

Meeting Minutes

Rebuilding Lives Funder Collaborative Meeting

Thursday, January 26, 2017

11am – 1pm

Franklin Station

Attendees

Rebuilding Lives Funder Collaborative (RLFC) Members: Antonia Carroll, Becky Westerfelt, Buck Bramlish, Deborra Armstrong, Christy Hendricks, Emerald Hernandez, Matt Kosanovich, Jeff Cutlip, Jeff Pattison, Mark Paxson, Jonathan Welty, Lisa Defendiefer, Callie Query, Kim Stands, Mary Vail, Mary Wehrle, Michael Brooks, Michelle Heritage, Patrick Jarvis, Rhonda Grizzell, Robin Harris, Steve Sielschott, Julie Wagar, Terri Power, Veronica Lofton

Guests: Noel Welsh, Ryan Cassell (*Community Housing Network*); Faith Williams (*YWCA*); Colleen Bain, Amy Rosenthal (*National Church Residences Permanent Supportive Housing*); Stephanie Lunceford, Danielle McKnight-Zellner, Craig Perry (*Columbus Area Integrated Health Services*)

Community Shelter Board (CSB) Staff: Lianna Barbu, Tom Albanese, 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 November 14, 2016 RLFC meeting. Emerald moved to approve the minutes, Jeff C. seconded, and the RLFC agreed. Michelle introduced Tom Albanese, CSB's new Associate Director.

System Updates

Tom explained that the new veterans system is established and we are continuing to work out protocol between provider agencies. The system is using the federal benchmarks for ending veteran homelessness as guideposts and will use Veterans Administration (VA) resources in a more intentional way before using local resources.

- < The new process, which started in November, includes a weekly meeting to review numbers and a by-name list of veterans.

- < In February, the Committee to End Veteran Homelessness will evaluate progress so far and work on developing system-wide policies and procedures to ensure sustainability.

- < Lianna added that the by-name list contains approximately 100 individuals. CSB generates benchmark reports every two weeks. The numbers are moving in the right direction, but we have a lot more work to do before we can meet the goals.

On youth homelessness, Kim reported that our community did not receive the federal funding that we applied for in November 2016. The grant process was very competitive with few slots for

participation in a HUD Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program. The Committee to End Youth Homelessness will meet on February 7, 2017 to discuss next steps. Anyone is welcome.

- < Deborrha indicated that Children Services is seeing an increase in hotline referrals and placements, particularly for children under 10. The increase may in part be related to the ongoing opiate epidemic. Children Services is working to identify more foster and kinship families, and additional resources to support kinship families.

- < Mary W. informed the group that a sponsor has been identified for a recovery high school in central Ohio. Recovery high schools are for students who have been through an addiction treatment program. They provide a safe, drug-free post-treatment environment for students to finish their high school education. In addition to the regular high school curriculum, recovery schools also provide counseling and support. The school in central Ohio will be modeled after a successful recovery school in Indiana and will aim for approximately 50 students to start. It will be a charter school that will accept referrals from school systems throughout central Ohio. They may be able to open the school by fall 2018.

- < Becky added that Huckleberry House is seeing an increase in the use of hard drugs, including opiates, in the Transitional Living Program.

On family homelessness, Michelle explained that the number of homeless families is steady, but is still too high. The Prevent Family Homelessness Collaborative is working on 4 main pillars and aims to cut family homelessness in half over the next 5 years.

- < The Collaborative is starting to get traction on trying to reduce evictions, which are disproportionately high in Columbus compared to other similar cities. Legal Aid and the eviction court are involved in these efforts. The Collaborative will work with landlords to help families access stabilizing services when they are struggling to pay rent. The Collaborative will also investigate zoning and building code issues.

- < The Affordable Housing Alliance will release a report in late February that will include feasible recommendations on funding opportunities to increase affordable housing in Franklin County.

- < CSB has the lead on racism and homelessness and is working with the Center for Social Innovation on an initiative (Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities) to analyze and reduce racial disparities in the housing sector.

- < Matt referenced a study conducted by Chase and The Urban Institute on evictions. Michelle will send the report to the RLFC.

