

CHITTENDEN COUNTY HOMELESS ALLIANCE (CCHA)

Strategic Planning Committee Minutes

July 17, 2019, 3:00 – 4:30

ATTENDEES:

- Travis Poulin, **CVOEO**
- Kevin Pounds, **Anew Place**
- Jane Helmstetter, **AHS**
- Val Russell, **CEDO**
- Margaret Bozik, **CHT**
- Stephen Marshall, **Lived Experience**
- Stephen Luna, **SSVF @ UVM**
- Erica Da Costa, **CCHA**

Preliminary

- Chris Brzovic will come to the next meeting to update us about Community Housing Review & Coordinated Entry.

A DISCUSSION OF THE LANDLORD SURVEY

- We had decided earlier in the year to do a survey of 1. The frontline workers 2. Landlords 3. Clients. Today we're looking at the landlord survey.
- Travis described recently developing a very similar landlord survey at CVOEO, half of which have not yet been sent because they are in the form of snail mail (the electronic surveys have gone out). The point of the survey is just to strengthen relationships.
- Travis will hold off on sending the snail mail surveys and he will share his list of landlords.
- Maybe we should hold off on sending out our own landlord survey until CVOEO sends out theirs and gets responses.
- The question that reads, "What programs have you participated in?" may be confusing if they have no sense of the housing programs available. It's important to offer examples at least.
- Suggested additional or replacement question: "What precludes you from renting to our population?"
- We want to use the survey as an education device – to invite them to ask more questions and educate them about the programs we have.
- Margaret: The [recent Legal Aid study](#) found that 70 percent of evictions are about unpaid rent. This we know already.
 - These are the major findings of that study:
 - 1. One in 44 (2.25%) renting households had an eviction filed against them in 2016.9 This is referred to as the "eviction filing rate." Of these eviction filings, approximately 86% involved unsubsidized rental units, 13% had a project-based or tenant-based subsidy, and 1% were mobile home park evictions.
 - 2. In 70% of the cases, unpaid rent was the only issue (as opposed to violating the lease, foreclosure, or evicting "without cause").
 - 3. In the cases where unpaid rent caused the eviction, the median amount of rent due was \$2,000.

- 4. In 43% of the cases, the notice or eviction complaint did not comply with legal requirements, yet the defect went unnoticed or unaddressed by the tenant or the Court.
 - 5. In three-quarters of the cases, the plaintiff (landlord) had a lawyer, and the defendant (tenant) did not.
 - 6. Three-quarters of the households that had an eviction filed against them ended up getting evicted. This is referred to as the “eviction rate.”
 - HERE ARE THE RECOMMENTATIONS:
 - 1. When tenants fall behind on rent, provide adequate financial supports to help tenants become current. We estimate that \$800,000 strategically invested in back rent support could cut Vermont’s eviction rate by over 50%.
 - 2. Once a case is filed, increase legal representation of defendants in eviction cases or make it easier for defendants to capably represent themselves. • At minimum, provide a fill-in-the-blanks Answer form, so tenants can more easily give the Court the relevant information. • Expand the “lawyer-for-the-day” programs that are already providing limited representation for tenants in housing cases.¹⁰
 - 3. Expand and develop programs to help tenants manage their rental payments.
 - 4. Reduce the number of tenants who fall behind on rent by addressing the broader housing affordability crisis. • Support and expand affordable housing programs. • Support and expand rental subsidy programs that make rent more affordable. Together, these recommendations would dramatically reduce Vermont’s eviction filing rate and eviction rate. Vermont could lead the nation in—and provide a model for—combating the national eviction crisis.
 - CVOEO is in the process of establishing a PAYEE position. This is something that can help tremendously and should be encouraged.
 - **Let’s shelve the landlord survey at least until we get the report by GREG HESSEL (the consultant).**
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A DISCUSSION OF THE CLIENT FEEDBACK SURVEY

- We’ve talked about creating a client feedback loop and hopefully the consultant will designed something along these lines.
- Could some of the service retention questions be folded into that feedback loop?
- Travis: CVOEO recently had a HOP audit. We got feedback about how to fill out the HOP report. After Linda did a deep dive into the data, we found that for **both homeless prevention and Rapid Rehousing** (services only in both cases), it shows that CVOEO worked with roughly 600 to 700 households in the last year. (“Worked with” means we completed a HOP intake, we completed an HMIS intake, they engaged with case management services.) Most of those 700 clients “dropped off” because they are separated out from the list of people who received financial assistance to stabilize their housing. Homeless prevention/RR is one list and everyone who got financial assistance is another list. The question was posed:

“how many clients who you provided ONLY services to, were stabilized in housing in 28 days?”
This a vanishingly small number because it’s not realistic to get people into housing that quickly.

- CVOEO retention rates for those who do receive financial assistance are in the high 80s/low 90s.
- But we (CVOEO) need to create an exit interview sheet so we can track what happens to those 700 families.
- Not everyone is going to get into HMIS. But we need a distinction in HMIS between those who are first time homeless and those who are returning to homelessness.
- It might be interesting to look beyond the 90 days to see how many of them become homeless after that.
- Travis: CVOEO would love to have a check-ins with people we’ve housed, monthly plus a yearly party.
- Margaret: In our (CHT) experience, the best thing is to be pro-active. Go out and meet the clients at their homes. If someone notices something is going wrong, make contact.
- How about asking the city to convene a landlord meeting to hear their perspective? It’s important that they understand it’s not about imposing more requirements but just bringing them into the conversation.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Stephen Marshall: It’s come to my attention that CVOEO has a massive amount of information about people experiencing homelessness in our area and we should tap into that.
- Regarding CCHA communications, let’s think about demonstrating regularly how the Alliance partners are having a positive impact.
 - This should be taken up by the Outreach Committee.
- Let’s convene a group to work on collaborating with Balance of State, because otherwise the issue will just evaporate until it comes up again in a year.
 - If there’s a particular area that makes sense to increase collaboration, let’s come together around that issue rather than artificially convene to abstracting “collaborate.”
- ESD will begin entering data into HMIS soon. This is a big deal.

Next Meeting: 8/21

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