

Whatcom County Homeless Coalition

NOTES from Coalition Meeting on Thursday, September 4, 2008
City of Bellingham- Municipal Court Bldg. Fireplace Room- 3:30- 5:00 PM

Meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m.

1. Introductions and Announcements

- Greg Winter was introduced as Director of the Homeless Service Center
- Teresa Josephson announced that Lydia Place is moving their Thrift Store this weekend to State Street.
- Mary Jo Duborow of Readiness to Learn announced that they were successful with their McKinney Vento Homeless Education Grant this year; however the total amount applied for was cut by \$15,000, so they won't be doing any training, but it will pay for staff time.

2. Public Comment Period

- A consumer from Rainbow Center shared concerns he had regarding incarceration and mental health issues. It was suggested that he contact the mental health ombudsman service. Gary Williams will provide the 1-800 contact number to the consumer.
- Berkley Watterson of Garden St. UMC Church asked that a list of agencies participating in the Homeless County Coalition be made available for attendees. The list will be provided at the next meeting.

3. Review notes from August Coalition and Steering Committee meeting

Minutes were reviewed and accepted as submitted. Clarification was requested regarding Section 8 and the 2200 on the list now. Question was if this was above the 1693 slots available now. Gail clarified that the 2200 number is the waiting list.

4. Update of Homeless Service Center (Greg)

Greg shared his views of the journey over the past three years of the Homeless Coalition and Homeless Service Center leading to his selection as new Director. The Phase I Plan, implemented three years ago, identified big gaps in the homeless continuum of care and discussed broad strategies. Needs were recognized, and there was a concentrated interest in using a "housing first" approach, using resources and energy to prevent homelessness. Phase II focused on the implementation of the HSC project through HGAP, to serve all sub-populations, build case management capacity in the community and develop funding. Phase III, which is the current implementation phase, is developing cross-system strategies to better integrate homeless services with employment and vocational services, domestic violence services, and behavioral health services. Greg stated that the county's homeless population has been rising, slowly compared to other communities that also have a rising homeless population, but is currently at approximately 1300 at any point in time, or 900 households. New resources to fight homelessness include 2163 and 1359 funding to transform how homelessness is addressed. HGAP II provides permanent housing options, and expanded use of S+C funds to provide housing assistance for housing for mental health clients.

The Homeless Service Center was fully staffed in early July. They've enrolled 89 households, 45 of which are housed. Referrals come from many sources. HSC is in the process of completion of an MOA with Whatcom Counseling to use previously unused S+C funds to house individuals with mental health disabilities, and may have capabilities to expand S+C assistance in the future to persons with chemical dependency or HIV/AIDS in 12/09. The Landlord Guarantee Fund was recently finalized. Future focus of HSC will be landlord engagement and recruitment, development of a comprehensive

communication plan, and aggressively seek additional grant funding. Existing funding will be reexamined; Greg and Gail will discuss this issue and Greg asks for input from members.

HSC is developing a PowerPoint presentation for landlords and realtors, and Garden St. UMC Church would like to schedule a presentation. There is a plan to provide presentations to community partners and providers.

The HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) database, called "Client Track," is not yet available for tracking clients. The product has been purchased, but implementation will still take a few months. The program will allow tracking of clients by any number of criteria, and it is hoped that funding can be secured to allow availability of HMIS by other providers, with initial users to include HSC and OC.

Greg added that "missing pieces" include need for increased employment and vocational services, lack of permanent supported housing with a particular need for mental health housing, single-room occupancy, and specialized housing for youth. Deeper and more vocal commitment is needed from community leaders, and Greg plans to provide regular updates to the County Council and City Council. He further stated that it is his intention to occupy his current position to 2015 and, with the help of service providers plans to decrease homelessness by half.

5. Follow up on discussion of Tent Cities (Claire, Rainbow Center)

Neither Robert nor Shannon was present to provide update, but Rainbow Center representative, Claire deArmond, reported that Gail O'Grady has been in contact with at least one person in Seattle involved in Tent City there with the hope of arranging for them to come up to meet with Interfaith regarding Tent City.

6. Shelter Plus Care update (Greg)

As mentioned earlier, HSC is working on a MOA with Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric to fully implement S+C component of the HSC program to serve more mental health clients. Currently 30 are being served, and 20 will be added to total 50. OC is considering becoming a sponsor.

7. County Reentry Project (Gail)

County has several RFPs going out:

-HGAP Reentry issued 8/20/08, application due 9/30/08, applicant conference on 9/10/08 at 10:00 a.m. at the Health Department for those interested.

-2060 R&R RFP notice went out to agencies, released 9/3/08; application due 9/23/08, applicant conference 9/12 at 9:00 a.m. at the Health Department for \$105,000 for new agencies.

2060 O&M RFP issue on 9/10/08, due 9/30/08, applicant conference 9/18/08 at 10:00 a.m. at the Health Department for \$58,428.

8. Update on local McKinney Application (Gail)

Gail thinks the County McKinney Application was successfully submitted. Greg and Gail will continue to work on a piece for it to be completely finished from the County's perspective regarding counts.

9. Update on Steve Powers' Archdiocese Housing Authority Project (Gail)

A 50-unit apartment complex was previously discussed. This will now be a 40-unit complex, no longer able to do 24/7 staffing due to budget. 75% Of the 40 units are targeted for homeless. Steve anticipates 100% for homeless or formerly homeless. Expectation is that HSC will be able to use this

for tertiary population. Gary added that models are available that use tenant/client resident managers.

10. Rapid Re-housing Application (Gail)

Part of the HUD McKinney grant, a demonstration project, which is a 3-year grant which will only be offered one time. The successful applicant should be renewed. This is competitive regionally, with a target population of medium barriered families with children, to provide case management and rental subsidies. Exploring collaboration with Clallam County. This is a positive, in that we'd get leverage points. Gail will update at next meeting.

11. Update/ Bellingham Whatcom Project Homeless Connect (Bruce)

In support of the 10-year Plan, three months ago the group made the decision to invite new people to join Homeless Connect, and moved from a planning group to a coordination/implementation focus. Now a group of 30, the group has decided to use January 29, 2009, in conjunction with the PIT count. Informational workshop is being offered on 9/23/08 and flyers made available. Bruce reports receiving great support from Lydia Place, OC, Whatcom Volunteer Center.

12. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 2, 2008, to be chaired by Greg Winter