**Statewide Homeless Council**

**November 14, 2017**

**9:30 AM to 2:00 PM**

**Location: MaineHousing, 353 Water Street Augusta, Maine**

 **SHC meets regularly the second Tuesday of each month**

**Attendees:** Cullen Ryan (CHOM), Donna Kelley (KBH), Josh D’Alessio (PCHC), Dan Brennan (MaineHousing), Melanie LaMore Gagnon (Safe Voices), David McClusky (Community Care), Boyd Kronholm (BAHS), Arron Dombroski (MBVA), Mary LaRoche (Dept. of Corrections)

**Guests:** Ginny Dill (Shalom House), Alley Smith (Veterans, Inc.), Mary Frances Bartlett (City of Augusta), Donna Yellen (Preble Street), Dan Fleming (Shaw House), Susie Whittington (VA Maine), Jennifer Stacio (Family Crisis Services).

**Minutes:** Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing)

**Minutes** of September 12, 2017 and October 10, 2017 were both reviewed and APPROVED as submitted.

**Announcements:** The December SHC Meeting will need a different location and note taker. MaineHousing’s “All Staff Day” offsite training coincides with SHC that day, so no one will be at MaineHousing. **(The December Meeting will be held at the Maine State Library, 230 State Street in Augusta, and Vickey Rand will take the minutes (Thank you, Vickey!!))**

**Policy Committee:** (see Policy Committee notes posted on [www.mainehomelessplanning.org](http://www.mainehomelessplanning.org) for full details)

**Federal:**  The proposed new tax plan is very concerning. It would result in cut of over $1.5 Trillion over 10 years, which are likely to come from safety net programs and other areas our clients depend upon. It would eliminate a number of taxes that currently support development of affordable housing.

**MOTION:** SHC send a letter to our Senators to asking that they oppose this plan. **2nd and PASSED.**

**State:** Homeless Voices for Justice had submitted a Homeless Bill of Rights, and Preble Street submitted a Bill proposing programs to address the opioid epidemic. Neither Bill passed the first round, but both are being appealed.

The Policy Committee discussed the **difficulty some Food Stamp (SNAP) applicants are facing in regard to LIHEAP.** The problem was presented as stating that someone who is renting a unit, even if their heat is included, must apply for LIHEAP in order to qualify for Food Stamps, and this creates an unnecessary burden not only on the client but on the agencies that must provide and process the required documentation, which is a specific form that clients/tenants typically do not have access to. Donna Y. pointed out that this process actually allows people who do pay for heat to get an increase in their SNAP benefits, so we need to be careful how we address. Cullen asked if other housing providers would look into this and see if their tenants are being impacted. (Cullen also subsequently spoke with folks from MaineHousing’s Energy and Housing Services Department, who provided some clarification on this issue to bring to the Dec. meeting)

**Continuum Updates:** The work of the MCOC Consolidation Committee is done! But one of the last acts of the group was to propose the creation of a Planning Committee help the full group focus on and work toward specific goals. The Data Committee is also grappling with a change in how HUD wants projects to record when a client is a ‘Participant’ in a program. Many housing programs currently record this as the date the client leases up or moves in. HUD now wants participation to begin when the client successfully applies to the program, and for the move in date to be recorded separately. In theory, this will allow for better tracking of how long it takes from application to move-in, and of any services that might be provided by the agency prior to move in, but it will require many projects (in particular, S+C) to totally revamp their data entry workflow. It may also have unintended consequences, such as negatively impacting some Performance Measures if lots of people apply for a program, but very few end up moving in – which is common. MCOC will be seeking guidance and TA from HUD, and may request that this be changed or modified.

**Regional Homeless Council Updates:**

-R3: The Bangor Long Term Stayer Committee look at shelter suspension lists and will attempt to contact anyone who is still homeless but is no longer suspended to let them know.

-R2: Meeting was cancelled.

-R1: Discussed Coordinated Entry and other updates.

**LTS:**  The first 4 Portland lists are down to around 30 people. The 5th list is down to 56 from 80. Bangor’s original list of 7 is now down to 3. They just housed their longest long term stayer! 1 of the 3 people left has been house several times over the last few years but it does not last due to the isolation and lack of structure.

**DHHS Updates:** No DHHS representatives were present. BRAP is currently frozen for all but Priority One applicants. (That would be BRAP’s Priority One, meaning they are discharged from a state medical facility, not the SHC Chart Priority 1.) They are still accepting applications but there is a waitlist.