Strategic Issues

Michelle reviewed the FY 2016 Rebuilding Lives Report Card. She reminded the group that we will be updating the Rebuilding Lives Plan, probably by knitting together ongoing initiatives. Tom will take the lead.

- < Matt described continued uncertainty regarding EFSP funding. United Way is working with HandsOn Central Ohio, but they are in a holding pattern regarding funding availability. The

'Coordinate Emergency Aid' strategy probably should be updated when we revise the Rebuilding Lives Plan.

- < The YWCA Benefits Partnership closed in July 2016, but COHHIO will contract with a local provider for SOAR services, an evidence-based best practice approach for increasing SSI approval rates.
- < Mary V. described the new workforce board as the biggest challenge and opportunity for increasing employment. In the past, the board hasn't focused on individuals with barriers, but this is a good opportunity to collaborate with the new board on serving higher-barrier populations. Matt noted that the new board is required to serve people with higher barriers and that the new board executive is doing a great job.
- < The Single Point of Contact for Adult Shelter is established, but there are significant concerns over wait times for the Homeless Hotline. CSB is analyzing data and working with HandsOn to identify a solution. Chase and Safelite Auto Glass, which have large call centers, have offered assistance.
- < The Collaborative Outreach system is operating well. Mary W. provided feedback from homeless camp residents that they are seeing too many people coming to their camps to offer help, which can be overwhelming. Mary W. will discuss with Tom and James Alexander at Maryhaven.
- < The Unified Supportive Housing System (USHS) is operating well. All permanent supportive housing units in the system are now included in USHS.
- < We continue efforts to increase supportive housing units and provide rent subsidies. CSB is trying to raise additional public and private funds for rent subsidies, but identifying additional resources has been challenging. The Salvation Army's Jobs2Housing program will expand to focus on pregnant women.
- < LSS is building a new facility for CHOICES, the domestic violence shelter. HandsOn conducts a warm transfer with CHOICES for callers experiencing domestic violence. Rental assistance and USHS are also available for domestic violence victims.
- < For the mental health population, HUD discontinued funding for Southeast New Horizons. ADAMH continues to fund the project at a limited capacity.

Lianna reviewed a comparative analysis of national and local homelessness data. The source of the national and urban data is HUD's Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR). Given the extensive collection, compilation, and analysis required for the AHAR, there's a delay in releasing this data, which represents the time period 10/1/2014 through 9/30/2015. The source of the local data is the 2016 Point-in-Time Count and the most recent federal fiscal year, which covers 10/1/2015 through 9/30/2016.

- < Local unsheltered homeless numbers increased because a different PIT Count methodology allowed us to identify more homeless individuals and because use of the HUD PIT Count forms made deduplication more difficult.
- < Columbus serves more women, more children and young adults, more disabled individuals, fewer Hispanics, more African Americans, and larger families than the national statistics. These trends are consistent for single adults and families. More individuals come to the homelessness system from homelessness and fewer from institutional settings (e.g., health care facilities, jails). Homelessness episodes end more quickly in Columbus, with lengths of stay lower than the national averages. Overall, these statistics indicate that Columbus is appropriately focused on serving the most vulnerable homeless individuals and families.
- < Emerald asked if HUD's definition of length of stay is the same as CSB's. Lianna replied affirmatively.
- < Becky expressed concern about the use of length of stay statistics for the youth population. Transition Age Youth (TAY) have shorter stays in shelter, but this is not necessarily a good indicator of success because many exit to instability. With short lengths of stay, providers are not getting a chance to do anything meaningful with youth that will increase stability. Youth who exit often don't return to the homelessness system because they don't find it to be relevant. Becky observed that the narrative that the homelessness system advances regarding lengths of stay is obscuring the fact that TAY are faring poorly. Becky asserted that we can affect change now and encouraged everyone to be more impatient about moving beyond talk and towards action.
- < Tom agreed that we can't use any one metric in isolation and that TAY are especially challenging because they are more transient than other populations. Tom and Michelle agreed that we should move forward quickly and expressed optimism about the Committee to End Youth Homelessness because it involves diverse parts of the community that are enthusiastic about change.
- < Robin suggested either not using length of stay as a metric for TAY or identifying a length of stay goal that's more appropriate for the population. Michelle explained that length of stay is a statistic required by HUD, but we can develop local metrics if we want.
- < Becky opined that the statistic itself is fine, but we have to change the narrative around how we report this statistic to explain what it means in the context of the youth population. Becky also observed that the work on best practices is complete and that now we just need to implement. Tom agreed, but also expressed optimism about learning best practices from other communities and noted that recently-released federal benchmarks for ending youth homelessness may be useful guideposts, as they are in the veterans system.

