

CHITTENDEN COUNTY HOMELESS ALLIANCE (CCHA) Strategic Planning Committee Minutes

June 19, 2019, 3:00 – 4:30

ATTENDEES:

- Kevin Pounds, **Anew Place**
- Jane Helmstetter, **AHS**
- Val Russell, **CEDO**
- Melissa Farr, **COTS**
- Stephen Marshall, **Lived Experience**
- Erica Da Costa, **CCHA**

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

TAKE-AWAYS FROM THE PRELIMINARY ASSESSEMENT BY GREG HESSEL

- We don't have all the data we need. We're doing this with our eyes closed.
 - Why are we not getting good data? What are the obstacles?
- Greg also mentioned that “many housing providers are not at the table.”
- QUESTION: What does “at the table” mean? Because there ARE housing providers at the table.
 - RESPONSE: One interpretation is that the housing providers are not at important decision-making junctures.
- The COMMUNITY HOUSING REVIEW committee meetings (CHR) are important for prioritization but it appears that at the end of the day Allyson at BHA makes the decision about the housing.
- Allyson – the director of BHA – does not, and cannot, attend the CHR meetings BECAUSE she is s decision maker. This is a fair housing issue. To be clear, she actually makes the decisions herself. Not her department, but her specifically.
- There seems to be a general perception among the people who DO attend the CHR meetings that people on the master list get re-prioritized outside of the meeting without consideration for the conversations/ decisions happening in the CHR meetings. Some feel a disconnect between what happens at the meeting and what happens afterward.
- The CHR team makes the recommendations and they are generally followed.
- Greg was quoted: “There's not a transparent list of housing resources.” There seems to be a lot of cumbersome back and forth between BHA and the Housing Navigators because of lack of clarity about housing available.
- Each affordable housing entity (like CHT) has to balance their financial sustainability with offering units to the homeless. This is to be expected and should, perhaps, be stated explicitly.
- Greg also mentioned that we need to help housing developers feel comfortable with “different levels of buy-in.” This might be contradictory with having a transparent list of all housing resources.

- Susan Ainsworth from CHT did come to a CHR meeting but only briefly to discuss a particular issue. She CANNOT technically be at the meeting where clients are discussed because she is part of the decision making at CHT (fair housing issue).
- The Fair Housing Act results in a mandatory firewall between case conferencing and housing decision making. But the end result is that the decision makers we need at the table are not there.
- Sarah Russell is not technically making the decisions. She is from the “other side” of the BHA.
- **ACTION POINT: Let’s invite decision makers – like Allyson – to come and present at the CHR meeting. They could explain how their decision-making process works. They could also learn about the CHR (without learning about specific clients). Let’s do this twice a year.**
 - **Let’s ask, if you’re not taking the recommendations of the CHR in some instances, why?**
- People at the CHR meetings are feeling discouraged because they feel their work is being ignored. There seems to be a veil over the next step after the CHR. No one seems to have a clear idea of what happens.
- We don’t have systems for accountability. It’s a good-will agreement.
- **Let’s take the action point above to Coordinated Entry first.**

Strategic Action Plan July 2019 – Jun 2020

- We’re focusing in on Housing Retention here.
- Let’s do a broad survey of landlords to assess what they think.
 - Let’s approach the landlord’s association.
- Kevin met with the director of the landlord’s association. He asked about doing a survey. She liked the idea and suggested some questions to include:
 - **What characteristics would place an applicant in a high risk category?**
 - **When evaluating a current tenant, what characteristics or behaviors would place a tenant’s housing at risk?**
 - **What criteria would automatically disqualify an application?**
 - **Do you have experience high risk tenants (however you define that)?**
 - **Do you currently participate in Section 8?**
 - **Have you previously participated in Section 8?**
 - **Have you ever participated in other subsidized housing programs?**
- Sarah Russell had suggested previously she would put together the survey and include the same (slightly modified) questions that were sent out to the retention workers.
- There was some feedback about the questions themselves – that they weren’t person-centered.
- Stephen: There continues to be an accumulation of people who cannot be housed because of behavior. The people who don’t have significant behavioral issues get housed and everyone else remains homeless.
- **Suggested Question for the Survey: What supports would you like to see for someone who is difficult to house. Is it services? Is it subsidy?**
- **Let’s also add to the survey an introduction that reads roughly: “We’re starting this process of curiosity / inquiry to try to house more homeless – and we’re going to act based on what we learn.”**

- Next we'll do a survey of people who have been housed – THEN an action plan.

NEXT MEETING: 7/17

Please find archives of meeting minutes at cchavt.org.