



Whatcom County Coalition for the Homeless (NOTES)

Thursday, August 6, 2009
YWCA Ballroom
3:30- 5:00 PM

1. Introductions & Announcements

Morning of Sept 22nd at Saint Luke's Health Ed Ctr: event coordination meeting for Project Homeless Connect.

Thurs March 4th is the date for the 2010 Project Homeless Connect event.

Carol CCS – client in hospital has therapeutic cat that needs permanent home. Call Carol 318-6531

Housing Authority's Walton Place opened – 10 homeless units, housed 3 youth, still looking for a single person who would make it through the screening: no criminal history, no money owed, call 671-7663

2. Public Comment Period (limited to 3 minutes each)

No comments.

3. Review notes, July Coalition/Steering Com meetings Greg

Notes approved w/ a few minor corrections about one of the announcements.

4. Balance of State/Legislative Update Gail /Greg

Process to begin Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing assistance program: submit more technical information and Department of Commerce will evaluate to see if we are Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) compliant, probably about the beginning of Sept. We are on track to be HMIS compliant.

The WA State Point in Time (PIT) Count this January was 22,348 homeless persons.

Whatcom PIT report is on the County Health Dept. website.

McKinney – Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) is not out yet, only affects OC and Sun Community. Don't expect until October.

Samaritan Bonus Project – Homeless Service Center/Opportunity Council are applying. Only way to bring in new HUD money. The project would be for master leasing 8 units for permanent

supportive housing for chronically homeless persons who are disabled. Funding could be on-going if program performed well. Only a few competing projects.

Department of Corrections three-month rental voucher program is back. Call Thad for further questions.

Legislative – Greg joined state coalition legislative committee – meeting next week. Since Greg representing us, let him know legislative priorities related to housing and homelessness.

HGAP funding cut is recent development. Statewide, the grant money was forward promised, but not spent fast enough, so was re-allocated. Here in Whatcom County, our HGAP projects ARE spending and delivering services at a very good pace, but that’s not the case for some other parts of the state. There will be cuts across the board. Think we’ll be OK in Whatcom, but not sure yet how cuts will be done.

5. HGAP2 Update

Gail / Joe

City Gate Apartments = Permanent Supportive Housing for re-entry.

19 City Gate apartments full. Some clients moving away from City Gate to their next permanent housing placement with family. Our committee just met to review more applications. Some approved, some denied. It’s a good process.

Gail and Greg recently toured City Gate and were impressed with quality of units and security system.

Also supporting hardest to house with vouchers in scattered sites – housed 11 this month. Joe provides case management for both programs: City Gate and voucher recipients.

Reference letters for clients applying for City Gate – can be sent to Joe, discuss how long the client has worked with you and what services he/she has engaged in.

Contact info: Joseph Nagel (Pioneer Human Services) Joseph.nagel@p-h-s.com (425)327-5477.

6. Update on medically fragile homeless respite

Greg

Recent examination of this on-going issue. Paula Stratman OC/WHSC former case manager worked on a graduate school project on this topic. Research included case managing a medically fragile client. Paula made recommendations. Also, volunteers with Hope House have been very interested in responding to this need.

We have formalized a workgroup as of last month. St. Joes, Evergreen and Alderwood skilled nursing facilities, WHSC, DSHS, COPES, Lighthouse Mission, Gail (Health Department), Stepping Stones of Qualis Health (medical coach - helps makes sure discharged patient follows care plan. One hoped-for outcome is to get the hospital’s 30-day re-admission rate down, even though it’s already a low rate nationwide. Hope to have pilot project to train volunteers to provide case management to small case loads. We hope to end the cycle of streets to hospital and back to the streets, and in the process, make better use of skilled nursing facilities.

We’re going to develop job description to volunteer case management position. If the pilot works, we can pursue funding to create a more sustainable program.

Medical respite beds (4) are being implemented at the Lighthouse Mission, a partnership with the hospital. Referrals to this program is from the hospital.

7. Whatcom Homeless Service Center (WHSC) update (clean and sober housing policy) Greg

WHSC recently changed its policy that will affect some of your clients. Our community has a number of clean and sober houses, mix of providers, styles. WHSC only provides subsidies for permanent housing. At first we were treating C&S housing as a permanent housing option because some people can and do stay there for a long time. There was a desire to help those leaving treatment getting into C&S housing. C&S housing is a very important community resource. After several months using that policy, we have realized that C&S is actually transitional housing. The main factor being a lack of regular landlord/tenant relationship in clean and sober housing, even with Oxford House. C&S operators need to be able to evict immediately if using substances– so not a regular relationship. From this point forward the WHSC will consider clean and sober housing to be transitional. So that removed the resource of helping people get in, but now we can help people exit clean and sober houses into more permanent housing. Substance abuse treatment providers supported this policy change. This decision was made in collaboration with providers and stakeholders. There are no perfect solutions, but this seems to make the most sense.

8. Organization update: Womenscare Kirsten/Anna

Kirsten has been with agency for 12 years, director for 2 years, also brought Anna Riel to do presentation. Womenscare has been operating for 30 years. Womenscare has a 24 hr crisis line – support to anyone dealing with domestic violence. If they need shelter, that’s how they access our services. This year we have answered over 1,800 hotline calls, an 86% increase over last year! We provide advocacy based counseling, resources, support, safety planning, domestic violence education.

Shelter – 5-bedroom home, 18-person capacity. Free, meals and basic needs provided. Safety planning, one-on-one advocacy , referrals to medical, legal, support groups, art groups for kids, individual support. 1,500 hours of advocacy based counseling 380 hours support group, total 2,600 hours, each resident receives an average of 2 hours individual support per day. Services are now being provided at the business office, “former resident direct service advocate” and legal advocate, can help walk-ins or former residents. One-on-one counseling, food and other help.

Part of our agency strategic plan. Sampling of former residents – feedback said we want support from Womenscare after we leave the shelter. Don’t want to have to switch agencies when leave shelter. We received new funding to hire an advocate and got new office space to offer these services.

Volunteer training twice a year, open to the community – free 30 hour training, could be helpful if you’re working with this population.

Womenscare is now the 5th partner agency for WHSC – not started yet. This partnership will help us address the issue of helping clients obtain/retain housing after they leave shelter. One of the biggest things that our clients have to deal with. We are also developing a housing advocacy program. Work a lot with OC, WHSC , LP, New Way Ministries. If you have nowhere to go, more likely to return to abuse. This will allow people to move directly into permanent housing, provide rental assistance and on-going case management. Hope to start Sept. 1st. Will update at next meeting. Also working with WHSC on Gates Foundation grant which would expand that program and have another case manager at Womenscare working on housing.

Let’s work together to make an impact in our community.

9. Future organization updates schedule Greg

Sept – Home and Community Services & WA Low-Income Housing Alliance

Oct – John Cummings – United for National Health Care

Nov – Housing Authority

Next Meeting September 3, 2009

Questions? Contact Stephanie Reinauer at 255-2091 or stephanie_reinauer@whatcomhsc.org.