

# **CHITTENDEN COUNTY HOMELESS ALLIANCE (CCHA)**

## **Steering Committee Minutes**

**Nov 7, 2019, 9:00 – 11:00, Champlain Housing Trust**

### **ATTENDEES:**

- Lacey-Ann Smith, **BPD**
- Terri Kingeter, former shelter manager in Baltimore, MD
- Erin Armstrong, **UVM MC**
- Olivia Graffeo-Cohen, **VLA**
- Laura Wilson, **Cathedral Square**
- Elaine Soto, **HC**
- Sarah Russell, **CVOEO**
- Chris Brzovic, **CVOEO/ CCHA**
- Louise Masterson, **ICA**
- Daniel Blankenship, **VSHA**
- Margaret Bozik, **CHT**
- Laura Zeliger, **BHA**
- Crystal Jones, **BHA**
- Jason Brill, **VA**
- Melissa Farr, **COTS**
- Mike Ohler, **CHT**
- Tammy Santamore, **Lund**
- Jessica Radbord, **VT Legal Aid**
- Elizabeth Kanard, **CHCB**
- Will Towne, **Spectrum**
- Kevin Pounds, **Anew Place**
- Emily Higgins, **DCF/ OEO**
- Geoffrey Pippenger, **DCF/ ESD**
- Kim Colville, **VCIL**
- Jane Helmstetter, **AHS**
- Todd Rawlings, **CEDO**
- MaryEllen Mendl, **VT 2-1-1**
- Amy Carmola, **UWNWVT**
- Bill Schrecker, **VHFA**
- Stephen Marshall, **Lived Experience**
- Elyssa Boisselle, **Steps**
- Travis Poulin, **CVOEO**
- Brian Smith, **AHS DMH**

- Erica Da Costa, **CCHA**

## **PRELIMINARIES**

- Olivia is a new person at VT Legal aid who will be taking over for Jessica Radbord.
- Elizabeth will be representing CHCB.
- Garden Apartments (CHT) will be opening beginning in December.
- Sarah Russell is now the children’s integrated services representative at CVOEO.
- Laura Wilson (Cathedral Square) mentions that they are hiring.
- Geoffrey Pippenger: “Adverse weather conditions” is in effect as of today through Tuesday.
- Emily Higgins, from OEO/ DCF: We’re being federally monitored for the first time. Our grant for Anew Place is up and running.
- Kevin Pounds: The new warming/ low barrier shelter is up and running.
- Laura Zelliger is the new director of BHA. Welcome.
- Travis: I am the co-chair of this committee but Sarah Russell has expressed interest. She will be exploring it for a few months.

## **VOTE for the definition of the Veterans subcommittee.**

- At the annual meeting we voted TO HAVE a Veterans subcommittee. But this vote for the specific language that defines that subcommittee.
- Proposed Language for definition of the Veterans Committee:
  - **“Veterans Committee:** This committee is charged with identifying systemic approaches to address veteran-specific housing needs. The Chairperson of the Vermont Veterans Committee on Homelessness (VVCH) will serve as the Chair of this committee (or a representative of the VVCH in the Chair’s stead). The committee will make recommendations to the Steering Committee on Veteran issues and offer the Steering Committee recommendations for resolution. The committee will remain in effect after full implementation to monitor progress on Veteran related issues and to offer changes as needed. A primary focus of the committee is to end veterans’ homelessness as part of a national federal initiative involving four federal partners; Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).”
    - **Motion: Sarah Russell**
    - **Second: Travis**
    - **All those in favor: 17**
    - **None opposed**
    - **One abstention.**

## **Sharing Critical Feedback (about housing services) Process.**

- This will be an item of discussion for review for the December meeting. **Please share your agency policies about customer feedback with us before the December meeting. Send them to edacosta@vhfa.org**

- Margaret Bozik/ CHT: Reminder: We do have a coalition wide grievance procedure for Coordinated Entry.
- Stephen Marshall: If someone complains about something and we know it – there’s a danger/fear that someone might use it against the institution. How do we overcome that fear? How do we embrace the process?

## **A DISCUSSION ABOUT PAYEES led by Travis Poulin, CVOEO**

- From the Agenda: “The issue of a need for payees - a position with time dedicated to financial management and oversight for individuals in order to ensure that their basic needs are being met, primarily that their rent is being paid – has come up recently in discussion with CHT, BHA, and with clients at CVOEO. It is not a new issue.

One question that arises from a general discussion for the need for/usefulness/efficacy of an individual or agency acting as a payee for multiple clients is: where do the funds come to pay for this type of position? Another question is how would a payee system work? Is there a role for the Continuum in this discussion, or is this an issue that needs to be handled by individual member agencies?

