

Housing Continuum of Care-Bucks County
Meeting Minutes
March 24, 2016

Introductions, Announcements, Welcome /Approval of minutes (Don Detweiler)

Don Detweiler welcomed those present. Attendees introduced themselves. Don called for the approval of the minutes for the January 28, 2016 HCoC-BC meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Tracy Mellor. The motion was seconded by Stefanie Hendel.

Membership (Matt Uhler)

Matt Uhler discussed membership renewals, indicating that the membership renewals will go out at about the time of the election slate – which usually happens in April. He encouraged HCoC members to consider participating at the committee level.

PIT Update (Stefanie Hendel)

The PIT took place between 1/27 and 1/28. Volunteers counted 530 people total, this is a 9% increase from 2015. Due to weather, shelter utilization was high which may account for a portion of the higher count. 41% of the people counted were children under the age of 18 and 11% were youth between the ages of 18 – 24. 2% identified themselves as veterans. 11% identified as victims of domestic violence. 5% were chronically homeless individuals and 59% of adults identify as having a mental health and/or substance abuse disorder. Of the total number, 416 were staying in emergency shelters or transitional housing, 84 were staying in churches or hotels/motels, and 30 were staying outside or in a place not meant for habitation. Information will be posted on the HCoC website, and the final report is due to HUD on May 2. About ½ of those who provided their names were/are in the HMIS system.

CoC Grant Update (Marti Woglom)

Tier 1 renewal grants were awarded in the amount of \$518,703 (PennDel Mental Health, Family Service Association, Bucks County Opportunity Council, Keystone Opportunity Center, Penn Foundation, HMIS). The large project for Valley Youth House, which was a tier II project, has not been announced yet. Other projects not yet announced were the projects by Opportunity Council for coordinated assessment and a bonus project from FSA for permanent supportive housing.

Today is the deadline for CDBG and Emergency Solutions Grants. Some emails that were going out have gone in to spam folders, members are encouraged to check junk folders so that no notices are missed.

Training (Deb Neidhardt): There were about 40 people at the March Bridges out of Poverty training. There is a morning conversation (for graduates of Bridges) on May 20. There is a mental health first aid training on April 8.

Landlord Engagement (Discussion): Liz Fritch talked about how Legal Aid once provided landlord training and taught landlords about tenant law. These were held in upper, central, and lower Bucks.

They usually had about 40 people attend. They had a pretty broad reach. The idea was that educated landlords are better landlords. They would be willing to do this again if funding were available.

Erin Lukoss mentioned that because there's an increased focus on rapid re-housing, there needs to be greater landlord engagement. There is consideration being given to a locator position, but will need feedback on what the needs are.

Tracy Mellor indicated that there is a stigma around individuals with vouchers/subsidies.

Marti Woglom asked the group what their experience has been like in identifying landlords, and what do they think a locator position might look like?

Liz Fritsch said a landlord list was compiled and may be available in the office of community development.

Brock Eichenhofer agrees that vouchers have stigma, and he tries to show landlords that a voucher can be guaranteed income. He sees value in a locator that would work on behalf clients.

Some of the barriers for clients include criminal backgrounds, credit checks, drug felonies, previous evictions (unpaid).

Rich Aichele emphasized that landlords need to be made whole and that as business people they want a return on investment with no problems and no damage. The housing locator that Keystone uses manages the relationships with the landlords. Additionally, they saw an increase in tax collection, because some landlords paid back taxes so that they could participate.

Specific things that might help with landlord engagement include:

- Education for landlords (with respect to landlord/tenant law)
- Addressing the stigma of subsidies
- Putting an emphasis on relationships with agencies (those supporting a landlord's tenant)
- Developing a common database of landlords
- Developing a list of selling points for why landlords should engage
- Assuring landlords that they won't lose money through engagement (mitigating risk)
- Conducting pre-inspection with landlord prior to lease

In the bigger picture, work needs to be done on:

- Messaging
- Marketing
- Funding

Recorded by Matt Uhler, HCoC-BC Secretary