**Statewide Homeless Council**

**July 10, 2018**

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

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

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

**Members:** Cullen Ryan (RII), Bill Higgins (RI), Josh D’Alessio (RIII)

Members not able to attend: David McClusky (RIII), Chet Barnes (DHHS-SAMHS), Rob Parritt (RI), Elizabeth Szatkowski (RI), Melanie LaMore Gagnon (RII), Donna Kelley (RII), Boyd Kronholm (RIII), Lauren Bustard (MaineHousing)

**Guests:** Donna Yellen (Preble Street), Alley Smith (Veterans, Inc.), Don Lynch (Families and Children Together), Ginny Dill (Shalom House), Cheryl Harkins (HVJ), Rob Liscord (Preble Street VHS), Ashley Karr (Preble Street, SOAR), Chris Bicknell (New Beginnings), Allison Gallagher (MaineHousing), Mary Francis Bartlett (City of Augusta), Susie Whittington (VA, Togus)

**Minutes:** Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing)

NO QUORUM

**Minutes** of June 12, 2018 were reviewed – no vote on approval was taken.

**State and Federal updates:** Cullen’s notes were posted and distributed at the meeting.

**Federal**: Since those were written there were renewed efforts to repeal the ACA, but the proposal did not pass. It was close – 50 to 48 in the Senate. The Senate version of the Farm Bill looks good. Several other bills to pay attention to: Expanding Housing Opportunities for Youth leaving Foster Care; another proposes to expand on the current McKinney Vento definition used by the Homeless Children and Youth Act – while this would allow for more youth to be served there is concern that it will spread the resource too thin. The THRIVE Act is designed to provide transitional type housing to people with Substance Use Disorder, which sounds good, and is something we need, but it would take resources away from HCV/Section 8 vouchers to do it, and there is already not enough of that available. We will be working to see that Congress finds a new source of funding for this important purpose.

**State:** Several of the Governor’s vetoes have been overturned by the Legislature, but not the one squashing Medicaid expansion. Some time ago, the Governor had said he would fund the expansion if the legislature found a way to pay for it. They did try, but he vetoed it anyway.

**MCOC Updates:** The NOFA is out! First meeting of the NOFA Committee is this coming Friday afternoon in Portland. The Committee plans to meet roughly every other week. There is about $738K for qualifying New Projects, and $574K specifically for DV Bonus projects. Big emphasis on Reallocation and Performance this time. New and Renewal Applications must be submitted to MCOC via esnaps by August 17, 2018. The final deadline for the CoC Application is September 18, 2018. Information is and will be posted on the [www.mainehomelessplanning.org](http://www.mainehomelessplanning.org) site. This is the ‘official’ website for both the Maine Continuum of Care and the Statewide Homeless Council. If you have not done so yet, please subscribe to the site to receive automatic notifications whenever new information is posted.

**Regional Homeless Councils:** R3, nothing new. R2, no meeting since last SHC. R1, nothing new.

**Long Term Stayer Updates:** Portland’s first 5 lists are now down to a combined total of 23 people. List #6 is down to 42, and List #7 is down to 24 Unsheltered people. Bangor was at Zero, but is now back to 3, all of them with less than 180 days. There is an increased focus in the Bangor area on those who are still unsheltered. They have identified about 24 people, all of them known to local providers, who are ‘camping out’ by choice – none of them are banned from staying in shelters. Bangor PD has been communicating and coordinating efforts with local providers before intervening, but they have begun ‘dispersing’ encampments because of increases police calls and troubles arising at the sites.

**DHHS Updates:** No DHHS representative with us today. Several providers are concerned about the shift to a Fee For Service model for Substance Use Disorder Treatment. This change actually took place July 1 but will not be ‘implemented’ until January. Providers say it will require a ton of extra work. There are some good things about it – we do need more resources and attention focused on this population, but unfortunately this could have serious negative impacts on our low barrier shelters and those that serve clients with SUD, such as Milestone, PCHC, and YCSPI. It was suggested that SHC invite someone to come and provide more information about this. Cullen will see if Mallory Shaughnessy, ED of the Maine Association for SA/MH would be willing to speak with SHC soon.