As a possible response to the second question, Travis will briefly review the structure of the IDA matched savings accounts CVOEO has set up with Opportunities Credit Union.”

- This is sometimes a sensitive topic but it keeps coming up in multiple venues because there are always some subset of people who are not in a position to pay their own bills. For example, a man came in to CVOEO recently and was overcome by the task of being the financial manager for both of his adult children. He felt he just couldn’t do it anymore.
- Opportunities Credit Union has a payee program called an IDA – Individual Development Account — which is a matched savings program. You save money from earned income and it’s matched by the IDA program, however you can only use those funds for one of three reasons: education, purchasing a home or starting a business.
- You start an account at OCU and CVOEO also has an account at OCU. You put money into your account but you cannot draw it back out without a written letter from CVOEO. When you do want to draw money out for one of the 3 legitimate purposes, you coordinate with the person who’s handling your IDA and that money is transferred to CVOEO’s account, the match happens, then CVOEO notifies OCU and they write a check to the vendor and that money comes out of CVOEO’s account.
- This is not necessarily how a Payee system would work but that’s an example of how it COULD work. We’re trying to work out with Mike Ohler how this would unfold. The client would have to agree to it.
  - SUGGESTION: Groundworks in Brattleboro has a payee on staff who offers their services to anyone who wants them. Funded by OEO. This might be an example to take a look at.

- Jessica Radbord/VT Legal Aid: There are very strict limits regarding who the Payee can be. It cannot be someone with a conflict of interest, so it cannot be the landlord of the client, for example. OCU used to have something called “payment assurance” but it’s not clear how effective it was.
- Margaret Bozik/ CHT: Just to emphasize the need, I just finished doing the review of our fiscal year on negative exits. Of the 24 evictions we had, 14 of them had subsidy. We do offer counseling to anyone who is falling behind on their rent and a repayment plan but for some people it just isn’t enough.
- Kim Colville/VCIL: VCIL works with people who have payees but does not have a payee itself.
- *Reach up* should be part of the conversation for families who have a hard time paying housing related costs because payments can be vendored.
- Elaine Soto/ HC: We do a lot of payee services for people we are working with.
- Michael Ohler/ CHT: We can’t do it internally. We reached out to CVOEO to try to build something together, possibly a position that would be based at CVOEO.
- Sarah Russell/ CVOEO: Let’s come up with alternative language because some people will feel stigmatized by having a payee. This is more like a financial coach who focuses on making sure your housing costs are covered. Perhaps it’s not even a payee in the legal, technical sense.
- A payee is not a power of attorney.
- Elaine Soto/ HC: A payee can say NO.
- Amy Carmola/ United Way: Is there a similar role for people who are not indigent? Something that someone of means would pay for. Whatever it is, perhaps we could call it the same thing.
- Stephen Marshall: What tweaks to the law do we need to make this quasi payee program work better ?
  - RESPONSE: We’re not there yet.
  - RESPONSE: This sounds more like a contract relationship.

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## **A DISCUSSION OF THE G.A. RESTRUCTURING LED BY Geoffrey Pippenger, ESD**

- Last year we saw the motel voucher program utilization go through the roof. It was an increase of 7 – 10 percent households and an increase of 30 percent nights. The current proposal – and it is just a proposal at this point – is to move away from the motel voucher program entirely and instead, shifting toward community investments we’ve already started on a larger state-wide scale. It would take place over a period of time and commence in July 2020 – beginning with community based motel pools as shelter overflow as opposed to the hotel voucher program. Then encouraging communities to have conversations around what crisis housing response should look like in those areas. We’re workshopping this proposal.
- Margaret Bozik/ CHT: One of the concerns is the devolution of crisis services; if you’re ESD and you have an financial overrun, you can go back and say you need more money. If you’re a community organization and you run out of money, you don’t have that ability. Another concern is that when people are in hotels, we need them to get connected to services and move toward housing.
  - RESPONSE: Part of the plan would be include a pool for overflow.

