

Minutes
Mental Health Planning Council
Housing Committee
Wednesday, November 15, 2017

Attendees:

- Chris Zabik , DMH-WM (via Telephone)
- Dennis McCrory, MD, MRC
- Joe Finn, MHSA (co-chair)
- Adrienne Cassidy, Advocates (co-chair)
- Jonathan Bowen-Leopold, DMH-CO (via Telephone)
- Joel Danforth, DMH-CO
- Danna Mauch, MAMH
- Arthur Ellis, DMH-CM (via telephone)
- Megan Wiechnik, NAMI-MA
- Mary Callahan, MAMH
- Paul McPartland, DHCD
- Sue White, Vinfen
- Ken McIntyre, Bay Cove HS
- Joe Vallely, DMH-CO

Minutes of Previous Meeting

The meeting was co-chair by Adrienne Cassidy and Joe Finn. Adrienne called the meeting to order at 10:13.

The minutes from the September 27 meeting were presented and approved upon a motion by Dennis McCrory, seconded by Mary Callahan.

Community First Olmstead Plan

Joe F talked about being in attendance at the Olmstead Advisory Committee meeting the other week. He reviewed the history of Olmstead and its significance in shaping policy and providing needed resources particularly for housing people with mental illness. He noted that in order for the plan to be effective it must be specific and give firm commitments.

Danna agreed and talked about the need for measurable targets. She expressed concern about the way that DMH-RSP expansion was referred to, and the use of the term “explore”. She feels strongly that a much stronger statement must be made for DMH-RSP and will bring this to the Secretary’s attention.

Joe and Danna each said that the draft document to be issued in the next month or so will give the Committee an opportunity to both review what the plan intends to do, and the opportunity to give the Olmstead Committee feedback.

Danna felt that the Olmstead powerpoint presentation that was handed out at the Advisory meeting did not effectively display the key DMH successes and next steps required. Another reason why the draft plan will be important to review and comment on.

Dennis suggested that in reviewing soon to be released draft of the Olmstead plan that the Housing Committee prepare to identify and strategize about what it wants to come from the plan and how to give shape to the plan. What outcomes might the Committee want to see?

Danna touched on the DMH-RSP expansion as well as improvements to the MassHousing Set-Aside and Low Income Housing Tax Credit program.

Adrienne said it would be import to speak to the success of housing [homing] in helping to promote recovery for people with mental illness. Dennis suggested that those who have benefited from housing are in the best position to “sell” the idea.

NAMI Conference / Housing Workshop

Joe F spoke about his presentation on housing and was taken aback by the Q&A and the demanding needs that parents of adult children are facing. Talked about one parent with a 70 year old son who in order to access housing was encouraged to become homeless. The system is clearly not working for many. Danna talked about parents giving up their kids to the State to get services.

Megan commented that these stories as difficult as they are to hear; are important to changing policy. She further mentioned there are some 900 families in MA with adult children with MI living at home. She suggested that a housing conference may be a necessary vehicle for advocating and promoting change sponsored by NAMI, MAMH, MHSA and DMH.

Ken said in his work with ATARP (homeless co-occurring disorders) that access to affordable housing is key to recovery and the units are not there or difficult to find.

DMH-RSP Expansion Efforts FY19

Danna stated that MAMH is pursuing talks with the Legislature regarding expansion of DMH-RSP. Is evaluating the need to offer a seminar on housing to Legislators in Jan/Feb to promote housing as a critical element to the DMH system and recovery. More to come on this.

Educating Stakeholders

Due to time limitations Adrienne was not able to speak about the housing training she and others offered in CM in October. The session was attended by some 50 people and focused on Sec.8 subsidies and strategies for finding and keeping housing. Additional training in other Areas is being planned.

Old / New Business

Adriane seeks to engage the Committee in a discussion around a work plan for the Housing Committee in 2018.

The Commissioner’s housing plan continues to gain attention particularly the aspect of expanding DMH-RSP in promoting movement through the residential system.

Next Meeting: January 17@10AM at DMH Central Office.