

Chittenden County Homeless Alliance Steering Committee Meeting

Thursday, November 2, 2017

9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Champlain Housing Trust, 88 King Street, Burlington, VT – 2nd floor conference room

MEETING MINUTES

CCHA Steering Committee Members in Attendance: Champlain Housing Trust (Margaret Bozik: committee co-chair), Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (Travis Poulin: committee co-chair, Chris Brzovic), VT Agency of Human Services - Burlington Field District Director (Jane Helmstetter: committee facilitator), Burlington Police Department (Lacey-Ann Smith: committee secretary), ANEW Place (Kevin Pounds), Homeless Community (Stephen Marshall), Pathways Vermont (Lindsay Casale), Burlington Housing Authority (Sarah Russell, Stephanie Bixby), Howard Center (Elaine Soto), Steps to End Domestic Violence (Sharon Rotax), Spectrum Youth & Family Services (Will Towne), United Way of Northwest Vermont (Diana Carminati).

(CCHA Steering Committee Members Absent: Community & Economic Development Office - City of Burlington (collaborative applicant), Committee on Temporary Shelter, Safe Harbor Health Center - Community Health Centers of Burlington, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, UVM Medical Center, Vermont 2-1-1 United Ways of Vermont, Vermont Center for Independent Living, Vermont State Housing Authority.)

Other Attendees: Chittenden County Homeless Alliance (Paddy Shea: meeting note taker), VT AHS DCF Economic Services Division (Adnan Duracak), VT AHS DCF Office of Economic Opportunity (Emily Higgins), Vermont Legal Aid (Jessica Radbord), Institute for Community Alliances (Meghan Morrow, Caitlin Ettenborough), UVM Supportive Services for Veteran Families (Steve Lunna), First United Methodist Church (Mark Demers).

1. Introductions and Announcements

Travis Poulin (CVOEO): The heating and fuel assistance program has started. Electricity or home heating fuel. Seasonal fuel assistance comes out in mid-November. Crisis fuel opens November 27th.

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): I just got hired by CVOEO.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): December 8th, from 8:30-10:00 AM, there will be a HOP [*Housing Opportunity Grant Program*] and VAWA [*Violence Against Women Act*] housing protections webinar. An email went out to the CCHA google group about it. Email Emily Higgins from VT Office of Economic Opportunity if you need more info. about it.

Emily Higgins (VT AHS DCF Office of Economic Opportunity): That email also described that we are doing a substance abuse training November 29th, and an online domestic violence training. Also, we are not doing the One Night Count anymore.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): There are some new fuel tank regulations. So, we are anticipating that a lot of people are going to get “red-tagged” (meaning that their tank is not in a safe condition and can’t be filled).

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): As of 2 days ago, they still had some funding assistance for people who needed their old tanks replaced if the person is on heating fuel assistance, but if you’re not on heating fuel assistance, then there are no funds available until January.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): And it can be difficult for tenants if the landlord is not cooperative.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): The Vermont legislature’s annual Homelessness Awareness Day is, for the first time ever, on a Wednesday instead of a Thursday, so it won’t interfere with our January CCHA Steering Committee meeting. I’ll send an email with the exact date. *[From her follow-up email: Wednesday, January 10, 2017.]*

Lacey-Ann Smith (Burlington Police Department): This is my last meeting until March 2018. November 22nd is my last day of work before my leave. Some particular parts of my work will be covered by others, but other things won’t be specifically covered. I’ll be sending an email out before my leave starts.

2. Warming Shelter Updates (Erin Ahearn, Community Health Centers of Burlington, and Will Towne, Spectrum Youth & Family Services)

Will Towne (Spectrum Youth & Family Services): Our Youth Warming Shelter is opening on Monday. It can shelter 10 youth ages 18-24, and is located at St. Joseph’s Co-Cathedral at 29 Allen Street, Burlington, VT, and will be open 6 PM - 7 AM. We are finishing all the initial intakes today and tomorrow so that on the first day the shelter staff isn’t overwhelmed. From now on, people can check in at Spectrum to see if there is an opening, and after 5 PM they call a cell phone number (which Will will email to the group shortly). They are hoping to receive donated meals to provide. Dinner and breakfast is also provided at Spectrum’s regular drop-in center. The warming shelter is a low-barrier shelter. Animals are not allowed, except service animals. *[From his follow-up email: It will be open November 6th-March 31st. During the day, email housingreferrals@spectrumvt.org, or call Mike Shirk at 802.864.7423 x382. After 5:00 PM call 802.324. 2934.]*

Travis Poulin (CVOEO): The animal shelter may be able to host pets temporarily (but a downside is you give up all rights to it if you don’t retrieve the animal within a week).

