

# Chittenden County Homeless Alliance (CCHA)

## STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

October 3, 2019, 9 – 11 at Champlain Housing Trust

Attendees:

- Jane Helmstetter, **AHS**
- Erin Armstrong, **UVM MC**
- Margaret Bozik, **CHT**
- Travis Poulin, **CVOEO**
- Laura Wilson, **Cathedral Square**
- Stephen Marshall, **Lived Experience**
- Elaine Soto, **HC**
- Jessica Radbord, **Vermont Legal Aid**
- Will Towne, **Spectrum**
- Geoffrey Pippenger, **Economic Services**
- Chris Brzovic, **CVOEO**
- Emily Higgins, **OEO**
- Steve Lunna, **SSVF @ UVM**
- Jason Brill, **VA**
- MaryEllen Mendel, **VT211**
- Val Russell, **CEDO**
- Todd Rawlings, **CEDO**
- Louise Masterson, **ICA**
- Meghan Morrow Raftery, **ICA**
- Amy Carmolla, **United Way NWVT**
- Erica Da Costa, **CCHA**

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### PRELIMINARIES

**Margaret Bozik/ CHT:**

- Laurentide is almost completely leased up. We still have about 12 mostly market rate apartments available.
- Garden Apartments in south Burlington coming up next. We will begin leasing Garden Apartment in late November/ early December.
- As of the end of Sept. we were providing homes 314 formerly homeless households, not including Laurentide.
- Over the last state fiscal year we received over 800 applications from people who identified as experiencing homelessness.

**Travis Poulin/ CVOEO:**

- We will begin providing heating and fuel assistance out of our WARMTH program by approximately Oct 18<sup>th</sup>.

- The annual **Wheels for Warmth Fundraiser** will be on Oct 24 & 25<sup>th</sup> at Casella on Avenue B in Williston. You pay a \$4 recycling fee which goes to the program OR if they are in good condition, you don't have to pay anything because we will resell them. They have to be in a SET of at least 2. We have raised almost half a million dollars since we started this annual event 14 years ago.

### **Jessica Radbord/ VT Legal Aid:**

- **The new public charge rule** – which would potentially bar people who aren't permanent citizens from getting housing assistance – goes into effect on Oct 15<sup>th</sup> (though there are number of legal challenges to it). It could affect families who have Section 8 vouchers. Or those currently in public housing. If you do have any tenants who are concerned about that, I'm thinking the time has come to set up a date for them to meet with someone from Vermont Law school.
- **Please make a public comment online about this issue!** When lawsuits are filed, the comments raised become an issue that have to be addressed.
- **Food stamps:** There is also a proposed change to broad-based eligibility for food stamps that would cause Vermont to lose around 7.5 million dollars. It would affect almost 5000 people. Some schools would lose eligibility entirely (because it's based on percentages). This affects people's ability to pay rent so be aware of it.

### **Steve Lunna/ SSVF @ UVM**

- Both mayors – Burlington and Winooski -- have signed on to the "Mayor's Challenge to end Veteran Homelessness." We have five of eight mayors signed on so far. We are still waiting on Montpelier, St. Albans and Newport.

### **Will Towne/ Spectrum**

- We're a month away from warming shelter launch date of November 1<sup>st</sup>. Still in the process of hiring. No major changes. Still at St. Joseph's Cathedral Parish Hall.

### **Emily Higgins/ OEO**

- Look for the year-end report from the OEO HOP program.
- There were a lot less kids experiencing homelessness this year than last year.
- We did a webinar in combination with ICA about HOP reporting and will be published to our website soon.

### **Geoffrey Pippenger, ESD / MaryEllen Mendel, VT211**

- There is no longer 24-hour service. Contract bids for after hours service came in astronomically higher than last year. It will now be 8AM – 8PM. Spread the word. Currently the after hours number of calls was roughly 9000 last year (see spreadsheet to see after hours volume for 2018).
- Our vision is to be 24/7 all within Vermont (rather than contracting out of state for after hours service), but it's going to take a long time and a lot of resources to get there. It has to be a certified 211 service.
- The bulk of after-hours calls for emergency housing specifically happen between 4:30 and 8:00 and those hours are still staffed.