- Kim Colville/VCIL: Many shelters in the state are not accessible to people with disabilities. Where does that leave these people? In addition, PTSD patients feel discriminated against. Going into a shelter for this group can be too difficult.
  - We didn't throw out motels completely. They will always be part of the program. How do we use the motel program more effectively?
  - We also require that shelters have an accessibility plan at minimum.
- Sarah Russell/ CVOEO: This is a very short timeframe.
  - RESPONSE: There would be a transition process.
    - Sarah: Is your plan to put this out to RFP with the HOP grant?
      - RESPONSE: In year one, it would be more of a conversation about a specific designated provider whether they're a year round shelter provider or a coordinated entry lead agency taking on that motel pool for a year. This would give time for the process to shift into HOP for year 2 and beyond. The motel process would stay in place for now – in the first year.
      - The funding would be held level for the first year.
- Sarah / CVOEO: How do other states manage this?
  - RESPONSE: Many don't. But we are continuing to look at the states who do. The scale is also difficult to compare because Vermont is so small.
- Margaret Bozik/ CHT: CHT owns a motel. The only way we are able to offer the low rates that we do, it that we have a guaranteed contract with the state. In the absence of that contract, we would convert our motel into housing. And this will drive up the cost of all the other motels because we are the cheapest motel.
  - RESPONSE: Perhaps the community can have a conversation about the community providers still maintaining some sort of guaranteed pool of motel beds. It seems unlikely that Chittenden would ever need fewer than 30 motel rooms.
  - This is not about the state abdicating responsibility. This is actually harder than what we do now. Instead of being a reservationist, we would shift that money to OEO, and would actually transfer to being more about technical assistance, training and facilitating conversations, connecting different parts of the state, while also ensuring that the bottom doesn't fall out anywhere.
- Jessica Radbord/ VT Legal Aid: Legislators hate the motel program. If individual communities are stuck trying to go to the legislator because there's too much need, it's likely going to ring on hollow ears.
- Laura Zeliger/ BHA: Revenue for the coming fiscal year is not confirmed sometimes until May or June for local providers. Are we going to have some time to prepare for this? What's the fallback plan if it's June 21<sup>st</sup> and there's no state budget?
  - RESPONSE: We will definitely build in time to prepare and just to be clear, currently we are still administering the GA program as it is and we will not stop until something else is in place.
- Brian Smith: I got the sense a small cushion of money for communities who max out on their motel budgets.

## ***A Discussion of Point in Time Planning***

- Stephen Marshall: We're working on publicity and on a training curriculum. The expertise we're looking for to help with training includes: understanding the homeless community, how to organize a local team, how to stay safe when out in the field, how to administer the survey. Hopefully we can make this a video training.
- Terri Kingeter, formerly of homeless services in Baltimore: I just moved to Vermont four months ago and our systems are very different but a couple of things we did in Baltimore helped increase our PIT Count.
  - We spent a lot of time doing prep work, specifically connecting with churches, with fast food places, etc. to find out what they're seeing. Then we asked permission of these places, like McDonalds, to set up camp for a few hours on the day of the PIT Count and people came in to be counted and do surveys (we had already done the work to let them know to come to that place) and receive a coffee or something similar.
  - We worked closely with the police department who did maps of each area regarding where they were getting calls for people who were homeless. All of our volunteers had maps.
  - We worked with the libraries.
  - We had a soup kitchen that night and spent the two weeks prior with our outreach team letting everyone know to come and be counted and receive a free meal. We got people to come to us.
  - We also provided incentives, specifically, bags for participants and a gift cards, gloves, hats, mittens, toiletries and a "street card" — a list of resources.
- Chris Brzovic/ CVOEO: When we did 100,000 Homes, we did give out Dunkin Donuts gift cards and that worked very well. We were focused on Burlington however.
- Daniel Blankenship/ VCEH: Our experience at BoS is that our rural areas are too large to do street outreach, but connecting with 2-1-1, or setting up a Here-to-Help clinic or a soup kitchen is a good idea. Also offering incentives for volunteers themselves.
- Sarah Russell/ CVOEO; Engaging students at UVM, especially the medical students who are required to do a public health project, might be a good idea.
- Jason Brill/VA: Also UVM Social Work students.
- Sarah Russell/ CVOEO: Membership and Outreach Committee members are? Point in Time Committee?

- **OUTREACH & MEMBERSHIP**

- CHT
- Stephen Marshall
- VT 211

- **DATA, POINT-IN-TIME, HMIS**

- Community Health Center/ Safe Harbor
- Veteran's Affairs
- CEDO
- COTS
- CVOEO
- Howard
- Vermont State Housing Authority
- Stephen Marshall
- VT 211

- ICA

- Champlain and St. Mike's both have required community service, so it might be worthwhile to reach out to them.
  - The 2019 revised **PIT form is linked here**. The changes are listed below:
    1. No HUD Changes for this year!
    2. Decluttered top instructions & Added Minimum Information Requested
    3. Section 1 will be editable: Volunteers can fill this out before printing.
    4. Arrows added to indicate that there is a question that needs to be checked off and/or filled out
    5. Question added for making an Observation
    6. Currently Fleeing Violence was updated to reflect ALL fleeing of violence and not just from an intimate partner.
    7. Section 3: Age Ranges changes to reflect the current ranges <18, 18-24, 25-59, 60+).
    8. Section 3: Age Range column added to form
    9. Administrative box at top of form for those collecting/entering these forms to indicate completed.
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## ***Coordinated Entry System Assessment Action Planning***

