Coordinating Committee to End Homelessness (CCEH) Meeting Minutes

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January 19, 2011 First United Methodist Church

Facilitated by: Jean DeMaster Prepared by: Mary Welch

Reviewed by: Steering Committee

Present: Sonja Arigbon, EV Armitage, Caren Baumgart, Israel Bayer, Cathie Boerboom, Bill Boyd, Heather Brown, Jennifer Chang, Ryan Deibert, Jean DeMaster, Peter Fournier, Kari Goudge, Troy Hammond, Meghan Hart, Liv Jenssen, Steven Keenan, Marylee King, Puanani Lalakea, Laura Langslet, Dennis Lundberg, Michael Mellick, Molli Mitchell, Susan Montgomery, Ibrahim Mubarak, Andrew Noethe, Laurie Palmer, Rachel Payton, Rachel Phariss, Rachel Post, Daniel Roby, Natasha Roe, Annie Rosen, Erika Silver, Ian Slingerland, Angel Tapia, Barry Joe Stull, Renee Sutherland, Nicki Turk, Larry Turner, Wade Varner, Lynne Walker, Tom Wehrley, Amiran White, Zoe Zachariades

I. Introductions – Jean DeMaster

New members at today's meeting represented a new Portland non-profit, Shower for the People.

II. Updates

Reporting on Homeless Deaths – Israel Bayer, Street Roots

StreetRoots is working with the county medical examiner to produce better guidelines for reporting the number of people who die on the street. This is important to honor the lives of those who have died on the streets, but also from a policy standpoint, the information will help us figure out the reasons why people are dying. These statistics can be useful in advocating for more funding and resources. Between 50 to 100 people die on the streets each year in Multnomah County, and the hope is that this reporting will be implemented in every city in Oregon or at the state level. Recently there was a memorial held at Outside In to honor those who have died on the streets. Street Roots will collaborate with hospitals and government agencies to study those released from various types of facilities onto the streets or into shelters. Other items on the agency's advocacy agenda include the St. Francis loo, implementing "first/last month rental assistance" policy in new affordable housing and legislation around tow companies confiscating property from cars that serve as homes.

Street and Shelter Counts - Tiffany Kingery, Multnomah County; Ryan Deibert, PHB

The annual shelter count will take place on January 26th and is a requirement by the State of Oregon. The amount of money the state allocates for homeless funding is based on this number so it's very important to get the most accurate count possible. This year, data will be pulled from Service Point. A question was asked about whether someone in a drug or alcohol rehab facility would be counted. Tiffany believed that checking the "transitional housing" box would be appropriate for those housed in these facilities. The street count will also take place on January 26th. The count will attempt to capture the number of every person living on the streets, in cars or any other place not fit for human habitation. PHB has contracted with 211 this year and they are working with the consultant Kris Smock to coordinat this year's count. The count will be very similar to 2009's, and this year we do have more confirmed agencies participating and better participation by agencies in East County. The police have also agreed not to do sweeps during the count. Some concerns were raised about volunteers not being adequately trained to conduct the count in wooded areas but as far as PHB knows, every volunteer will be trained and accompanied by an experienced agency leader when administering the surveys.

Winter Services & Severe Weather Report – Jennifer Chang, PHB; Tiffany Kingery, Multnomah County We are currently half way through the winter season and would like to hear from providers how things are going so far, who we are seeing, significant differences in this season in comparison to others and any other observations.

Youth Shelters: The two youth shelters currently have 30 beds/night and can provide 10 more beds during severe weather. They have been open ten additional nights this winter. When the shelters first opened in August they were frequently at capacity within 15 minutes of opening the doors, having to turn away 10-15 regularly. Since then, the numbers have declined but the shelters are still at capacity and are seeing 60-65 per night with no turn-aways. This year is different because the day shelter and night shelters hours overlap to enable people to walk from one to the other and not have to be on the streets in between. The shelter can also provide transportation during inclement weather and has only been used one time this year. Factors that would disqualify someone entry into the youth shelter would be if the person is over 17, if they aren't truly homeless, if they have a warrant out for arrest (depending on severity of crime), and if they have pets.