- As a far as the GA program is concerned, the benefits provided by it will NOT decrease, to be clear.
- We'll want to make sure clients are housed through weekends, adverse weather and holidays. Our staff will have to be super-conscious about making sure that benefits last through one of these periods instead of ending in the middle of a weekend, for example, when will be no way of contacting ESD.
- Out of 7255 after hours calls related to emergency housing, 5480 were homeless intake. Another 1700 were calling for other related reasons.
- Many motels don't take reservations after 11:00.
  - Question: What would it take to fund 211 service from 4:30PM to 11:00PM.
    - Response: Apparently too much.
- ESD is working with the NETWORK on what happens to survivors who are trying to access after 8:00 PM.
- **Please encourage clients to go to ESD or call 211 BEFORE 8:00.**
- What's the progress on HMIS?
  - We're working on it but it's a HUGE bureaucratic lift. We'll be balancing running 2 parallel systems. But we have a signed contract with ICA.
- ESD will be doing direct entry into HMIS rather than data import.
- **We need to get the word out as broadly as possible about the reduction of 211.**

#### **Kevin Pounds/ Anew Place**

- November 1<sup>st</sup> is opening date for the warming shelter.

#### **Chris Brzovic/ CVEOE**

- Stephanie Smith is coming into the new role as Coordinated Entry Specialist from STEPS. Starting on Oct 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Todd Rawlings / CEDO**

- Todd will replace Val Russell at CCHA meetings until a replacement is found for her.

#### **Stephen Marshall / Lived Experience**

- Stephen needs help with his publication, STREET NEWS.
- It's 4 – 6 pages.
- We'll put out 200 – 400 hard copies.

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### **HUD APPLICATION NEWS led by Val Russell of CEDO**

- The application was submitted last Friday.
- Will be sending final drafts to email list.
- In the final draft there were minor budget changes. The changes amounted to approximately \$900 total.
- Final draft will be sent out & posted on the ccha website.
- **Thank you Val! It was a HUGE lift. We'll miss you.**

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## PIT COUNT discussion led by Stephen Marshall

PIT count has 3 primary aspirations:

1. Publicity: Let's saturate Chittenden County with notice of the count and do it well in advance.
    - a. Town Managers and local CJs will play an important role.
    - b. I'm hoping the Steering Committee members will do publicity in your particular towns.
  2. Outreach: Finding people to be involved.
    - a. Libraries/ Food Shelves / Community Outreach
  3. Organization of PIT Teams
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- Question: This is geared toward unsheltered outreach. What about sheltered? Also, should we collaborate more with BoS PIT Team?
  - Meghan/ ICA: HUD has not put out any PIT notice yet – anticipating December. We don't know if any of their requirements are going to change yet. Andrea will be doing the NON-HMIS piece this year in BoS.
  - Amy Carmolla / UWVT: Any sense of WHO doesn't find out about that?
    - We don't have coverage in most Chittenden towns.
  
  - Stephen: "Most of the PIT count is local organizing."
  - The sheltered population will not be an area for Stephen. We already have the data in HMIS and so nothing extra will be required UNLESS people want to collect more information.
  - Margaret/CHT: We should ask ourselves if we are going to go beyond HUD mandated data and ask for precariously housed status (which is not always added to HMIS).
  - Let's have an online Training for unsheltered PIT count.
  - There was an online training last year hosted by Balance of State.
  - Steve Lunna has volunteered to do safety planning.
  - **The PIT COUNT will likely be scheduled for the FOURTH WED of JAN. (the 22<sup>nd</sup>). Federal reporting looks at the fourth WED.**
  - Let's set up the PIT committee soon.

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## DEBRIEF OF THE COMMUNITY MEETING

- Front Porch Forum reached a couple that otherwise would not have known.
- The mayor of Winooski was there.

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## WARMING SHELTER

- We're staffing up quickly right now.
- We're going to have someone besides Brian doing the HMIS work.

## A DISCUSSION OF / UPDATE ON CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COORDINATED ENTRY led by Chris Brzovic