Michelle reviewed the System and Program Indicator Report for 7/1/2016 – 9/30/2016. The Featured Programs of Excellence were Huckleberry House Youth Emergency Shelter, Volunteers of America of Greater Ohio Men's Shelter, and YMCA's First Breath initiative at Van Buren Center.

- < For the Family system, the Average Length of Stay (ALOS) has increased, while the number of households served decreased. The family shelters are at full occupancy. CSB and the two family shelters are working to figure out why ALOS increased. From the data, we can see that many of the families served have experienced homelessness before in the last 10 years, but we can't tell from the data why they returned to homelessness or why ALOS has increased.
- < For the Men's system, ALOS decreased, leading to an increase in the number of men served.
- < For the Women's system, the number of women served increased because of an increase in capacity and a decreased ALOS. The system is serving the most number of women ever. The rate of Successful Housing Outcomes is low.
- < For the Navigator program, Successful Housing Outcomes are low both from shelter and from the Navigator program (which includes aftercare services). Access Ohio has been focused on decreasing ALOS, but needs to find a good balance between decreasing ALOS and increasing Successful Housing Outcomes.

Emerald explained that the Mayor's office is concerned about bad landlords, so when they see sub-standard housing, they inspect all the properties that the landlord owns, not just the housing in question. They want to share information on bad landlords so we don't send our clients to these property owners. Michelle agreed that we should consolidate our lists.

- < Julie said that YMCA has observed some landlords ending their relationship with the homelessness system and some raising rents. It's very difficult for clients to sustain housing on minimum wage.
- < Tom described an initiative to develop a more intentional and systematic effort to engage and develop relationships with landlords. Steve Gunn, who has a contract with CSB to conduct housing inspections, will assist.

Lianna reviewed the Occupancy Report.

- < Columbus Area Integrated Health Services (CAIHS) Scattered Sites program is below occupancy because we are trying to determine the right size for the program, given the available funding.
- < YWCA WINGS has finished the relocation back to the renovated Griswold Building and is at full occupancy.
- < Southeast New Horizons is closing.
- < Amethyst continues to have very low occupancy and difficulty attracting women to its program. They have hired a new outreach coordinator to recruit residents at shelters.

PSH Project Updates

Noel and Ryan provided updates on Hotel St. Clair, Terrace Place, Briggsdale II, and Parsons Place. Jon added information on the tax credit market, which has historically been based on the corporate

tax rate. Investors are expecting the new administration to reduce the corporate tax rate, which will reduce funds available for low-income housing tax credits nationwide. Investors have paused investment for at least 6 months and the system is in flux. Jon will keep the RLFC informed of developments and expects more clarity in the next 2-3 months.

Faith reported that YWCA WINGS residents are back in the renovated Griswold Building. Administrative staff moved back this week. Faith thanked the community for all the help and support during the renovation. YWCA will be organizing events to celebrate the re-opening. Colleen asked if WINGS is all Rebuilding Lives units now and Faith replied affirmatively.

Amy provided handouts specifying the new site for Commons at 161. The project did not receive tax credits because OHFA was concerned about the location near a vacant building. They were able to find a new site in the same area. They are working on additional outreach to community groups regarding the new site and hope to get tax credits this year.

Other

Lisa updated the group on a Discovery SID business member lunch January 25, 2017. They are seeing an increase in unsheltered homelessness downtown and businesses want to help reduce it. Discovery SID will follow up on this opportunity and develop ideas for how businesses can help. In addition, Discovery SID will hold a fundraising event for outreach efforts on March 16, 2017. Kim noted that the Short North business group is also discussing efforts to reduce homelessness.

Meeting Adjourned