

Housing Continuum of Care-Bucks County
Meeting Minutes
September 29, 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 July 21, 2016 HCoC-BC meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Marti Woglom. The motion was seconded by Rich Aichele.

Outcomes/Data Management (Stefanie Hendel): The combined outcomes/data management committee met on August 10. Three members of the committee attended the National Alliance to End Homelessness conference. At the conference, there was discussion of the new system performance measures along with the rating and ranking process for scoring proposals. It also became evident that very few people in Bucks County with low-income will only pay 30% of their income towards housing – in Bucks, it can often be up to 50%. This requires greater effort to connect people to other resources to meet their financial needs. Another take away from the conference was that rapid re-housing needs to be client-driven (find, pay, and stay mentality is needed). They also looked at some of the CoC questions, in particular reducing returns to homelessness, and strategies discussed were diversion, section 8 local preference, the SPDAT tool, and the SOAR program. The other topic discussed was income growth – strategies include SOAR, partnering with Career Link, partnering with the community colleges and local training programs. The next meeting is October 11.

A question was asked about the 30% vs 50% income. The standard is that people only pay 30% of their income towards rent. Because Bucks has a high cost of living, the reality is that it can cost upwards of 50%.

LHOT (Joyce Schug): Next meeting is on October 18. The committee has not met in a while, but the next meeting will focus on Landlord engagement. There is no SOAR update.

Local Preference (Rich Aichele): Local preference met on Sept. 16. They reviewed 6 applications. All total, about 71 applications have been processed since 2014, and 85% have retained their vouchers. The next meeting is on Dec. 16th.

Training (Deb Neidhardt): There is a Morning Conversation scheduled for October 20 at 9:30 to be held at the New Britain Baptist Church. There is a Bridges Out of Poverty training scheduled for October 25 at the Community College. Lenape Valley Foundation is planning to conduct a mental health first aid training for code blue volunteers – scheduled for Nov. 12 at Lenape Valley. Next committee meeting is scheduled for Oct. 5. Sue Denard added that they are looking to engage the library system to provide assistance for staff and find out their needs.

HAB Update (Roger Collins): Everything is being reviewed with the hope of having recommendations in place by October.

CoC Update (Marti Woglom): The application has been submitted. The CoC applied for 1.2 million. The application included renewal grants, for reallocated funds, for new permanent bonus grants, and a planning grant. Nationally, there is a trend away from transitional housing towards rapid re-housing. Two existing grants chose to reallocate transitional housing projects to rapid re-housing projects. A hand out showing a snapshot of the projects was provided for CoC attendees. The entire application is posted on the website.

Sue Denard asked about the permanent supportive housing projects appear at the bottom of the ranking. As tier 2 projects, they may end up not receiving funding.

HUD Update (Marti Woglom / Deb Kirkner): A number of CoC members attended a regional HUD meeting. One key focus is on fair housing. It appears that compliance monitoring is a focus area. They emphasized their willingness to provide technical assistance. There is a group working on making the CoC application process easier.

PIT 2017 (Stefanie Hendel): The PIT will take place sometime in the last 10 days of January. Last year 530 individuals were counted (a 9% increase from 2015), 114 of them were in code blue shelters or on the street. The 2016 reports are available on the CoC website. The first PIT planning meeting will be on October 20 at 2pm in the 4th floor conference room.

AHAR (Annual Homeless Assessment Report): Stefanie is collecting data for this report. Data from Bucks County has been accepted for the past five years. Eventually this data makes its way to congress and helps determine the level of support communities receive.

Housing Link (Stefanie Hendel): A Housing Link report handout was provided to members of the CoC. It covered from January to August of 2016. It is the County's entry point in to the housing system. Anyone experiencing a housing crisis is to call in to the Housing Link. They are assessed on their eligibility and vulnerability and then are referred on for services. There have been 2645 calls during this time period, and call volume is increasing. Of those calls, 95 identified as veterans, 128 were fleeing domestic violence, and 227 were transition age youth. Of the 5 assessment sites, the majority of callers are referred to the Bristol site (64%). During this time period, 1102 assessments were completed, and about half of those (612) were referred on to housing services. 115 were not eligible for services, 112 did not show up for their appointment, and 263 had other results, which includes people who self-resolved and no longer needed an assessment. The highest housing service needs are for emergency shelter, rental assistance, and rapid re-housing. The reports are posted on the website.

Rapid re-housing (Nicole Yerkes): Nicole touched on the basics of rapid re-housing which follows a find, pay, and stay model – essentially helping clients find housing, provide assistance to help secure housing, and provide case management to help clients maintain their housing. The goal is to get clients to self-sufficiency and paying 100% of their housing. Funding comes from multiple grants, each with different matching requirements. The three primary goals of the program are to reduce the length of time people are homeless, exit households to permanent housing, and limit the returns to homelessness. Nicole

provided some statistics on the program (since January 2015) and pointed out that all clients applying must meet the federal definition of homeless. All information was provided to the CoC on handouts.

There was discussion about whether people's incomes are too low or if housing costs are too high. The consensus is that the cost of living is high for low-income individual, but that by securing other supports, clients can maintain their housing. There was also discussion on the case management aspect and the housing first approach.

Mental Health and Co-Occurring Supportive Housing Program (Joyce Schug): Joyce provided handouts for the group. She reviewed the qualifications for the program along with the requirements of the Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program.

Performance Measure: Employment and Income Growth (Discussion): Stefanie provided a handout on the data from October 2014 to September 2015. 32% of adults increased their employment. 13% increased their income from other sources (SSDI, etc.). The question posed was what type of goal would we like to set for this benchmark. The discussion was opened up to discuss challenges and strategies. One suggested challenge was that our community colleges are providing higher-end more academic opportunities that might not meet client needs. There was a request for more technical and entry level skills development programs. The concern is that we're not moving clients along a continuum. Marlene Piasecki suggested an employment first approach, and would like to see case management as part of the career system. People with high barriers to employment need to get employed first and then move their way up. High barriers to employment include forensic history, mental health issues, and addiction and recovery issues.

It was mentioned that some people are concerned about increasing their income because they might lose benefits.

Some of the conversation centered on job developers and employment specialists, but resources continue to be a barrier. Career Link has job developers to help people who are unemployed.

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

Recorded by Matt Uhler, HCoC-BC Secretary