Ricker Hamilton is now officially the new Director.

OCFS is reaching out and looking at the system of care for Youth and Families in need. They are using some of the information from the Homeless Youth Forum that took place earlier this year.

**Policy Proposal for Housing People with Substance Use Disorder:** Cullen provided asummary of bullet points from last month’s “BRAP-like Subsidy” discussion.

Policy Proposal Stabilizing People Homeless with Substance Use Disorder

Create a Housing Fund with Wrap Around Services for people with Substance Use Disorders

Key Ideal Components:

* Allows for roommate situations so it can be used in congregate (shared bedroom) Recovery Residences or Sober Housing
* Needs to allow quick access to Recovery Residences
	+ May need a year – flexibility is important; meet each person where he or she is at
* Needs to work for Oxford House models – shared bedroom or bedroom SROs
* Ideally would let practitioners determine legitimacy of the living situation
* Vouchers need to be flexible
* Need renewability – if someone loses the voucher, having the ability to qualify again (relapse is part of recovery)
* Quick and simple access
* The best arrangement is that providers have a pot of money to use only for subsidizing rents situation by situation. They will know who will best benefit, and for how long, and they will have established relationships with landlords so they can establish the legitimacy of each housing option
* The state HOME Fund is the most flexible funding source
* STEP, due to Fed HOME source, has too many strings
* This could be set up as an RFP/grant opportunity for practitioners
* Should be flexible to allow wrap around supports including transportation, child care, etc.
* 30% of income is target affordability portion

Should we develop an RFP? What sort of funding might be available? FedHOME seems too restrictive but maybe StateHOME could work.

In Bangor they see many people who come to town seeking treatment for substance use but often, by the time they get to the point where they can heave ‘take home’ meds, they are not able to go home – either they cannot afford it, or they have lost whatever situation they had there. Medicaid can provide transportation but not everyone get it. We need Wrap-Around supports to cover non-housing related costs that are needed to keep people in housing, such as transportation and childcare. This needs to be more than just a housing subsidy. SHC should coordinate with the Opioid Task Force on this. How do we get landlords on board? The Mayor’s Initiative on Homelessness, a national effort under the Obama Administration to house, did a good job involving landlords. Maybe we need to seek the subsidy and the wrap around from different sources, but tie them together so the funding follows the client. This is looking less and less like ‘BRAP’, so let’s rename it to avoid confusion. For now: **Policy Proposal for Housing People with Substance Use Disorder**

**Discussion Topic: HMIS vs. Reality**

HMIS is only able to report out on the data that is entered but we know there are people out there who either do not want to go to shelters, or who cannot get in because the shelters are full. Shelters currently do not want to enter HMIS data on clients who do not stay at their facility – it’s a lot of work, and could negatively impact their performance if they are not able to enter ‘complete’ data. Providers already indicate that HMIS is too complicated, and reports are not accurate, and adding incomplete data will only make things worse. The reports are only as good as the data that is entered. Every program needs to run and review their own reports and understand what they mean. If there is a problem with the data as entered, they can fix that at their end. If there is a problem with the way the report is functioning, contact the HMIS Team so they can fix it.

Coordinated Entry will address some of these issues. There is a Diversion/Prevention element to it for folks who never actually enter a shelter. There will also be Data Sharing on a wider scale so we will know if someone is contacting multiple agencies, shelters, PATH, etc. We should begin to identify exactly what data we need at the CE level and what can wait for later if/when a person enters a shelter.

HMIS data is good and getting better because performance measures directly tie good project data to funding. Not sure how we can apply that same sort of incentive to CE data.

We need to collect consistent data across programs, and it needs to be entered in real time to be the most useful. Also need to be able to share historical data already in the system.

The VI-SPDAT is not a VA requirement, but veteran programs in Maine are using it because the community adopted it as part of a standard assessment process. It is not a perfect tool, and there are concerns that is does not work well with certain populations, but it is a start.

MaineHousing should develop a plan for auditing CE data the way they do ESG, and contractually require shelters to comply. But what about other, non-funded participants? ESG and COC funded projects are required to participate in CE, but overall performance will be measured at the system level – including all the agencies who do not have a direct financial stake in the participation.

This coming year will be challenging – we know this – but we cannot wait until we have the perfect system in place before we implement anything. We have to start, and then identify and address issues as they come up. It will be a continuous improvement process.

