

**SUMMARY MEETING MINUTES  
CONTINUUM OF CARE WORKING GROUP  
FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2009 – 8:30 A.M.  
MANCHESTER ROOM – TOWN HALL**

**Members present:** Debra Morgan – V.A., Nydia Einsiedel – Head Start, Debra Macht – WorkSource, Myrian Garcia – EHCHC, Andrea Harnois-Cherry – Genesis, Jennifer Eukers – V.A., Phil McNally - MACC

**Also present:** Diane Wicks – Senior Adult & Family Services  
Heather Donoghue, Community Development Block Grant Manager

Ms. Wicks began the meeting by welcoming the group and inviting everyone to participate in introductions, as there were some new people in attendance. She also reminded attendees that last month's meeting was the last official meeting for Gary Anderson from the Planning Department. Ms. Wicks explained that Heather Donoghue from the Planning Department would be assuming his role in the CoC working group and would be working with Ms. Wicks to run the meetings and represent the Town.

**Renter's Rebate**

Ms. Wicks distributed information packets on the Renter's Rebate program. The program runs through September 15<sup>th</sup> and applicants can receive up to \$700/single person and \$900/couple. Appointments are about 15 minutes long and checks would come to participants around November 15<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Eukers asked if people on Section 8 are eligible. Ms. Wicks responded it is based on the person's income and utilities paid. All applicants are screened so it is worth applying though they may not get a grant or may only get a small one. The rebate will be based on whatever the applicant paid out in 2008 and people should apply where they currently live, not where they lived in 2008, if different.

**Job Opportunity**

Ms. Wicks informed the group that SAFS is looking to hire a part-time Social Worker, in case anyone knew of someone looking for such a position. It would be for 19 hours/week and they are looking for someone with a Bachelor's Degree (Master's preferred) with at least 1 year experience.

**SAFS Housing Analysis**

Ms. Wicks analyzed the Top 10 needs by problem category reported to SAFS in 2007-2008. For both self-referrals and case management situations, the top problem was affordable housing. There were 153 new referrals during this period; of these, 37 were homeless or at-risk at the time. Eleven had a primary need for affordable housing.

## **IRS Changes**

Due to the “Making Work Pay” credit, people are receiving a little more money in each paycheck. This is a problem, however, for people who work multiple jobs; because this money is spread out over 3-4 paychecks, they will end up owing more money to the IRS through their end-of-year taxes. This issue is of great concern to SAFS’ IRS contact, who says one option for people in this situation is to change their withholding status.

## **COBRA**

People can get up to 65% of their COBRA payments paid through a new economic stimulus program. Ms. Wicks believes the employer pays the 65% up front and then they are reimbursed.

## **MEMBER ORGANIZATION UPDATES**

Mr. McNally stated that Vernon, Manchester and East Hartford have all seen increases in their outdoor/unsheltered homeless population. He added the mental health population is also skyrocketing and that these issues are affecting an increasing number of younger people. In terms of outreach efforts, a worker through C-PAS was lost recently but there is a temporary employee through June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Harnois-Cherry mentioned the funding for the SOAR case manager position she had discussed at last month’s meeting had been cut, so the position will end on June 30, 2009.

Ms. Eukers shared that the Veterans’ Administration is working with the Chrysalis Center to fund 24 Section 8 vouchers and provide case management for recipients. The eligibility criteria are broad: combat in the theater of operation and participating towns include Rocky Hill, Manchester, Vernon and Rockville. This is a 3-year grant and Chrysalis will work with participants to get on the regular Section 8 voucher waiting list so they have a regular voucher before this grant expires. The program will be conducted under the “Housing First” Model. Ms. Harnois-Cherry asked for the program’s definition of homelessness, as this tends to vary by program. Ms. Eukers said she will have to look into this and will respond when she has more information.

Ms. Einsiedel said Headstart is starting to recruit for their new preschool. Their new building should be completed by the end of July.

Ms. Macht said there will be a consumer art show coming up at 150 N Main St and a reception will be held on Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup> at 2:30pm. The display will continue through May.

## **HOMELESS REPORT**

The homeless report is finally ready for distribution, after a long period of number crunching, data analysis, writing and editing on the part of the homeless report subcommittee. Ms. Wicks said this year’s report, which can be found on the Planning Department’s website, includes a table of contents and an appendix with websites of interest. The report has already been distributed to the General Manager and the Board of Directors. Ms. Wicks invited attendees to recommend other individuals or groups to whom hard copies of the report should be sent, besides all CoC members.

Ms. Wicks led a review and discussion of the 2008 recommendations from the report. Mr. McNally noted the first recommendation, "...obtaining more information on obstacles to treatment from our respondents will help in developing a more complete understanding of the barriers, which are necessary in advocating for treatment options" will need to be done at the state level. He also raised the question of whether, if the point-in-time count were conducted during the summer, we would have difficulty tracking down families since we obtain related information from the Board of Education and Headstart. He suggested that, in this case, perhaps we could track families through breakfast and lunch programs.

Ms. Macht mentioned that criminal history is also a major barrier to finding housing and employment and should maybe somehow be incorporated into future surveys. She pointed out that having a criminal history makes it nearly impossible to find a job.

Mr. McNally expressed his surprise that no survey respondents had mentioned supportive housing as a primary need (page 12 chart). Ms. Wicks said we may need to adjust survey question #9; supportive housing is not included as an option under "check all that apply." It is likely someone may have written it in on the blank (#9a) at one point so the option just remained in the chart on page 12. We may want to re-evaluate this. Ms. Macht also suggested we may want to include legal services to the list as well.

#### **SUMMER HOMELESS SURVEY AND STATE 2011 HOMELESS SURVEY**

Because the meeting was running long and the discussion is not urgent, it was decided the development of recommendations for the summer homeless survey would be postponed until our next meeting. The same decision was reached regarding recommendations to the State as to how to reach more families in the 2011 Homeless Survey.

#### **HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT EXPO**

Ms. Wicks discussed the expo to be held by the Human Services Department on Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, entitled "Beating the Recession Blues". Each month, this department has been receiving an additional 300 contacts for information referrals, so the topic seems very relevant. As a result, this expo will be open to the entire community, not just low-income residents, and will be geared towards providing relief from stress and financial pressures. A specific outline and programs are still in the planning stages but the event will be held at the Senior Center. Ms. Eukers said she thought the V.A. would like to get involved. Ms. Garcia added that perhaps EHCHC could provide health screenings at the event. Ms. Macht mentioned she could probably provide a list of job sites for people to check in their employment search.

#### **NEXT COC MEETING**

It was decided there were no pressing reasons to hold meetings during the summer months. Therefore, the next meeting has been scheduled for Friday, September 11<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting was adjourned around 9:50 a.m.

The next meeting of the Continuum of Care Working Group will take place on ***Friday, September 11, 2009 at 8:30 a.m. in the Manchester Room.***