Cullen has invited folks from GA to come next month. BRAP is still frozen and basically needs to cut the number of households served in half, and BRAP will only be available for Category 1 clients, not for homeless.

**Chronic Homeless Access to Permanent Housing:** Shelter Plus Care and HCV should be considered options for housing CH. The new Housing Trust Fund RFP is out, and it does include points for projects that propose to serve homeless or Chronically Homeless (no distinction) but it is only 2 out of 100 points, so not much of an incentive. Many developers say they have trouble finding/housing homeless clients, but CHOM and AVESTA have been very successful, even with CH Clients, and the Portland Long Term Stayer Initiative has a very high success rate, even better than most general population LIHTC projects – developers need to know this can work, with proper supports in place. Cullen asked Cindy to arrange a meeting with MaineHousing Development folks to discuss how to best share this information. The FY18 Budget included an increase for HCV. MaineHousing recently drew about 70 households from Its homeless priority list – only about half of them responded. They are working with the shelters – the referral sources – to try to find people – not just relying on their contact info. If people move from one shelter to another, and the shelters share data, they should be able to see where folks are (except DV). If we had a By Name List for this, it would be much simpler. There have also recently been about 150 draws from the Centralized Waitlist. They are finding that lots of folks who indicated veteran status do not actually have veteran status when asked to verify it. Maine has also applied for 35 non-elderly/disabled vouchers. There are currently about 250 vouchers issued and searching. Less than half of those are expected to lease up. About 65% of the vouchers that MaineHousing issues – with a 120-day search period – go unused. There are about 1445 households on the Centralized Waitlist. In total, there are about 12,000 vouchers statewide, and MaineHousing controls about 3600 of those. Can there be some way for applicants to log in and check their status, update their info, maybe even upload documents the way My Maine Connection does? Josh said that CHCS attends the LTS meetings in Bangor and always knows who just got, or is about to get a voucher – is there a way all shelters can get that information? Allison said they can always just call and ask – Jamie Johnson would be the person to talk to – perhaps she can attend some meetings to explain the process. Will it ever be possible to just hand someone a voucher when they apply – assuming they are eligible – without having to go on a list, and then trying to find them months later? The rules around waiting lists are very strict, and were not designed with things like Rapid Rehousing or Coordinated Entry in mind.

**Consolidated Plan:** In August, Paula Weber will present information on this year’s annual update to the Consolidated Plan. This is just preliminary work, before beginning to draft the language. Once the draft is done, there will be a public comment period in the fall.

**SUD Subsidy:** The group is still developing a draft proposal.

**SHC Meeting Protocols:** Cullen shared an updated draft, which was well received, but this led to further discussion about SHC in general. We can list all the people and agencies that should be here, but trying to shame or guilt them into attending is not working – what can we do to make them want to be here? The two-month delay in posting minutes makes it hard to keep track of what’s going on. SHC establish long ago they did not want minutes posted until they were approved, and since info on upcoming meetings is not posted until a week or so prior to the meeting, that creates the gap. Minutes could be posted once approved, and again prior to the meeting, that might also be confusing. Having Scott take the minutes by hand, and then type them up later, seems like a huge waste of his time. Scott agrees, but cannot type fast enough to keep up with the conversation, and does not necessarily type up what he writes downs – the notes are a sketch – the minutes try to fill in the details. Someone without the knowledge, the background, and the understanding of the lingo, would not be able to convey they information as effectively – a lot could be lost in translation. The RHC and MCOC members do pay attention to the SHC minutes – it is important that they be as accurate and informative as possible. RHC’s have tried revolving note-takers, but that never works for long. Some groups record their meetings, but that doesn’t seem practical given the length of this one. It was suggested we could use a ‘Go To Meeting’ format, with a chat box and video link – it would be more engaging than just calling in on the phone. But, it would require someone (probably Scott) to pay attention to everything going on there, which would make it harder to keep track of the conversation. We need to get back to our guiding principles – why are we here – what value are people going to bring back to their agencies for attending? Can we have a meeting just to talk about our meetings? Really spend some time on these things – facilitation, logistics, minutes, etc. We were originally set up to advise the Governor and the Legislature – maybe we can do that again. In the end, it was noted by the group that the SHC serves a very important purpose and has done a lot of good work – let’s not forget that – and while our input has not always been acted on, that could change in the future. Changing protocols to improve the meeting is the goal here, but it the importance of the SHC to the state is not in question.

