

Mental Health Planning Council
Housing Subcommittee
Friday, June 19, 2020
Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Over 30+

Welcome & Introductions

- Adrienne Cassidy and Joe Finn, the co-chairs called the meeting to order @10:06 and welcomed the group to the Zoom meeting. Everyone was asked to introduce themselves and it was noted there were some 30 plus people on the call. The meeting agenda had been mailed out in advance and was presented for review and approval.
- Adrienne began with highlighting the value of the Covid-19 meetings the Subcommittee hosted with DMH providers and other interested parties. These meetings were held every other week during April & May which offered providers the opportunity to share challenges & best practices associated while navigating COVID 19 and Housing. Adrienne reported the turnout ranged from 30-40+ people, provided for lots of discussion and served as a great support group for housing staff during a very difficult period.

DMH Housing Plan

- Kim Clougherty provided an update on the DMH Housing Plan. She noted that the initial plan was outlined in 2016 at the request of Commissioner Mikula as she sought to secure additional DMHRSP. This rental program is now funded at over \$12.5M housing nearly 1,600 clients. The advocates led by MAMH are seeking to increase the fund by \$3M.
- She went on to outline and review proposed changes to the earlier plan. The key elements of the plan include: 1. Expansion of DMHRSP (Sponsor-Based & Tenant-Based) by \$1M/yr.; 2. Address needs of homeless individuals with mental health conditions by growing Safe Havens programs; 3. Create permanent housing utilizing FCF capital, ch. 689; sec. 811, and 3% Priority Program; 4. Improve management of DMH housing resources through securing TA, along with necessary hardware/software; 5. Continue to support and deliver training specific to housing.
- DMH is actively seeking input to the revised plan and will continue to reach out to the Subcommittee for input and advice.

Homelessness & Covid-19

- Joe Finn spoke to the shelter crisis brought on by Covid-19 where the census has been reduced by about 50% in order to conform to CDC requirements. He particularly noted the recent Globe Op.Ed. that spoke about the fact that 30% of homeless individuals were asymptomatic, as if that was a positive finding. Joe registered his perspective noting they still suffer the indignity of being homeless on a daily basis. He went on to make the argument that this was a unique point-in-time to reset the course and plan for creating more humane sheltering options and permanent housing.

- Joe F. noted that DMH approached him to assist in leading a workgroup focused on expanding Safe Havens. He is familiar with this model, strengths / weakness and looks forward to engaging in a vibrant conversation with a broad-based group of agencies as the need is great.
- The impassioned words from Joe F, if ever there was a time to address homelessness it's now, promoted Jonathan B. to mention the need to consider purchasing hotels/motels with ready capacity. Danna M. echoed Joe's concerns and said this is the time to make the needs of the homeless known. Yuka asked, "where will the homeless go if they can't go back to shelter?" Keith from PATH/Eliot indicated his willingness to assist.

Housing & Peer Specialists Discussion / Education

- Jill G. spoke about the importance of educating Peer Specialist and those with lived experience about affordable housing resources / options and how peers in their various roles can best assist individuals who are seeking housing. The Subcommittee is planning to host a series of meetings around the state in the coming months to engage Peer Specialists and others in this conversation. Jill Gichuhi/NAMI and Earl Miller /DMH are co-chairing the effort with assistance from Catia Sharp / MAMH. Catia reported that a steering committee is being formed, there is a lot of interest and regional meeting will be scheduled soon, details forthcoming.

DMHRSP Statewide Provider Dialogue

- Adrienne gave a brief update on efforts to organize this meeting, based upon the bi-weekly Covid-19 meetings there is much interest on the part of providers to gather to discuss what's working, the challenges they face, and identify steps to address operational issues and learn from each other. She hopes to have more details in the coming weeks. Planning has been complicated by Covid-19 but, she assured everyone it will happen.

Next Meeting: TBD- September