- ⟨ Becky asked how much leeway the system has with shelter restrictions, especially for special subpopulations like youth. Tom replied that there are some hard requirements from HUD on eligibility and prioritization, but we do have some leeway and will revisit the service restrictions annually to see if adjustments are needed.
- ⟨ The RLFC Board reviewed the changes and recommended that the RLFC approve the revised policies and procedures.

Tom reviewed changes that CSB is proposing for the Unified Supportive Housing System (USHS) Policies and Procedures.

- ⟨ The most significant proposed change is regarding unit matching and client prioritization. The revisions prioritize USHS applicants by length of time homeless and severity of service needs, consistent with HUD's prioritization guidance and requirements.
- ⟨ As part of the clarifications on prioritization, CSB recommends removing the Rebuilding Lives category.
- ⟨ Carl L. asked when the revised procedures and USHS application will be released. Tom replied that CSB will wait until USHS Program Manager Angelic Arana returns from maternity leave in January 2018.
- ⟨ The RLFC Board reviewed the changes and recommended that the RLFC approve the revised policies and procedures.

Michelle reviewed a resolution to support the recommended changes to the HEARTH and USHS policies and procedures. Matt moved to approve the resolution, Lisa P. seconded, and the RLFC agreed.

Community Plan

Michelle reminded the RLFC that the Rebuilding Lives Plan expires in 2018. CSB is proposing the development of a new plan to end homelessness, retiring the Rebuilding Lives brand. With the retirement of the Rebuilding Lives brand, the RLFC will need to be re-named. CSB recommends using the terms that HUD uses – Continuum of Care instead of RLFC and Continuum of Care Board instead of RLFC Board.

- ⟨ Tom presented a draft framework for the community to use as a starting place for a new plan. The framework articulates federal, state, and local principles and presents a vision for what a comprehensive, optimized homeless system would look like if fully resourced.
- ⟨ The framework defines what it means to effectively end homelessness, using the definition from the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). The USICH definition

emphasizes development of an optimized system that makes homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

- < The draft goals in the framework mirror existing federal, state, and local goals. Five goals target particular sub-populations and eight are cross-cutting system goals. We can use federal criteria and benchmarks, where they exist and are appropriate for our community, and can develop our own local criteria and benchmarks where there are no federal standards and where it's more appropriate.
- < The framework includes strategic opportunities for each of the goals, to give people a sense of what is already happening in these areas and what may be possible. The opportunities are just a starting place and are not meant to constrain additional input.

Once the RLFC approves the plan framework, community stakeholders will come together on January 16, 2018 for an all-day session to identify and prioritize specific strategies for each goal.

- < *Ad hoc* leadership groups for each goal will then take these strategies and dig deeper into each one, determining what strategies we should prioritize over the next three years.
- < Christy asked about the timeline for completing the plan. Tom responded that the work at the retreat and in the committees will culminate in a plan for RLFC review and approval in June 2018.
- < Kim asked about the approval process and Michelle explained that the plan would go to the CSB Trustees, RLFC Board, and RLFC for approval.
- < Christy asked about updating the plan and Tom said that RLFC will review and update the plan annually. It's meant to be a dynamic document that can be adjusted as needed.
- < CSB Trustees have reviewed and approved the framework. The RLFC Board has also reviewed the framework and recommends that the RLFC approve it.

Michelle reviewed the draft resolution supporting the plan framework and approach for the plan development. Lisa D. moved to approve the resolution, Nancy seconded, and the RLFC agreed.

Strategic Issues

Lianna reviewed the FY18 Quarter 1 System and Program Indicator Report.

