



HOMELESS SERVICES NETWORK MINUTES

March 24, 2016 / 8:30am – 10:00am

Hope Haven Conference Center

ATTENDANCE

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT

1) Bridgett Graham	Crisis Assistance Ministry
2) Joy Crosby	Crisis Assistance Ministry
3) Gayle Butterfield	Florence Crittenton Services
4) Dr. Pat Krikorian	Florence Crittenton Services
5) Alice Harrison	Hope Haven
6) Natalia Botella	Legal Services of Southern Piedmont
7) Tameka Bellfield	Lutheran Services of the Carolinas
8) Karen Pelletier	Mecklenburg County Community Support Services
9) Peter Safir	Mecklenburg County Community Support Services
10) Courtney Morton	Mecklenburg County Community Support Services
11) Ulinda Forehand	Mecklenburg County Community Support Services: Shelter + Care
12) Erin Schroeder	Mecklenburg County Community Support Services: Shelter + Care
13) Meg Robinson Arnold	Mecklenburg County Community Support Services: SVS
14) Pamela Bennett	Men's Shelter of Charlotte
15) Kathy Gauger	Safe Alliance
16) Kelly Lynn	Supportive Housing Communities
17) Mike O'Sullivan	Unitarian Church Universalist Church Advocacy Group
18) Dale Mullennix	Urban Ministry Center

GUESTS PRESENT:

19) Janice McNeely	Changed Choices
20) Julia Hanson	Charlotte Mecklenburg Library
21) Angela Sepulveda	Department of Veterans Affairs
22) Ken Szymanski	Greater Charlotte Apartment Association
23) Unitie Mance	Homecare for the Carolinas
24) Loretta Tillman	ICR
25) Renee Johnson	Jessie's World, Inc.
26) Kim Alexander	Mecklenburg County
27) Jamie Matteo	Mecklenburg County Behavioral Health Department
28) Debbie O'Handley	The Hope House Foundation
29) Phyllis E. Finch	Victory Christian Center

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & FEBRUARY MINUTES

- Meeting called to order by HSN Ex Officio Member, Peter Safir, at 8:33am



- Peter welcomed members and guests of HSN and shared that many members, including HSN chair and vice chair, are in Los Angeles attending a Housing First conference.
- February meeting minutes were approved by vote.

VICTORIES

- Crisis Assistance Ministry has expanded its staff—New staff person leading Partner Agency Office: Bridgett Graham. Feel free to reach out to Bridgett via email @ bgraham@crisisassistance.org (Joy Crosby)
- Housing Resource Center @ Mecklenburg County Annex Building staying open! (Mike O’Sullivan)
- Mecklenburg County Commissioners voted unanimously to ban the box, removing criminal background from the county’s employment application. (Mike O’Sullivan)
- Hope Haven is having its first-time ever sold out event with its April 19th luncheon – which will feature Darryl Strawberry (Alice Harrison)
- Baby Grand Opening will take place at the Moore Place Expansion on June 8th @ 10am (Dale Mullennix)
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg community was awarded most of the funding it applied for through the NOFA process and is still waiting to hear about rest of application; the approved funding includes dollars to go toward the work on the community’s Landlord consortium (Erin Schroeder)
- March is National Social Work Month! (Pat Krikorian)
- New services available at Women’s and Men’s shelters including medication management through other community agencies including Family First and Anuvia (Kim Alexander)

GENERAL UPDATES

- **Change to HSN schedule in July: Meeting will occur on Third Thursday (7/21)**
- **Presentation on Community Takeaways from the National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference for Families and Youth (Karen Pelletier)**
 - Group attending conference from Charlotte-Mecklenburg included Stacy Lowry, Deronda Metz, Nicole Dewitt, Tameka Gunn, Karen Pelletier, and Stephen Smith
 - Takeaways:
 - Opened conference with charge from Obama administration that it is dedicated to ending family homelessness by 2020.
 - Housing First remains a theme in every session. Mecklenburg County is doing this well in many areas and can continue by promoting harm reduction as one of Housing First’s best practices.
 - Rapid re-housing was reinforced as a key intervention for families experiencing homelessness. Work can continue on how Housing First and rapid re-housing intersect.
 - There is no existing method that predicts who will be successful in a housing intervention. What is known is that it costs more money when programs spend resources requiring families to get ready for housing instead of housing them first and then wrapping them with supportive services.