Will Towne (Spectrum Youth & Family Services): Any other questions or feedback, let me know.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): Erin Ahearn is too busy to come in today since the Warming Shelter opened last night. For the CHCB Warming Shelter, there are ample opportunities to volunteer, such as to help with food.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): They can house 37. So, with Spectrum, that gives us 47 warming shelter beds.

3.) Facebook Page (Paddy Shea, CCHA Staff)

See Appendix A: CCHA Facebook Page Proposal

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): At the recent CCHA Strategic Planning Committee meeting, the committee asked for volunteers to create a proposal for the CCHA to have a Facebook page. So, Marcy Esbjerg, Stephen Marshall, and I met and created this proposal. *[Summarizes Appendix A.]* The reason behind the suggestion to have the page be closed to comments is due to the fact that I am only half-time and could not monitor the comments on a daily basis.

Travis Poulin (CVOEO): That's a good idea to have it closed to public comment due to troll-type comments.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): How many of your groups have Facebook pages?

Most raise hands.

VOTE: To start a Facebook page for the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance under the attached guidelines.

Motions: Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community)

Seconds: Travis Poulin (CVOEO)

Yes: 12

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

Motion passes.

4. Outreach Update (Stephen Marshall, Homeless Community)

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): The workgroup for the Everyone Known to Someone project has met twice. We are very focused on collecting data. We are trying to find out how many folks might be out there in the communities, so that we can present information to the communities. Diana Carminati is working on a letter to the regional planning director. We are hoping that will help us get connected to the rest of the communities in the county. Jane Helmstetter is helping us get connected through the McKinney-Vento liaison.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): We're looking at this as an opportunity to expand on the PIT count. A lot of people are just a few steps away from becoming homeless (we were calling it "vulnerably housed").

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): We'd like to understand poverty in the county better, and ways to avert it. We want to stabilize the lives of people who are poor. You don't need to be rich to be happy, but need basic needs met and predictability.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): Would you also want to look at people who are at risk of homelessness?

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): Yes. That's what we are doing.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): We think that will come to the fore when we talk to people in the communities.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): Are the people who get HOP grants included in that?

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): We may end up expanding it in a second year. We're trying to pilot an outreach network in the outlying towns, rather than focus on Burlington like we often do.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): You may want to reach out to food shelves and Meals on Wheels.

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): Yes, that's what we want to do. We'll be depending on the autonomous local community groups.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): When someone who is in need is identified, we will have to figure out a way to respond to people that doesn't end up in them chasing resources for which they don't qualify. That's one of the most challenging things.

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): Chris Brzovic is on the committee too, so he will be helping with coordinated entry.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): Just an FYI that I will be the point person for the PIT count this year because Marcy Esbjerg will be out of town at that time of the year.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): Yes, and we'd like to get more help with it this year.

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): We should start working on the PIT count earlier.

Meghan Morrow (Institute for Community Alliances): Anyone who enters into HMIS will be using their HMIS data for the PIT count. Anyone who usually uses the PIT count paper forms, they may have an option to put data directly into the online form.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): We've been working directly with the statewide committee, rather than have our own separate committee. We've been doing the PIT count for 20 years.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): And the statewide PIT Count committee has been having monthly conference calls, so they have been working on it.

Meghan Morrow (Institute for Community Alliances): People need to make sure to fill out the forms and not leave a bunch of blanks. The paper form will be longer than it used to be because of additional info. that HUD needs.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): The biggest gap will be with the motel system. Until ESD is using HMIS, there will probably be gaps.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): It's great that there is a commitment now that the state is working towards getting on HMIS.

Stephen Marshall (Homeless Community): I want to understand what is happening.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Paddy Shea will be handling the forms, and Erin Ahearn's people will be doing the outreach.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): It's happening late this year.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): The PIT count will be January 31, 2018.

5. Committee Updates

a. Coordinated Entry (Chris Brzovic)

See Appendix B: Coordinated Entry System Overview DRAFT

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): I think about half of you are on the coordinated entry committee. Next month, we would present our policies and procedures to the Steering Committee. I've structured this by Access, Assessment, Prioritization, and Referral, so it doesn't say who will be doing what yet. It will be a semi-centralized approach. We will have certain agencies who are hubs, to streamline it so that most assessments are done by them. When you encounter someone who needs help, they can be connected to an assessment hub. We'll have flyers designed to communicate very clearly to service users and non-service providers where people can go for help. And, we'll do outreach to other local providers like food shelves, churches, etc. 2-1-1 will also be a part of it. They will be a virtual access point to help cover the whole geography of the county.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): Will the signage you create be translated into other languages like Somali or Nepali?

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): Yes, I would say that's a goal, but we haven't talked about it much yet. That's an important point.

Stephanie Bixby (Burlington Housing Authority): I think it's recommended, not required, because it is a financial burden.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): There's a threshold percentage of your portfolio that needs to speak another language before you are required to provide documents in that language, and we don't meet that threshold.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): I think 2-1-1 has translation services.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): The Assessment is the most detailed part of this overview because we've spent a lot of time on it.

