

**SUMMARY MEETING MINUTES
CONTINUUM OF CARE WORKING GROUP
FEBRUARY 13, 2009 – 8:30 A.M.
MANCHESTER ROOM – TOWN HALL**

Members present: Myrian Garcia – EHCHC; Amy Rodriguez – Hispanic Health Council; Debra Macht – Work Source; Nydia Einsiedel – Head Start; Miles Godard – CPAS; Diane Wicks – SAFS; Katie Martin – CT Comm. on Homelessness; Sarah Melquist - MACC

Also present: Gary Anderson, Planning Department
Heather Donoghue, Planning Department

After introductions, Mr. Anderson updated the group on the State wide Point-In-Time Count of the Homeless which took place on Thursday, January 29. He said the count went smoothly and that Town and agency staff had the assistance of 20 volunteers including five Manchester Police Officers.

Ms. Wicks said grouping volunteers into teams in advance of the count made for a more organized night. She said the Continuum received \$130 in grant money which was spent on snacks for volunteers, and gloves and socks, given out to those unsheltered persons found on the night of the count. She said there is an on-line survey that the Connecticut Commission to End Homelessness is asking volunteers to fill out. She will email that survey to members of the Continuum. Ms. Wicks said CCEH will extrapolate the data within four weeks and will provide weekly updates on their progress.

Ms. Wicks attended a count debrief on February 11. She said the Manchester count went smoothly compared to the cities, who had difficulty with volunteers showing up on the night of the count. She said Continuum leaders discussed the possibility of using HMIS for completing the shelter survey and possibly doing the unsheltered count every other year. The possibility of doing a soup kitchen count rather than a shelter count was also mentioned as a way to count families who may be doubled-up with friends or family but may go to soup kitchens during the day.

Earned Income Tax Credit Program

Ms. Wicks updated the group on the Town's earned income tax credit program, for which the kick-off was held at the end of January. The intention of the program is to help lower income families receive up to a \$4,500.00 of tax rebate in approximately seven to ten days. She said Senior Adult and Family Services held a budget workshop for which there was a waiting list of 16 people. Senior Adult and Family Services will be partnering with MACC for another such program in March for those on the waiting list. She will email the Continuum about the March date.

Ms. Wicks also said the IRS has a tax advocacy office which was created to expedite and help people with tax return problems. She will email the Continuum that information as well.

Ms. Donoghue updated the Continuum on the status of the Community Development Block Grant funds from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. She said applications for funding will be out soon and are due by April 17th. Agencies interested in completing an application should contact her. The applications will also be available on the Planning Department web site in the near future. Fifteen percent of the total block grant is available for public service activities and a town-wide meeting on funding will be held on March 3. The year's CDBG funds will be approved by the Board of Directors in July.

Ms. Macht told those in attendance about a program called *Dressed for Success*. The program is designed for women who are trying to get into or re-enter the workforce. It provides women who qualify with a head-to-toe outfit for job interviews. Clients must be referred by an agency and if participants receive jobs, they are able to get another outfit in three additional months. Ms. Melquist said MACC offers a similar service for anyone looking for work clothes through its thrift store, although the program is not as formal. Ms. Macht asked if such a program would qualify for CDBG funding. Ms. Donoghue said it might and said any interested agency is welcome to complete an application.

Ms. Martin gave a brief update on current homeless prevention activities at the state level. She said the governor's most recent budget does not propose any additional cuts beyond those originally proposed. The original budget, however, eliminated funding for 150 units of supportive housing through the Next Steps program. She said appropriation hearings are next week and if people are interested in testifying they should contact her. She did note there were currently no cuts to the housing/ homelessness line item, but thought that in these times of budget crisis no items are ultimately safe.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

The next meeting of the Manchester Continuum of Care will take place on ***Friday, March 13, 2009 at 8:30 a.m. in the Manchester Room of Town Hall.***