- < Equitas Health and National Church Residences Permanent Supportive Housing were recognized as programs of excellence for achieving compliance with CSB's rigorous program certification standards on the first try. Capital Crossroads and Discovery Special Improvement Districts were recognized for their excellent street outreach efforts and outcomes.
- < The number of households served in the family system decreased by 26% compared to the same time period last year. Since family system capacity is flexible, this indicates there are fewer families in our community who need shelter. The number of successful housing outcomes has increased. CSB is working with family system providers to reduce average length of stay (ALOS) to 30 days. Seventy percent of families were homeless for the first time (i.e., had not been homeless in our system in the previous 2 years). Twenty percent of the families included a pregnant woman and 92% lived in Franklin County. Employment and income also increased from 29% to 37%.
- < Kim asked whether the reduced number of families is because of improved diversion. Michelle replied that better diversion outcomes are helping and CSB will continue to improve

diversion efforts, but CSB is not sure yet why the number has decreased. Michelle noted that increased employment is good, but it also means that more working people are ending up in shelter, demonstrating the lack of affordable housing.

- < Lianna reported that the number of people served in the women's system decreased slightly (5%). Since the single adult system has fixed capacity, the reduction does not mean that there were fewer women who needed shelter. The ALOS increased and the rate of successful housing outcomes was constant. The women's system served 80 pregnant women. Michelle noted that CSB expected outcomes for single adults to temporarily dip because of the transition of RRH services from Access Ohio to YMCA.
- < The number of people served in the men's system decreased and ALOS increased. The waitlist averaged 50 men. Successful housing outcomes for men decreased for the same reason as in the women's system.
- < PSH programs served over 1,900 people, with an average housing stability of 41 months. This stability is good for current PSH residents, but it means fewer units turn over and become available to house new clients.

Lianna reviewed the annual financial report, comparing budgeted and actual revenues and expenses. The report includes CSB funding sources and other funding sources that partner agencies use for the various system programs (i.e., leverage).

- < CSB actual revenues are 90% of budgeted revenues mainly because agencies did not use all HUD CoC funding that was available.
- < For expenses, CSB generally looks at variances below 80%. There are only a few programs in this category and overall CSB does not see cause for concern. CSB is working to address the under-use of direct client assistance funds by partner agencies.
- < Carl L. asked if there is a correlation between a program's overall variance and program utilization. Lianna said not necessarily. There may be such a correlation for smaller programs, but not for all programs.
- < The cost per household served/capacity enables cost comparisons for similar programs.

PSH Project Development

Ryan and Becky presented the project plan for Marsh Brook Place, a PSH program that would serve transition-age youth experiencing homelessness with mental illness and/or addiction. Ryan shared the good news that Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) designated Marsh Brook Place as the first (of two) priority project in OHFA's new youth housing tax credit pool.

- < Colleen asked whether CHN and Huckleberry House have rental assistance funding for the project. Ryan explained that CHN has rental assistance for 20 of the 40 units. Lianna added that when HUD allowed CoC funding to be moved from National Church Residences Commons at 161 to CHN Briggsdale II, HUD required CHN to provide the same number of units as would have been provided in the original Commons at 161 project. Briggsdale II has 40 units, so CHN has 20 additional units that can be used for Marsh Brook Place.
- < Jerome asked whether the services provided would include GED and other educational services. Becky replied affirmatively, explaining that Huckleberry House doesn't currently provide GED services onsite, but works with providers that do. Huckleberry House is committed to helping youth work toward education and/or employment goals. Michelle added that Huckleberry House has a good track record with facilitating GEDs. Becky reported that Huckleberry House's Board has a fund from which they grant scholarships.