- Importance of data integrity was emphasized—it is only good as how clean it is when entered; data should drive decisions in the community.
- Next Steps:
 - Karen is reaching out to Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) and the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) to explore options for community trainings on a housing first approach with rapid re-housing with families.
- Questions:
 - How did local organizations who attended respond?
 - There was enthusiasm for housing first and consensus that housing readiness created barriers for families and prolonged their time homeless. Decided to explore the possibility of bringing the experts who do this to the community and provide additional training.
 - Are there any plans made for trainings?
 - Since last week, Karen has reached out to NAEH and CSH to get proposals together.
 - What is meant by “housing readiness” and why is it not necessary?
 - Housing First is considered the best way to end someone’s episode to get them into housing as quickly as possible versus housing readiness where they need to meet steps before they can get there. When you prolong a family’s state of limbo, it becomes more and more difficult to reach housing as well as meet those housing readiness goals because they are living in state of crisis. There is a platform of success with Housing First.
- **Food Stamps Exemption Work**
 - Peter shared that HSN will follow up on this next month and will receive feedback from Stephanie Shatto, Pam Jepsen, and Alice Harrison.
 - Natalie Botella shared an update from their advocacy work:
 - NC has come up with interim solution to assess eligibility; they will send out a questionnaire, which is not required to be filled out. It is important to know that if a person continues to be eligible by meeting one of the exemptions, they should consider filling out the questionnaire. If a person knows that they do not meet the exemptions, it is up to that person to fill out the questionnaire. If they do not fill it out they will continue to receive Food Stamps until their next recertification. It is unclear whether they will be required to re-pay those food stamps for the portion of time they were not eligible to receive food stamps and continued to receive them. The safest approach is for each person to fill out the questionnaire, which will arrive via mail in the next weeks.
- **Update on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth**
 - Will update next month.



WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO END CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS BY 2016?

Dale Mullennix, Executive Director, Urban Ministry Center

- **PART 1: BACKGROUND**

- Dale shared the context that informed the Housing First Charlotte-Mecklenburg initiative, which aims to end chronic homelessness by 2016.
- Persons who meet the definition of chronic homelessness make up only 10% of the homeless population but use 50% of resources.
- For more information on the new definition of chronic homelessness, please see: <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4847/hearth-defining-chronically-homeless-final-rule/>
- In 2014, the issue of persons uptown sleeping on the benches gained attention and served as a catalyst for community groups to come together with a proposal that offered a stronger solution and longer lasting, better outcomes.
- What grew out of this was Housing First Charlotte-Mecklenburg (HFCM), which includes public and private entities. For more information, see: <http://www.housingfirstcharmeck.org/>

- **PART 2: STRATEGY**

- First step was to determine who persons experiencing chronic homelessness CH were and where they were located, which led to a three-day registry process that included over 280 volunteers. 516 persons were found in January 2015.
- Through the registry process, they found out many persons were not coming to agencies. Since then, the community's outreach team of 3 is now larger and includes PATH members to connect persons to services.
- HFCM works to train community resources in how to do the Housing First strategy. Sam Tsemberis, founder of Pathways to Housing and the first Housing First model, was invited to train the community. This included a full day event with 125 employees from over 8 organizations. Since then. Sam has been back to visit with each agency that works with persons experiencing chronic homelessness and to do continuing updates.
- HFCM works to engage the broader community to do other things—provide welcome home kits with essential things need to move in, for example.
- HFCM maintains a Speaker's Bureau that includes a police captain, realtor, banker, and other professionals that raise awareness about the work.
- HFCM evaluates its work. Through funding provided by Mecklenburg County and others, UNCC is overseeing a program evaluation that will look at program outcomes, process, and impact on cost to the community.
- Dale shared that as of February 2016, HFCM has housed 254 persons with 93% of them still in apartments today. 5 of the people housed together had been homeless a total of 130 years. Dale shared that this tells you that no one is a lost cause and to never give up on anyone.
- Dale shared that there is still a need to create new units: there are three components needed—the unit, supportive services, and rent subsidy.



