

**Housing Continuum of Care-Bucks County**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**February 23, 2017**

**Welcome, Introductions, Approval of minutes (Don Detweiler)**

Don Detweiler welcomed those present. Attendees introduced themselves. Don called for the approval of the minutes for the September 29, 2016 HCoC-BC meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Dave Heckler. The motion was seconded by Marti Woglom.

**LHOT (Joyce Schug):** The LHOT is the local housing option team and it includes stakeholders from various disability groups who focus on housing options for people with disabilities. The committee has been working on the prepared renter's education program with Jeff Fields from the self-determination housing project. They will be piloting training materials. They meet the first Tuesday of every other month – meeting information can be found on the HCoC website. They recently met with Legal Aid who presented information on sealing criminal records.

**Outcomes/Data Management (Stefanie Hendel):** This group meets every other month and the goal is to coordinate the research on the needs and characteristics of people experiencing homelessness. They also review data to determine if those needs are being met. During the last few meetings they have reviewed housing link data, PIT data, transitional housing data. They will be looking at local preference data and mental health outcomes at the next meeting. The next meeting is Tuesday April 14 at 9:00 am at BCOC's admin office on Doyle St.

**Training (Deb Neidhardt):** The training committee works on developing and securing trainings for housing related issues. The committee last met on Feb. 15. The next meeting is set for March 27. They are working on developing a curriculum for case management training. Areas being considered are advocacy, how to make referrals, knowledge of resources, etc. They are also working with the library system to see if there is a need to train library staff. Additionally, two Morning Conversations (follow up to Bridges Out of Poverty) have been held, and another is scheduled for March 22. There was a poverty simulation on February 10 and there was a mental health first aid training on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of February.

**Local Preference (Stefanie Hendel):** This is a program through Bucks County Housing Authority that sets aside a certain percentage of section 8 vouchers for families facing homelessness here in Bucks County. The families must be current residents of transitional housing or emergency shelter. The vouchers are intended for families that require permanent rental subsidies to resolve their homelessness on a long-term basis. The committee has met for about 2 ½ years and has housed 52 families with vouchers. They meet to review and rank applications and submit them to the Housing Authority. The next meeting is March 17. The committee meets quarterly.

**SOAR (Stefanie Hendel):** SOAR stands for SSI/SSDI Outreach Access and Recovery. It's a national program that focuses on individuals who are homeless and have severe mental health issues or mental

illness. It helps reduce the barriers to receiving SSI/SSDI, it reduces the length of time and improves approval rates. This past fiscal year, they have had 10 decisions with an 80% approval rate. The average number of days to decision was 57 days. Anyone can become SOAR certified, it is an online certification (approx two full days), and there is a need for additional SOAR trained staff. They meet at the MH/DP offices. The next meeting is April 25. Marlene Piasecki pointed out that the training is a good training for anyone that helps clients secure SSI/SSDI.

**Housing Services Action Plan (Marti Woglom):** A summary of the timeline was provided as a handout. The three areas of focus are preventing homelessness, exiting people who are experiencing homelessness, and coordinating services. The plan is being designed to make the recommendations actionable. Recommendations under review include: centralized intake and assessment; rapid rehousing; individual program results; funding structure; and housing coordinator/locator needs.

**CoC Update/Debrief (Marti Woglom):** The CoC received funding for everything but one project – the transitional housing program at Village of Hope. This is based on the review and ranking and HUD priorities – HUD de-emphasized transitional housing projects. According to the debriefing, our CoC organization and structure scores well. The CoC struggles on performance, some of which can be attributed to the challenges of working with this population, but some of it is also related to the small number of clients being served – a small shift in any one number will represent significant shifts in percentages.

**HUD Funding Application (Marti Woglom):** The CoC is accepting applications for funding for ESG (approx. \$150k), CDBG (approx. \$1.7 mil), and Home (approx. \$700k). For ESG, approx. \$100k can be used for street outreach and operations, the rest has to be used for rapid rehousing. Applications are due 2/24/17.

**PIT count preliminary data (Stefanie Hendel):** The annual PIT count was on Thursday Jan. 26. Approx. 30 volunteers participated. They canvassed lower, central, and upper Bucks along with the 3 code blue shelters. The count was at 511 people, which is a slight decrease from last year, but more people were outdoors and fewer people were in shelters – this might be attributed to better weather this year. Another factor is that rapid rehousing funds have been increased which would decrease shelter stays. A lot of people opted not to provide information on the surveys. One thought is that people who have been on the street for a while no longer want to be surveyed. The reports will be posted on the CoC website once they are submitted to HUD after March 1.

**Enhanced Housing Link Data (Stefanie Hendel):** Stefanie presented a hand out and reviewed the 2016 Housing Link information. The report is posted on the Housing Link page of the CoC website. There were 4049 unduplicated call screenings. 2350 of those calls were sent on to assessment. The category “other results” includes calls that were self-resolved or calls that didn’t need any services. There were a total of 1590 assessments completed. Again, “other results” includes self-resolution. It was suggested that mobile assessments be made at libraries.

Recent changes to housing link include a community queue which is a single prioritized list for housing services. Prioritization is based on vulnerability. Another change is that BCOC's Bristol office is piloting walk-in assessments on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 – 3. They are seeing about 15 clients per day.

**Enhanced Housing Link (Marlene Piasecki):** Housing Link providers are continuously working on ways to improve the Housing Link process. There has been a desire to be able to handle calls live, but the volume is too great for the 1.5 full time staff assigned to Housing Link. They are looking at how to address the drop points in the system (return calls, and getting people to assessment). One thing being considered is a one-stop system in which screening and assessment happen all at once. In order to do this, the volume of calls would need to be reduced – walk-in assessment can help with this. It would require cross-training and looking at how spread the volume of calls to other agencies. It is also important that case workers ensure that they are identified as the other emergency contact so that return calls don't get missed as often. Access to HMIS has been granted to additional agencies so that fewer calls come in to check on client status. A critical question to consider is “who should be served by this system” – should it be limited to those who are literally homeless? This question needs to be answered by the collective with full support of all involved. Another recommendation is to identify who is responsible for the client once they are on the waiting list.

**Funding Committee (Marlene Piasecki):** There continues to be a need for additional funds to come in to the housing system, in particular flexible funding for direct services and operations. This needs to be a collaborative approach that goes beyond the federal grants.

**Open Feedback:**

Geoffrey Hurnyak (Veterans Multi-Service Center) announced that Sunday Dyitt will be in Levittown on Tuesdays and will be in Doylestown on Wednesdays and Quakertown on Thursdays.

Woody (Synergy Project) announced that Synergy Project has mobile drop-in for youth (sandwiches) on Thursdays at 1:00 at the Levittown Library and 4:00 in Bristol. Contact Woody for additional details.

Jessica Peterson (Career Link) asked about how Career Link can direct people without an address to secure one for employment – it was recommended that they contact AHTN or CSSH. They are hosting job fairs, fliers were available.

Carla (Mental Health Association / HOST): They are down to 1 recovery coach and a part-time advocate. They expect their funding to end by the end of April. The perception is that the number of street homeless is growing. She indicated that there needs to be additional street outreach.

Joyce Schug (MH/DP) mentioned that protocols on how to manage camp closures are under development.

**New Business/Old Business (Don Detweiler):** None.

**Recorded by Matt Uhler, HCoC-BC Secretary**