Family Shelters: This is the first year having family shelters running year round. There are 108 beds in the winter and 40 in the summer and about the same number of people have been showing up this year as in the past. No one has been turned away yet but in case of overflow there is additional capacity if needed. Those who could be turned away are couples with no children but animals are allowed in the kennels. So far this year, 250 total people in 79 families have been served. Of those, 48 families were placed into housing, 35 were successfully linked of services to housing assistance.

Single Women: Numbers have gone from 10-15 women per night at the beginning of the season up to now about 55-65 per night. The numbers have gone up but the Winter Warming Center still has capacity to serve up to 70. Possible reasons for the surge are substance abuse, mental illness, domestic violence and the economy. There has been an increase in degreed and/or professional women simply unable to find work after trying for several months or years. The space is also used as a waiting space to get into transitional housing and is a good place to stay clean and sober before entering transitional housing which has a strict no drugs/alcohol policies. **Salvation Army** has seen a huge increase in women suffering from domestic violence issues which his difficult since the Salvation Army isn't a secure facility.

Single Men: The Rescue Mission has been turning away 10-15 men per evening. Capacity is 125 men per night during the winter and 136 when it's below freezing. The shelters have seen an increase of people with mental illness coming in. **Union Gospel Mission** has capacity for 50-70 people per night, and allows men, women, kids and animals. The numbers are up this year across the board. The shelter is first-come, first-served, and opens between 9:00 to 9:30pm. Call (503)274-4483 for access.

Red Cross did not reach capacity during the last severe weather event (Dec. 29-31, 2010) and was at about half capacity. **211** has experienced a larger number of calls this year each night with greater response rate.

Many providers would like to have a discussion about trigger temperatures and perhaps revisit the limits and how we communicate the information. When harsh winds and rain combine with the cold weather people are in much more danger of suffering from hypothermia and frost bite.

III. Overview of the WorkSource System in the Portland/Metro Region - Bob Durston, WorkSystems

WorkSource is a federally funded program through the United States Department of Labor and also has contracts with community colleges. This system isn't yet set up very well for those leaving homelessness and attempting to re-enter the workforce. There needs to be better collaboration between agencies to improve the system. In 2007 there was 5% unemployment in the region and in 2010 that number has risen to 10.4%. Unemployment claims went from 6,806 in 2007 to 9,583 in 2010. There is also a huge problem with those who are employed being underemployed. This makes earning a sustainable income that much harder for those trying to enter the workforce. The longer someone remains unemployed the harder it becomes to gain employment.

There are five WorkSource centers in the area which aim to provide universal access through training, workshops and other types of assistance. Universal accessibility needs a lot of improvement to assist those with disabilities and other challenges. This can be accomplished by strengthening partnerships with other organizations in the community and helping people to overcome the obstacles to using the system.

More private sector jobs and WPA jobs need to be created. On-the-job training programs are a great way to begin new employment. WorkSource can help give job seekers strategies to make them "job ready." Employment should be a shared advocacy between housing and jobs because they are related. Communication protocols need to be established in order for those coming out of homelessness or experiencing other barriers to effectively use this program. Advocacy is the best way to help someone navigate this often complicated and confusing system.

The Aligned Partners program has been very successful but sometimes ends up getting used for the wrong reasons. There needs to be a system-wide change, greater advocacy and better partnering between WorkSource and DHS along with the creation of new tools.

IV. Other Announcements

Meeting in a larger space that can accommodate all attendees was requested. If you have suggestions for new meeting space please let Jennifer Chang know.

 Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 16, 2011, 3-5 p.m., FUMC Room 202.
 For more information, contact Jennifer Chang at (503) 823-2391 or Jennifer.Chang@portlandoregon.gov