- Chris Brzovic/ CVOEO: In the Coordinated Entry committee, we've been going through the whole list of recommendations produced by Regenerations Resource for Coordinated Entry specifically.
  - Jane Helmstetter/ AHS: The executive committee will be taking a looking at this list and considering what the executive committee should take on and what recommendations don't make sense to follow.
  - Jason Brill/ VA: We've never had a discussion about whether we agree that something is a high priority.
  - Jane Helmstetter: A larger question regarding building a culture of trust and transparency: **WHAT DO WE ACTUALLY DO WITH THAT?**
    - Sarah Russell: Front line staff are not in this room and that feedback came largely from them. We need to bring front line staff together on a semi regular basis for training and sharing.
    - Amy Carmola/ United Way: I don't have a clear sense of what it is about culture that needs to change and whether we're talking about the system or about this group. But if we want to start talking about this group, there are some great tools for self-assessment.
  - **So let's have everyone take a look at the recommendations and bring back their opinions next time about what is high priority and then the ultimate responsibility will sit with the executive and the strategic committees.**
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## ***WINTER SHELTERS UPDATE***

- Kevin Pounds/ Anew Place/ Winter Warming Shelter: Emily helped us secure a HOP grant, thank you. Heather Bush came on to be the shelter coordinator which is great. We have 30 permanent beds. And the 3 overflow cots filled. The new site will be up by this afternoon: [btvshelter.org](http://btvshelter.org). We do intakes every day at 3:30.
- Will Towne/ Spectrum: We opened November 1st. We had 8 youth slated to enter immediately but we only housed 3. So we have plenty of beds.
- Travis Poulin/ CVOEO: EXTREME Cold Weather shelter will be activated by 20 degrees below zero and a lack of available hotel rooms. It will be at the First United Methodist Church. We will have 25 beds and will accommodate pets in crates. Americorps/Vista/ Medicalcorp will be staffing. Cots are provided by the Red Cross. Bedding is provided by the UVM Medical Center. Tues Dec 10<sup>th</sup> training for volunteers will be offered. Contact Jan Demers at CVOEO with any questions. 802-862-2771 ext. 740 [jdemers@cvoeo.org](mailto:jdemers@cvoeo.org)
- Melissa Farr: The Day Station (COTS) is open at 8:00 now through cold weather season. We have been full into overflow already.

## **UPDATE FROM SUBCOMMITTEES**

### **COORDINATED ENTRY COMMITTEE**

- Chris Brzovic: Regarding our work with Built for Zero, we're shifting more toward case conferencing in the CHR Committee meetings. To improve outcomes but for those who are stuck, we're also going to be collecting data on what the obstacles REALLY ARE.
- Chronic numbers are down:
  - 87 chronic (were above 100 – a number were moved to inactive. They sometimes were aging into chronic.)
  - 11 chronic adults have been housed this month — 6 of these went to Laurentide
  - **In September, we had 24 households get into permanent housing.** About half is Laurentide.
- Jessica Radbord /VT Legal Aid: How long does it take for someone to become inactive?
  - RESPONSE: 90 days
- Inactive is defined as someone who is on our by-name list but has not been in touch with us for 90 days. But they don't disappear from the system, they are placed on the inactive list so that if they come back into the system in any way, they can be activated easily.
- Hospitalization and imprisonment (both considered institutional housing) breaks your eligibility for chronic services.

### **VETERANS COMMITTEE**

- Jason Brill/VA: 1. Federal Benchmark Generation Tool (FBGT) is used all over the state. We have a training soon on how to use this tool. 2. We've been doing case conferencing with the veterans committee as well. Next meeting, however, we'll take a break from case conferencing and we will be

doing a self-assessment. We'll have a transparent conversation about what we're doing that works well and doesn't work well. 3. In terms of reaching BFZ functional zero (inflow & outflow) we are required to have 6 consecutive trend shifts below a certain number, and we had 2 consecutive shifts and we hope to continue that trend over the next 4 months so that at the next BFZ learning session in March or April we'll be able to achieve functional zero. We might be getting into the single digits for Veterans as soon as next week.

## **FINAL ITEM**

- Stephen Marshall: VCEH has a legislative committee & we are a non voting member. I'm active in this committee but CCHA might want to have a formal seat at that committee. There are some charter questions that need to be answered.
- Travis & Lacey are involved with balance of state.

**The next meeting will be on 12/5.**

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