- < Nancy asked about the age range for the target population and Ryan replied that it will be ages 18-24.
- < Michelle noted that the project's location is somewhat out of the way and asked about transportation options. Ryan explained that bus access in the area is good, with a bus stop right outside the site.
- < Carl W. asked if CHN and Huckleberry House have a relationship with the YMCA that is near the site. Becky noted that the proximity is indeed helpful. Huckleberry House has good relationships with other YMCA locations and hopes to replicate those relationships with the location near Marsh Brook Place.
- < Christy asked about residents with small children. Ryan explained that there will be some 2 bedroom units and a community room with a play area for children. Christy asked about day care. Becky confirmed that Huckleberry House has parenting services and staff work with each family to identify good child care. Some families prefer child care closer to work or school and some prefer it closer to home.
- < Nancy advised CHN and Huckleberry House to be mindful of the requirements for the number of bedrooms for families. Lianna noted that youth-headed families can also access the rest of the community's PSH inventory, if there isn't space at Marsh Brook Place or if another program would be more appropriate for the family. Becky observed that some youth do well in adult PSH programs. Marsh Brook Place will be for those who can really benefit from youth-tailored services.

Lianna summarized feedback on the project from the Citizen's Advisory Council and providers. Both groups were supportive of the project and recommended including youth input in the design and implementation of the project.

- < Carl L. noted the cost per unit and asked how that cost compares to market rate housing. Lianna responded that the project costs are in a similar range as other recent PSH developments, accounting for current higher construction costs. CSB does not know how it compares to market rate housing.
- < Tom observed that OHFA thoroughly vets projects applying for tax credits. Ryan agreed, noting that OHFA recognizes that it's more expensive to build PSH than market rate housing because there are more regulations and because of the administrative costs of the tax credit process. Unfortunately, there are no resources available to build affordable PSH outside the tax credit process, especially not at a larger scale.
- < Michelle added that the additional costs for PSH development demonstrate the gap in affordable housing. It's difficult for any housing provider – including the Veteran Administration, Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA), scattered sites PSH providers, and RRH providers – to find market rate housing that's affordable. Ron concurred, explaining that landlords are more reluctant to participate in CMHA's programs and developers are buying up affordable housing to rent at market rates.
- < Buck raised the issue of prevention, noting that once someone loses their housing, the landlord is more likely to raise the rent and less likely to rent to someone with more severe needs. It's understandable for the system to focus on the neediest individuals, but we also need to look at prevention so that people don't become homeless in the first place.
- < Michelle agreed that the system needs to cover more than just people who will be homeless tonight and work on a way to gauge housing instability and better identify those on the verge of homelessness.

- < Hank informed the group that the Department of Job and Family Services is working on a housing stability early warning detection system and will have a better idea of where the effort is going in January. There has been a lot of collaboration and support around the community and the effort is looking promising.
- < Carl L. emphasized that we never want to say no to a new PSH development and that the cost may be appropriate, but he encouraged the RLFC and PSH developers to question whether projects can be developed for less money. He acknowledged that the homelessness system is not in a great position to negotiate, but saving some money now could free up funds for other developments in the future.
- < Michelle said that we may be able to find someone to build PSH for less money, but there's no source of funding other than tax credits. Columbus and Franklin County would have to decide as a community to incentivize developers to build affordable housing. Many developers would be willing to build affordable housing, but can't figure out how to make the finances work without charging market rate rent.
- < Tom added that supportive services also add costs for developers, because they need to include office and community space in the buildings.
- < Lisa P. emphasized the importance of building quality housing up front so that operating costs are lower in the long run. She also noted that our clients deserve to live in a good environment, which supports their mental and physical health. Michelle agreed, adding that the cost of PSH is lower than the cost to the community of people frequenting the emergency room and/or jail.
- < Michelle also agreed with Carl L's point, however – the community does need to figure out how to develop more affordable housing. Buck asked whose role it is to promote affordable housing. Michelle explained that the City, County, and private corporations are discussing the issue. The Affordable Housing Alliance commissioned a study to determine the gap in affordable housing in our community and present potential recommendations.
- < Buck asked what the RLFC can do about affordable housing and Kim suggested that we raise that question at the Community Plan retreat in January.
- < Carl W. asked about reducing the eviction rate so that fewer people lose their housing. Michelle agreed, noting that the Prevent Family Homelessness Collaborative is working on eviction issues, as is Columbus Legal Aid, Columbus Foundation, and Women's Commission.

Meeting Adjourned