



INTERAGENCY COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS

Housing for all = A Stronger Montgomery

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/homelessness | HousingForAll@montgomerycountymd.gov

Wednesday, March 20, 2024 | 3-5p
Approval Date: Tuesday, June 4, 2024

Present		
DaVida Rowley-Blackman (rep. Chelsea Andrews)	Christine Hong	Robin Lewis
Jeff Goldman, Chair	Manuel Hidalgo	Pelumi Olatinpo (Pelumi)
Ebony Grey, Co-Chair	Terence Hill	Karishma Sheth
Stacey Gold	Christine Hong	Beth Shuman
Courtney Hall	Kathryn Kelly	Earl Stoddard
Gwendolyn Harter	Liz Krueger (rep-Courtney Hall)	

Welcome and Introductions by Chair Jeff Goldman

Recognition of Outgoing Commissions: Susie Sinclair Smith and Amanda Chesney

Acknowledgement of Reappointed Commissioners: Manny Hidalgo, Dr. Ebony Grey, and Karishma Sheth

Welcome to New Commissioners: Gwendolyn Harter, Stacey Gold, and Oluwapelumi Olatinpo

Welcome New SEPH Deputy Chief: Diana Bernhardt Pina

Approval of the January 10, Meeting Notes (VOTE): Ebony Grey motioned to approve the January 10, 2024. The motion carried and the January 10 meeting minutes were approved.

Presentations

Zero For All Populations Goal update and discussion: Paloma Arroyo-LeFebre, MSSW Zero for All Strategy and Collaboration Coordinator shared the six-month milestones for the six working groups. A few highlights were that SEPH housed 350 families last year and vulnerable adults have an average length of stay of 45 days from assigned to housed.

Christine Hong shared the current inflow and outflow charts (presentation slides 7 and 8) and highlighted specific programs that are working to help motivate and move people and families into housing.

- Sharp (Short-term Housing Assistance Rent Program) assisted 26 individuals and 25 families. Sharp provides 12 months of rent with some navigation and light-touch case management. (Return rate: 90%)
- Exit Bonus which is \$5000 for individuals and \$8000 for families to find a solution for their homelessness. (Return rate 18%)
- Move-in incentive an additional \$500 for individual and families.
- Rapid Re-housing (RRH) has an 80% retention or housing rate.
- Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) has a 98% retention of housing rate.

CoC Current Needs

Housing Stabilization Services (HSS): In FY23, 44,000 households received late rent notices from the court. In FY24, SEPH moved the eligibility criteria to receive HSS to households that had court notices. HSS has paid \$124.6 million in emergency rental assistance (ERAP) and prevented 19,100 evictions. When the number of evictions is unduplicated, the programs have prevented 16,326 households from falling into homelessness. The demand continues because there has been a 2-to-3-fold increase in people presenting for services over the last year. HSS continues to focus on prevention by providing case management. County resources are available to provide eviction prevention but not at the level provided by the ERAP program.

Homeless Triage/Centralized Diversion:

Centralized Diversion: Individuals who recently lost housing can call or go to 1301 Piccard Drive and meet with a diversion specialist to discuss short-term solutions (i.e., natural support—family, friends, etc.). Diversion prevents long-term homelessness. A limitation to the diversion process is the hours of operation. Diversion specialists are available from 9a-6p Monday-Friday. According to the Crisis Center, many people experiencing homelessness report to the center on weekends and before and after the hours of operations. SEPH is exploring solutions to this issue because the most effective way to help individuals and families with diversion is when they meet with a diversion specialist and discuss their options. When diversion staff are unavailable, people are referred to shelters or motels, where there are limited beds.

Homeless Triage: Currently, there is no homeless triage down county. This presents a problem because much of the inflow down county (over 50%) is from DC and Prince George's County (PGC). The inflow is challenging, and we are having difficulty keeping up. Progress Place does have one diversion specialist, which is not enough to keep up with the inflow.