- The appendix of recommendations (Appendix D) in the consultant report is something we've been working through in the C.E. Committee. All the items have been given priority status (low, med or high). We have created a workplan.
- There are some items – especially the high priority items -- we've already accomplished or made headway including increasing coordination between housing providers and service providers. So housing providers are now attending our Community Housing Review Committee. We've also hired a half time Coordinated Entry Specialist which addresses one item, in part.
- **Val / CEDO : I just started a conversation with the ED of the Winooski Housing Authority. They don't currently have a preference for people experiencing homelessness. This is a good time to reach out to them about that.**
- Improving data quality will be a high priority item over the next few month. This is both about timeliness AND completeness. This is largely about input on the part of the people who are working with the clients.
- QUESTION from Jessica Radbord/ Legal Aid: For timeliness – a question for the navigators: how quickly are **preliminary applications** getting entered into **HMIS** because what I experience sometimes is that I'm ready to appeal a denial but there can't be a denial if there was no application.
  - RESPONSE: Sort of. It's built into our phase process (the first phase involves work on getting essential documents together and the last phase (phase 4) and that's the point at which a client is ready to actively look for housing ); we are able to know (more or less) that a preliminary application is in if they've made it to phase 2.
- At CVOEO, all the housing navigators have licenses to enter data directly. At COTS, now they have 2 people with licenses. There used to be just one and adding another has helped noticeably. At SPECTRUM, they have no single front line person who has a license and does data entry. It all goes to an admin person. STEPS does not enter into HMIS.
- QUESTION: What would be helpful for this type of data input?
  - RESPONSE: People don't always know the value of doing an update IMMEDIATELY – because it won't get a tangible improvement for their client. People generally understand the prioritization process importance, but not at the other end.
  - **The most improvement we've noticed comes from having the same people who are on the front lines, entering data, ALSO attend the Community Housing Review Committee meetings.**
- Margaret Bozik/ CHT: I wonder if there are lessons to be learned from the medical model and their electronic medical records process.
- Meghan / ICA: The 2020 data standards include new standards for coordinated entry. We haven't updated the system yet with the 2020 standards only because we already see issues with the upgrade. The new C.E. data elements don't need to be used until April. There will be least 3 data elements required by HUD for C.E.
- Margaret Bozik / CHT: Two of the issues raised by the consultant report were: trust issues and how the Steering Committee makes decisions.
  - We made an effort at working on the trust issues with the "Shared Values Exercise" at the community meeting and various other venues. Let's keep talking about that.

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- Regarding decision making there seems to be frustration around the SPEED of decision-making.
    - From the consultant report: “5.a. Discuss and clarify cultural assumptions that may slow innovation and the pace of decisions. Among these potential assumptions are that: i. decisions have to be perfect before starting; ii. all risk has to be eliminated before starting; iii. there needs to be complete consensus on all; decisions before starting; iv. all conversations or negotiations need to happen in the large group.”
    - Travis/CVOEO: Let’s have more conversation about the Steering Committee’s responsibility for these recommendations. But first, I’ll take this to the executive committee as it may help speed decision making and then we’ll bring it back to the Steering Committee.
  - From the consultant’s report: “6. Clarify the boundaries of CE. This will entail outlining the preferred referral process. Ideally this clarification will involve increased communication and feedback loops.”
    - Chris: There seem to be differences between how housing providers approach the C.E. process. For example we have a formal MOU with CHT – homeless preference units are communicated to us and then we make referrals. We do NOT have an MOU in place with BHA or Cathedral Square however. So creating consistency might help with the final referral process – the handoff to the provider. Having formal MOUs with everyone would be ideal.
      - QUESTION: How did the other MOUs happen?
        - RESPONSE: The housing providers drafted something and sent it to us.
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## ***FINAL NOTES***

- Agenda for the upcoming executive committee meeting: Newsletter, PIT count, C.E. assessment workplan.
- For the November Steering Committee meeting: PIT & warming shelters (the extreme cold pop-up shelters) updates & how housing providers handle complains & trust.
- Jessica Radbord / Legal Aid: Are we losing HUD points because we aren’t doing certain things? What data do we need to be tracking that we aren’t?
  - RESPONSE from Val/ CEDO: Fair Housing training should be at least offered, providing services to protected classes (“did you have a training on serving a particular protected class?”), more work with children’s liaisons.
- Margaret: **Let’s add a discussion around how well we serve children. We haven’t spent a lot of time talking about serving children & youth. Can we have someone from DCF come to talk about FUV system?**
  - **Let’s talk about children and families (shelter & FUV) in two pieces.**
- Val Russell/ CEDO: look at the November agenda from last year.
- Stephen has been appointed to the Vermont Council on Homelessness.
- Here are the people who volunteered to spread the news about the PIT Count in their home towns.
  - Mary Ellen Mendl: Colchester

- Steve Lunna: Williston, St. George, Hinesburg and Huntington
- Travis Poulin: South Burlington (I think)
- Jane Helmstetter: South Burlington
- Amy Carmola: Richmond

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**Next Meeting: Nov. 7**

Please go to [cchavt.org](http://cchavt.org) to find the minutes archive, upcoming dates, etc.