

# Chittenden County Homeless Alliance (CCHA)

## Strategic Planning Committee Meeting

March 20, 2019 3:00 – 4:30

### ATTENDEES:

- Jane Helmstetter, **AHS**
- Margaret Bozik, **CHT**
- Travis Poulin, **CVOEO**
- Jan Demers, **CVOEO**
- Val Russell, **CEDO**
- Stephen Marshall, **Homeless Community**
- Kevin Pounds, **ANEW PLACE**
- Amy Carmolla, **UWVT**
- Erica Da Costa, **CCHA**

PLEASE NOTE: Unless quote marks are used, text attributed to a specific person is paraphrased.

### PRELIMINARIES

- The issue of managed encampments – as raised by the mayor – came up. The shelter is currently open until June. The mayor's office is uncomfortable telling people to leave summer encampments and not having a place to offer as an alternative. So they want feedback from people who are already using the shelter.
  - They want to put together a short list of questions to start asking people who are currently using the shelter (until June when it closes): what do you need/want? A smaller group will put together to formulate these questions.
  - Once that has happened, the larger meeting will come back together to move forward.
  - But we need to also talk to people who are CURRENTLY living in camps (even in winter). Some people in camps don't want to go to shelter at any time.

### CO-CHAIR NEWS FOR THIS COMMITTEE

- **Kevin Pounds has agreed to be the new co-chair with Jane of this committee.**
- Kevin wants to make sure we always return to one of primary goals of this committee:  
**Identifying gaps in the system / service challenges.**  
And once identified, the gap should be categorized by asking these questions:
  - Is it about accessing services?
  - Is it about retention?
  - Is it about something else?

### CONSULTANT NEWS

- April 4th is the first meeting with the consultant. The executive team will be meeting plus Chris Brzovic and Stefani from UVM.

## **GENERATING TEMPLATES FOR LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

- We want to provide some guidance for those who ask for letters of support so that it's clear what our mission is exactly and outside entities can be extremely clear about how they fit into our strategic plan.
- Anything proposal that fits with our immediate priorities would receive stronger support. Perhaps we could include in this template the strategic plan itself ([linked here](#) – once open, double click to enlarge).

## **BHA VOUCHER ISSUES**

1. It turns out there is NOT service hole in a small area of Chittenden County as was previously mentioned. BHA will be providing subsidy in the outer reaches of Chittenden County (rather than VSHA).
2. **BHA is hoping to transition out of administering the CoC grants (tenant-based rental assistance for chronically homeless).** There may not be another organization in the community who has the ability to administer these tenant-based subsidies, however. (These subsidies total over half a million dollars a year -- formerly called “shelter plus care” – and they are the only really flexible subsidy we get. It's very low barrier. It's about half of what the community receives. These comes from HUD and goes through the CoC to BHA who administers them. Where section 8 says NO, these grants say yes.) **This conversation is currently ongoing.**

## **QUESTION ABOUT SUB-COMMITTEES REQUIRED BY HUD**

- **NONE are required**, though some are recommended including: Application Review, PIT, HMIS, Performance Measurement, Discharge Planning (out of foster care, prisons, hospitals, etc).

## **THOUGHTS ON THE POSSIBILITY OF MERGING THE 2 CoCs (Chittenden & Balance of State)**

- What would be the appropriate next steps?
- HUD has offered technical assistance.
- One of the suggestions made by the [HUD guide for merging CoCs](#) is that you compare governance structures. Margaret is working on a comparison chart.
- You have to pay dues to be a member of BoS.
- **PRIMARY QUESTION: Is there actually an interest in Chittenden in a merger?**
- The difference in C.E. between the two (Chittenden and BoS) is IMMENSE. BoS is not one entity. They have many continua of care whereas Chittenden has one.
- How many continua exist in the whole state? Answer: 11 counting us.
- Let's compile a list of pros and cons (long term vs. short term).
- **OPEN QUESTIONS:**
  - Is there any harm in getting T.A. without explicit intention to merge? Is it negative to get T.A. and then turn it down?
  - Is there a way to start to working together with BoS to SEE if this might work?

- Would the BoS benefit if we did join together?
- Will this help serve people better in Chittenden?
- How would a decision actually be made about a merger?
- **FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**
  - The time and bandwidth we would spend on a merger **discussion** instead of improving services may be quite outsized.
  - There are no data sharing agreements between the CoCs that make up the Balance of State nor between them and Chittenden.
  - HUD gives you a point increase in benefits (not a monetary increase) and even then it's not an ongoing benefit. It's only the year you merge.
- **The best outcome of this discussion will be that our two CoCs will get closer together.**

**NEXT STEPS:**

- **Let's assess how much interest there is first.** Let's do a straw poll vote about who thinks it's a good idea.
  - **Let's take care about whether we ask, "Who is actively interested in pursuing a merger?" OR "Who is interested in getting more information about it?"**
- And let's **identify the areas where further coordination** between Chittenden and BoS would be beneficial REGARDLESS of whether we become one continuum.
- We need to work on HMIS data sharing.
- Let's find out if there's risk in getting T.A. from HUD.

**BOTTOM LINE:** We are not going to pursue a merger at this point but we see the value of collaboration so we want to identify ways of working more closely together.

**TIME-LIMITED DISCUSSION OF GAPS IN THE SYSTEM:**

- We plan to invite retention services providers to this meeting and/or sending them a survey to complete. These providers include but are not limited to:
  - Sarah Russell
  - Erin Ahearn
  - Someone from Pathways
  - Someone who does financial counseling at CHT
  - And someone from CVOEO
  - Jessica Radbord from Legal Aid
  - Someone working on hoarding

**NEXT STEP:**

- For the purposes of a survey, let's come up with questions about the difficulties in keeping people housed.

To find meeting & event dates and minutes for previous meetings, please go to **cchavt.org**