- saying – data makes people believe; stories make people care
- Dale ended by sharing that the key to the HFCM success in getting going was impacting the broader community's values (respond to the uptown benches). At the same time, they tried to serve the persons experiencing homelessness with what they are seeking – a place to live – not as a reward for achievement.
- **PART 3: QUESTIONS + SUGGESTIONS**
 - Can HFCM use vacancies that already exist?
 - HFCM looked at this strategy when building Moore Place; because it is important to have supportive services provided in that facility and the need to customize it for the population living there, they found that they could build something new for cheaper than rehab and customize an existing building to their needs. At the same time, Dale said that he would never say no, but his experience is that it has been more economical this way.
 - Is the number on the registry a static number? What about the inflow? Is there a number for a net unhoused population?
 - Dale shared that they continue to meet new people each month; and they continue to scrub the data each month. The registry is a dynamic number; they constantly monitor the data; and are aiming toward functional zero which is to create systems within our community so people are not lingering on street and so they have resources where they can access housing when they need it.
 - A comment was made that 300 as a number in need of housing at any given time is not overwhelming for this kind of community – because the community has seen significant progress, it seems appropriate to dream the outcome for this and it seems to be on the horizon.
 - Where is HFCM finding landlords?
 - All over Charlotte. Providers have to go and sell the landlord on what they are doing; that a social worker comes with the person to support them in their housing and that there is a guaranteed rental subsidy. It is not easy, but there is evidence that it works.
 - It is a big deal to announce the end of chronic homelessness by 2016. It looks like it is difficult to achieve. Is the messaging now: we are still committed, but it will take a little longer?
 - The new single site is not finished, but this does not mean that we will stop finding landlords in the meantime; we do not want to lose our sense of urgency. At this point we do want to say there is a change in the goal date; we are talking about how to talk about that. We need to still go just as hard to the current goal; we need property owners, funders, elected officials to feel our sense of urgency.
 - With the new initiative related to the 2012 lawsuit from the Olmstead Act, what is the impact?
 - We need to integrate persons who have disabilities – we don't want to institutionalize – this is not the case at Moore Place – services are there for each person's use, but it is not required to take up in order to live there.



- Comment was made that locally based rental groups are generally better at working with these populations than nationally based ones.

UPDATES FROM HSN AND NON-HSN COMMITTEES

HSN Advocacy Committee: Mike O’Sullivan shared progress on some of the committee initiatives:

- Background was given on the proposal in front of City Council to eliminate garbage removal from multi-family homes, which would result in apartments contracting with various trash removal companies and would pass the cost onto the residents.
 - Mike proposed a motion that “HSN take an official position against the proposal being considered by City Council to eliminate garbage collection from multi-family homes based on the impact upon low- to moderate-income families.”
 - Motion was made, and approved by vote.
 - Mike will keep HSN updated on progress of advocacy efforts.
- Court Diversion: The program proposal was well-received by Mecklenburg County and they are seeking funding in next fiscal year’s budget to fund the program.
- *Storied Streets* has been a helpful way to share stories of people experiencing homeless and has prompted community conversations.
- HSN Advocacy continues to meet with City Council members.
- HB2 passed by State Legislators last night and included a mandate that cities cannot pass minimum wage increases above the Federal minimum wage. Directly impacts people trying to move out of poverty. There will be a meeting on 3/31 @ Little Rock Zion Church re: the \$15/hour minimum wage increase.

HSN Coordination of Services in Housing (COSH): Kathy Gauger shared update on work:

- Committee meets 1st Tuesday of each month at noon at Florence Crittendon and makes service provider staff aware of housing and other resources available in the community.
- Committee has been an avenue to process referrals to A Way Home for families who do not fall within the 72-hour window of experiencing homelessness as required by Coordinated Assessment. This process will end in May 2016 due to Coordinated Assessment opening the “window” to 14 days instead of 72 hours.
- COSH will decide whether or not they continue to meet as frequently or at all.

Housing Advisory Board of Charlotte-Mecklenburg: Continuum of Care (CoC) Committee:

- Peter Safir announced that Tier 1 funding from HUD was approved and the community is awaiting word that Tier 2 funding will be approved.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing our Heroes:

- Peter Safir reported that progress toward being able to declare we have ended Veteran Homelessness continues and that it has been a good partnership between public and private entities.
- Dale Mullennix reported that 10 units in the Moore Place expansion are designated for veterans and they are having trouble identifying 10 chronically homeless veterans.



CHALLENGES

- The CARA (Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act) that supports treatment and aftercare for substance use in light of the heroin/opiates crisis. Alice Harrison encouraged the community to think about this and how it plays into the Housing First approach that does not require participants to seek treatment once housed. She added that Hope Haven has been seeing more relapses related to opiates and it continues to be a challenge. (Alice Harrison)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- None.

ADJOURN

- Meeting adjourned at 10:00am.
- Minutes submitted by HSN Secretary, Courtney Morton.

Next Meeting – Thursday, April 28, 2016