We will have assessment hubs, but also assessment partners. The idea behind an assessment partner is that if someone is already working with one of our partner service providers, they can do the assessments, rather than route everyone needlessly to the hubs.

There will be 5 standardized assessment tools (one for each of the sub-populations: youth, persons fleeing DV, single adults, families, and people at risk of homelessness).

The comprehensive assessments are made up of: a vulnerability assessment, a barriers-to-sustainability assessment which focuses mainly on financial resources, and universal data elements.

The assessment partners will put the info. into ServicePoint. We'll be meeting with ICA next week to talk about it.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): We did see a demonstration last week, and ServicePoint does allow us to see what we are sorting by. E.g. we could sort by vulnerability and by sustainability.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): Yeah, for Rapid Rehousing, it'll be sorted one way, and for permanent supportive housing, it'll be sorted another way.

"Assessment hubs" are to do assessments for people who are just starting to get connected to services, and they would refer people to the appropriate service providers. Whereas "assessment partners" are those who do the assessments with clients they are already working with, and they do the assessment in order to get people on the housing prioritization lists.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): We haven't been working on the prevention/retention piece as much yet because it's not part of the January HUD deadline.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): Yes. We haven't been working on it as much, but we hope to get to it before too long.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): We will have to make sure that we have very clear information about how the system works so that if someone is denied assistance, they will understand why. To make sure it's clear.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): It's important to put it in language that is easily understood.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): Sustainability is financial, but it also needs to be service-oriented.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): Permanent supportive housing [*PSH*] is prioritized based on length of homelessness and level of vulnerability. CCHA already has a PSH process, and we are going to follow those principles. The first priority is for people who are chronically homeless, because we are required to prioritize them for dedicated beds. We will be using the VI-SPDAT version 2 with updates.

For rapid re-housing [*RRH*], the first prioritization will be for those with high likelihood of sustainability, and then, after that, it will be based on vulnerability, prioritizing the most vulnerable.

The other thing is, what do we do about the vast majority of households who never quite get to the top of the PSH or RRH lists? That's an on-going question for us. We might need a 3rd group/review team to work through people that are on the list who are not being prioritized for RRH and PSH. Maybe do more of a qualitative review to refer them to "mainstream" resources they might qualify for.

Once you are on the list, there will be a PSH committee (which already exists), a housing review team (which already exists), and potentially the 3rd committee which I just mentioned.

One thing I want to flag is shelter. Shelter is an access point. Do we want emergency shelters to refer to hubs, or to do assessments with their guests who are at the shelter right then and there?

We also need to work out the exact protocols for the DV track. Those working with Steps to End Domestic Violence won't be using ServicePoint, so we need to work out how we will refer them to resources.

The system relies on people making referrals after assessment. We need to work out that process, such as who will be making referrals, etc.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): And how to manage capacity issues.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): Yes, and how to manage capacity issues.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): Are all the places that are doing assessments wheelchair accessible, and will they have access to sign language interpreters, etc.? Because they have to. The CoC is also supposed to provide cultural competency training.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): We also have to establish a structure of management, evaluation, and training, at the CoC level.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): The process and assessments—is that compatible with being transferred to the Balance of State CoC?

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): No, because their model is different.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): So, if someone came into Chittenden County, could they be referred to a different county?

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Yes.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): It usually seems to be a hot mess when people try to get services in a new county.

Meghan Morrow (Institute for Community Alliances): A new file would have to be created in HMIS.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): But, we should ask people where they would like to live and be willing to live, and keep that communication line open. Thank you, Chris, I think this is great. My question is about the community meeting we're having, and what we want to get out of it.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): We are having a community meeting to present coordinated entry information to a broader audience.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): It's scheduled for November 29, 2-4 PM at Fletcher Free Library in Burlington.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): It wasn't really defined what we mean by "broader community." On the one hand, coordinated entry can be dry and technical. We could invite executive directors, etc., from our partner agencies who don't usually come to our CCHA Steering Committee meetings. Or, we could

invite people from the broader community, but if we did that we would have to sort of translate this into layperson's terms. Those are the two options I see for this meeting.

Stephanie Bixby (Burlington Housing Authority): Keep it in simple terms. That it's an access point to try to reduce homelessness in our community, and to help connect people to all the resources they are eligible for that they might not know about.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): And connect with places like the Pride Center, AALV, Vermont Refugee Resettlement, the schools, etc.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): I'm actually scheduled to talk to Josie from the Pride Center about this.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): I think if we are going to do that, we need to be very concrete.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): There used to be these fold-up guides about resources in the community.

