



AGENDA

Whatcom County Coalition for the Homeless

Thursday, April 1, 2010

YWCA Ballroom

3:30- 5:00 PM

1. Introductions & Announcements

2. Public Comment Period

(limited to 3 minutes each)

Tribute to Tutu.

Janet Marino – YWCA is having series of presentations, first is tonight at 7pm regarding dialog around racism.

Teresa Muirs – Hope House outreach staff have noticed an increase in violence within the homeless community. Incidents have been reported to her from other individuals experiencing homelessness, such as shortness in temper and lack of hope.

3. Review notes, Coalition/Steering Com meetings

Greg

Apology – steering committee notes not available at this time.

4. Multi-Agency Collaboration for Challenging Cases

Thad & Denise

Multi-Agency Collaboration for Challenging Cases

Thad Allen (DOC) and Denise Katterhagen (St. Joseph Hospital Social Worker Manager)

Thad and Denise are collaboratively examining how to provide services for individuals with challenging medical conditions that have criminal backgrounds such as sex offender charges. There are gaps in community services for these types of cases that need to be closed if we are to successfully help them obtain housing.

Denise and Thad described a case they shared. He is a sex offender with significant health problems. What can be done when a nursing home bed is needed for an individual however nursing homes will not take them due to liability of having a sex offender in residence. In these situations, the hospital provides thousands of dollars in care for these patients. The patient was in the hospital for weeks with no facilities willing to give him a bed. Thad was able to secure housing at the patient's prior residence by inviting the landlord up to the hospital to meet with the patient and come up with an agreement that would work for both parties.

One obstacle is that the nursing agencies will not send caregivers to take care of patients with sex offense charges, severe mental illness, chemical dependencies, etc due to the liability involved

Joe Nagel and Thad Allen have discussed this issue with Pioneer Human Services in contemplation of more individuals with strong criminal backgrounds being released due to state cutbacks.

Individuals who are medically fragile and homeless are very expensive to care for. Systems and funding must be provided to help service providers find proper facilities for individuals in need. Benefits such as Medicare/Medicaid offer limited if any subsidy to pay for these clients.

Medically fragile individuals are an important population and they are very expensive to take care of. Housing providers cannot take it on alone but can work with key partners with pockets deeper than ours. It must be brought to the attention of the community and collaboration with other services is needed.

5. PHC follow-up

Dan/Bruce/Greg

Rebecca from Whatcom Volunteer Center reported: This year's numbers of volunteers were 325 on the day of event, 75 more than last year. There were 467 households and 679 individual people attending as guests. (429 households attended last year.) This year ran smoothly with minimal lines at the intake area. Greg said that this was due in part to not having to do Point in Time count at intake this year. It was also noted that there were more families and children this year.

What we have learned so far from volunteers: we've had high volunteer retention – out of 200 plus only four people said they would not volunteer again next year; 30% were returning volunteers from PHC 2009. Many returning volunteers saw improvements in intake process and other improvements in delivering the event that they had suggested after last year's PHC. We are still waiting to hear complete feedback from service providers and guests to hear success stories and what needs improvement.

Theresa Muirs commented that some people who are homeless did not come due to the crowded atmosphere of the event.

6. Balance of State update

Gail/Greg

Balance of State committee is now called the **WA State Homeless Steering Committee**. At the last phone conference, we learned that there will be a new round of competition for a permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless project, as part of Dept. of Commerce's application for HUD McKinney-Vento homeless housing funds. Last year, with minimal planning, Whatcom County applied for these funds through the Homeless Service Center and the project was ranked #1 among three applications submitted by counties in the balance of state. All three projects were funded. We believe that we would score high again for this year's competition; however, we need to learn more about recent changes to the program rules that may put another Whatcom project at risk of losing funding. Gail will investigate this further to get a better understanding of how a Whatcom application might adversely affect other renewal projects here.

7. Legislative update - Greg please fill in what is needed

Greg

Greg – Federal – Health care reform passed – great thing in the long run. Medicare will expand significantly and more individuals will be covered.

State – The GAU program, being renamed Disability Lifeline, has experienced lots of twists and turns during this legislative session and it's not over yet. But the good news is that the program was saved by the legislature and the Governor's signed the bill into law. More details on this at our May meeting.

Local: WTA special election – facing some severe cutbacks on multiple routes and Sunday service might be cut all together. Greg asked the Homeless Coalition to endorse the bill by consensus; however one member spoke against it so it was not endorsed at this time.

8. 10-Year Plan Update

Gail

It is currently ready in a white paper form but needs edits and reviews before coming to the WHC. The documentation of the experiences and preferences of people who are homeless is missing. We need information and stories from people experiencing homelessness. Does anyone want to participate? Gail is currently looking for volunteers to help collect input from people who are homeless. This is an important piece needed before next steps are decided to ending homelessness, particularly for those who fit into the chronically homeless population. We need to identify what is not working in our community in helping homeless individuals? This information and the stories gathered from people experiencing homelessness will make the plan update stronger. It would be good to gather information from those individuals who are currently in housing and those who are not currently engaged in housing services. This will give more insight into what kind of housing people want and what homelessness looks like through the eyes of an individual currently experiencing it. Gail says that it is time to re-examine the resources or “shake things up a bit.” Our planning and the implementation of the Phase III plan shook things up a bit and we’ve made good progress, but we have lots more to do and some of it may look different than what we are doing now.

9. US Census update

Theresa/Greg

The Census Bureau finished the count of individuals experiencing homelessness this morning. Theresa Muirs stated that the letter that Greg wrote and communications by Gail after the last meeting had an effect on the Census Bureau’s decision to change how they approached their homeless count. The count times were changed to the more reasonable hours of between 9:00pm – 12:00pm on Tuesday night and 8:00am -10:00am on Wednesday. Some of the residents of the camps agreed to give Theresa their names and info but did not want Census staff coming into the camp and the Census accepted that. The Census believes that one hundred more people were counted that might not have been counted if not for the help they received from our community, especially Theresa and her team.

10. Future organization updates schedule

Greg

- **May: Lummi Ventures**

Next Meeting May 6, 2010

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