Christine commented that Diana Pina, the new Deputy Chief, has been tasked to strengthen our coordination with the district. SEPH has a data sharing agreement with PGC and the district giving us some ability to coordinate. Effective coordination needs to be operational to address the increase in the numbers of people presenting from outside of the jurisdiction.

Inadequate Capacity for families needing RRH and PSH:

Christine reported that there are currently 94 families on the coordinated entry list. The struggle is that there is not enough family providers to meet the capacity. The County has slots but does not have family partners to manage the subsidy programs. There is a need to identify and develop new partnerships to provide larger units that are covered by the subsidies. Cost combined with the required room configuration for boys and girls is challenging. It was suggested that we work to build relationships with landlords so we can help families with housing.

Dr. Ebony Grey commented that the 2023 ICH annual report highlights the work that the commission and staff have accomplished. Ebony also suggested that a workgroup be created to address the NOFO (notification of funding opportunity) bonus project. The group could explore the challenges that providers are facing that prevent them from applying for the bonus project and how we can support them in addressing the challenges.

John Mendez suggested a possible solution could be creating an on-going subsidy that SEPH provides to low-income households. Reconfiguring unused rapid rehousing voucher to give eligible families a permanent voucher. Perhaps, after some time working with HOC to transition those households into a Housing Choice Voucher.

Racial Equity Workgroup direction and next steps A Guide to Advance Racial Equity in a CoC policies and procedures, emphasizing the central importance of prioritizing racial equity in efforts ending homelessness:

Christine reported that Montgomery County was represented by Liz Krueger, Terence Hill, and Kim Ball on the regional Racial Equity Action Council. The council worked many hours to develop recommendations. This work is important because HUD data shows that 90% of families and 87% individual experiencing homelessness are people of color. This is a clear disparity, and we need to address this issue if we are to end homelessness.

Ralph Belk, Chair of the Racial Equity Workgroup, shared that the group has been in place for three years and meets monthly. The group wants to move the work forward and ensure that the ICH is in sync with what the Committee is accomplishing. Liz Krueger, Co-Chair, presented (See presentation slides 17-21)

Definitions of Terms:

- Race - A social construct used to oppress and discriminate against groups of people based on physical characteristics. Race is an identity that has been used to limit black and brown communities' access to freedom, education, housing, and the ability to build wealth.
- Racism – racial prejudice, or unfounded beliefs and irrational fears, that is present at the individual, institutional, systemic, and structural levels of communities and government.
- Power- The ability to help or harm, whether known or unknown.
- Privilege – unearned power, benefits, advantages, access and/or opportunities. It operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels. Power and privilege are often implicit and distributed unevenly.

Equity Design:

- This is the process to dismantle systems of oppression and (re)design them towards liberation and healing by centering the power of communities historically impacted by the oppressive systems being (re)designed.
- Equity Design ensures that those impacted by a decision / policy are part of / consulted in the decision-making process throughout from conceptualization to monitoring of the final product. The participation of these individuals should not be tokenized.

Liz emphasized the need for people with lived experience to be included and heard at each stage of the decision-making process from brainstorming to implementation. We need to ensure that meetings are at times that work for the majority. There is a need for clear direction regarding compensation (mileage and attendance).

Discuss ICH Full Meeting Schedule – Changing the day of week: The decision was made to change the weekday of the full ICH commission meeting from Wednesday because a commission has an ongoing conflict. There will be a poll circulated to decide the weekday which works for most of the commission members.

Committee Updates

- The Workforce Development Committee is circulating a survey to each CoC provider. The purpose of the survey is to collect information about what support each provider needs to help advocate for funding to help people find and retain employment.

Announcements

- Thursday, May 13 9:30a-3p | Community-wide meeting at Mt Calvary Baptist Church, 608 N Horners Lane, Rockville, MD 20850
- Thursday, June 14 9:30-11a | Community Homeless Memorial at Executive Office Building/Circuit Court, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD

Next Meeting

New Weekday: Tuesday, June 4, 2024 | 3-5, Hybrid meeting, Rockville Memorial Library, 21 Maryland Avenue, Rockville and Zoom Webinar.

Meeting adjourned.