Travis Poulin (CVOEO): "A Survivor's Guide to Burlington." COTS used to make them.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): Yes, we've talked about making a poster like that to post in parks, etc.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): The pocket guides were good.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): I think it might be too early to invite everyone to a "Grand Opening," but you could ask for feedback.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): I think it would be nice to give them an opportunity for feedback.

Stephanie Bixby (Burlington Housing Authority): But you can't tailor it 100% to everyone.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): We may not be able to accommodate everyone, but it would be good to have the feedback to see what accommodations we could make.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): And it's good to know ahead of time from folks like VCIL [*Vermont Center for Independent Living*] what might be legal requirements.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): I think it could be good for service providers who don't usually come to meetings, to introduce them to coordinated entry and what it is.

Sarah Russell (Burlington Housing Authority): Why have it in November?

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): That was just what we said months ago in our timeline for coordinated entry, was that we'd have a meeting in November that was for a broader audience. Then there is a CCHA Coordinated Entry Committee meeting on December 6th, and a CCHA Steering Committee meeting on December 7th.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): It's important to get input because it's important for implementation. But also, we will need to do a meeting for a much broader audience.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): Yeah, and when we do the "grand opening" to introduce it to the broader community, we should have all our materials ready—posters, pocket guides, etc.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): When we say Coordinated Entry needs to be in place in January, what does that mean?

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): A checklist of 30 things.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): That we have the policies and that we are carrying them out.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): But it's also limited to the resources being carried out because of the federal grant. Everything that is funded through the CoC money, but not the things that are funded by other money (although of course we would eventually want to include that).

Stephanie Bixby (Burlington Housing Authority): In January, you need to focus on the projects that *have* to be done because of their grant money, otherwise funds are at risk. We need to be able to show auditors the policies and procedures we are following. All of the providers need to be able to do that.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): To make it work well, we have to figure out what to do with the data we get, in order to actually move people into housing and resources.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): By January, we also need to be able to show that we have informed people of their rights, how we trained people in cultural competency, etc.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): It sounds like this is all "back of the house" stuff, not so much a meeting that the public would benefit from. We need to figure out how to establish feedback loops with the partners to see what is working and what isn't. Figuring that out is more important at this point.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): I disagree. Whenever the state is changing policies, they allow public comment to get feedback from those who are affected.

Jane Helmstetter (VT Agency of Human Services): It's more about service providers figuring out how they are going to work together and coordinate better. The eligibility requirements won't change.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): But, how do we know if the process is accessible for, say, a homeless Nepali family?

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Our by-name-list at this point has been focused on PSH, but if we have a larger by-name-list, it's less likely that people will fall through the holes.

Emily Higgins (VT AHS DCF Office of Economic Opportunity): I agree, and this is more behind the scenes stuff to coordinate better.

Chris Brzovic (CVOEO): It's about standardizing services. We'll have a master list, which we haven't had, and we're standardizing protocol. We're setting up the infrastructure for service providers to be on the same page.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Given what we've said, maybe the November 29th meeting is about focusing on the access plan.

Stephanie Bixby (Burlington Housing Authority): And that might address your concern about how people will access the system.

Jessica Radbord (Vermont Legal Aid): Yes.

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): And what about the referral and capacity question?

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): That's not for this meeting.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Could we agree that we send suggestions to Chris and Paddy about who should be invited?

Paddy Shea (Chittenden County Homeless Alliance): Yes, please send names and email addresses so we don't have to hunt for them.

6. Schedule and Agenda for December CCHA Steering Committee Meeting

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): At the December meeting, we'll talk about the PIT count and street outreach.

Emily Higgins (VT AHS DCF Office of Economic Opportunity): And the HOP [*Housing Opportunity Grant Program*] annual report (10 minutes).

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): I don't know if it needs to be in December, or maybe January, but we haven't yet talked about the Cabot/Rural Studies report, and if there is data we should share. Also, the study of evictions that was conducted by Housing Vermont.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): Housing Vermont collected info. from their partners around the state about what evictions look like in their larger portfolio. I could ask someone who was at that meeting to come talk about it. Within the tax credit portfolio, there were not many evictions, and they are doing a variety of things to lower it further.

Emily Higgins (VT AHS DCF Office of Economic Opportunity): Andrew Brown is a good person to speak about that. He's taken the lead on eviction prevention.

Margaret Bozik (Champlain Housing Trust): On December's agenda we'll have: street outreach, the PIT Count, coordinated entry, and HOP.

January will be: coordinated entry and the PIT Count. And, if time, the Cabot/Rural Studies report, and the study of evictions that was conducted by Housing Vermont, but, if not, we'll do those in February.

Diana Carminati (United Way of Northwest Vermont): What about also talking in February about how strategic planning could be helpful in coordinated entry?

*** Next CCHA Steering Committee Meeting: Thursday, December 7, 2017, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM, Champlain Housing Trust, 88 King Street, Burlington, VT – 2nd floor conference room.