**MaineHousing Updates:** The House version of the proposed tax reform bill would basically eliminate the private bond activities that fund MaineHousing. The Senate version does not, but there are other concerns. John Gallagher is retiring Jan 5th. As of yet we have no other information regarding new leadership.

Working to develop a new RFP for the National Housing Trust Fund allocation.

ESHAP training scheduled for January 12th at the Senator Inn in Augusta. There will be different sessions for Directors, Navigators, and HMIS staff. More information will be sent out soon.

In regard to the SUD Subsidy discussed earlier, State HOME funds are more flexible, but they are also unpredictable – the state changes the amount every year. MaineHousing has not wanted to tie this to a rental subsidy program because if the money goes away there is no easy way to keep those people housed. It is better, strategically, to keep it flexible because it allows MaineHousing to be able to respond to emergencies, like the drought relief efforts last summer. Someone who attended the NCSHA conference mentioned that Ohio is using HOME funds for an Opioid Recovery project. Cullen asked if Dan could look into this with an eye to the rules and regs that tend to keep people out of housing and find ways to overcome such barriers. For example, there are hundreds of LIHTC projects with set-asides for homeless populations that actual homeless clients are not able to access – how can we fix that?

**The Prioritization Chart:** Members had a number of suggestions regarding the most recent version. Cullen will incorporate these into an updated chart for review soon.

**Next Press Release Topic:** “Housing First 101” Cullen is still writing this up.

**Populations:**

**Substance Use Disorder**: See subsidy discussion above. SHC needs to connect with the Opioid Tack Force.

**Veterans:** A new NOFA for Transitional Housing for Veterans just came out. Maine is not considered a priority state but we can still apply. Maine does not currently have a ‘low demand’ model facility (meaning low demands are place on the residents). Both Preble Street and Veterans Inc. received SSVF grants in October.

The Stand Down at Togus identified about 75 homeless veterans (are they all on the list?).

HUD VASH staffing funds have been cut, though Togus will try to continue to support these postions.

**Age 55+ and Medically Compromised:** Still a growing issue and our shelter/housing systems are not designed for this population. Josh spoke of a 75 year old woman in a wheelchair who spent the summer outside. She was finally able to get into a PNMI unit, only to find out it was on the second floor of a building with no elevator.

**Youth:** Youth Outreach forms for the Point-in-Time were reviewed.

Shaw House is negotiating handing over shelter operations to Community Care and the Waterworks facilities to the Caleb Foundation.

**DV:** Nothing new to report.

**Families:** A group in Bangor is looking into opening a family shelter.

**Other Business:**

**Prioritizing Vulnerable Populations.** The idea of a 90/10 model has been suggested, where shelters would follow the approved prioritization for 90% of their clients to access available vouchers or other resources, and would be allowed to identify and assist up to 10% of their clients who show an obvious need for priority assistance but who, for whatever reason, are not otherwise being prioritized.

It was asked why MaineHousing was creating these barriers, making it more difficult to house people by requiring all of these things – the VI-SPDAT, a Prioritization Number, Length of Stay across programs, etc.?

Actually, these requires were all established by the SHC and/or the CoC – and it was then requested that MaineHousing, and other program, incorporate them into their processes in order to ensure programs are serving the clients with the highest levels of need.

**Housing Resource List:** Can MaineHousing develop a ‘Cheat Sheet’ for Navigators and others that lists all potential housing resources – and have it available for the January Training?

**PHD Candidate Conducting Homeless Research:** Krissy Gleason has met with Josh and with Clyde and the HMIS team at MaineHousing, seeking data and suggestions for areas of focus. Any ideas?

**Next Meeting: December 12, 2017 at the Maine State Library, 230 State Street in Augusta.**

[**https://www.google.com/maps/place/Maine+State+Library/@44.306073,-69.7827403,15z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x0:0xd4b66c59cfe49af3!8m2!3d44.306073!4d-69.7827403**](https://www.google.com/maps/place/Maine%2BState%2BLibrary/%4044.306073%2C-69.7827403%2C15z/data%3D%214m5%213m4%211s0x0%3A0xd4b66c59cfe49af3%218m2%213d44.306073%214d-69.7827403)



Enter through the main doors, go to your left from the lobby, then around the stairs to a door on the far side of stairwell.

The conference room is at the far end of the corridor on the left.