**SOAR:** Rob Liscord and Ashley Karr provided an overview of Preble Streets efforts on SOAR, specifically connecting homeless veterans to SS benefits, though the model can be used for other populations too. SOAR Case Management allows staff to work on behalf of applicants - not just tell them what to do and hope they follow through. It allows for better community level planning and cost savings at the local level – government, hospitals, etc. by increasing the income of individuals, and allowing them more independence. Rob’s work with SSVF placed a lot of emphasis on SOAR, but it was not a requirement. Preble Street felt it was important to get this information to all workers and all clients. There is a general perception that all SSI/SSDI applications will be denied the first time, and that the appeals process is long and complicated. It can be, but with SOAR training Case Managers are spending less time on repeat apps and appeals, things move faster, follow up is better, communication is improved, and more apps are approved the first time. The training is excellent, well laid out, and available on-line. Ashley is the Veteran’s Housing Services State Team Lead. She is available to help and answer questions. Increasing client incomes is a Continuum Performance Measure, so CoC projects need to be aware of this resource. Ashley and Rob will be presenting at all of the RHC’s and can attend other meetings or groups as well.

**Press Release:** The most recent one was included in the packets for this meeting and appeared in the Portland Press Herald. Feedback was positive.

**Veterans:** The By-Name List is at 146. 17 of those are not eligible for VA benefits. 73 are. 39 are signed up for VASH. 61 are in Region 1 (14 CH), 44 in Region 2 (4 CH), and 41 in Region 3 (8 CH). On average it is taking 87 days to house them once identifies, and the program is housing about 60 vets per quarter.

**Families:** Last month we talked about what resources are available: limited shelter options, limited vouchers, GA (more accessible in some areas than others), and we discussed developing a Long Term Stayer list for Families. We need a resource map, and a gaps and needs analysis. We also need to focus more on creating new housing options, not on adding more shelter beds. The RHCs are still collecting info on Family Resources in their areas. HVJ is already working to develop a list like this. We need to figure out the similarities and the differences between different areas – for example, Portland has more refugee families, coastal areas have a lack of available affordable housing (and what is available or affordable often won’t pass inspection. Western and Northern areas have lots of empty housing, but there are no job opportunities in those places. Poverty is the biggest factor in family homelessness – how do we address that? We need to coordinate better with CAP agencies to identify families at risk and we need to develop prevention strategies. FACT, in Bangor, is providing a Services Only program for homeless families, but are having trouble finding housing large enough for families with 3 or 4 kids, or landlords willing to take them. They want to provide short term Emergency Shelter for families while they seek housing. Bangor also has a lot of families who come from all over the norther part of the state to access the methadone clinic, and end up getting stuck – they spend all their money just getting there and have nothing to get home – the transportation cost back and forth make it impossible to live far way and maintain treatment. Many landlords seem to rely on the 1BR Business Model – you can get more rent for four 1BR units than you can for one 4 BR unit. The answer is not building more shelters. We need to get better at connecting to and utilizing other resources for families. FACT, and Fair Tide, have been able to get families into housing without making them go to a shelter first. The data from family shelters show they typically have long lengths of stay because even as difficult as it might be, families tend to settle in and adapt and are reluctant to move. Shout out to Jeff Tardiff at the Portland Family shelter for being the exception to this rule – he has been very successful at helping families move to, and stay in, housing, even though the families he is working with have some very complicated issues to deal with. Can we get Jeff to a meeting with other family shelters to talk about strategies he uses? What about using city owned land or properties to develop shelters or housing for families? Look at alternatives to the standard building systems, like tiny, or at least small, houses, congregate housing, and other options.

**DV:** Safe Voices has opened a new facility for victims of trafficking, and the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence is applying for two grants through the Continuum of Care DV Bonus Funding in the new NOFA – one for Rapid Re-housing and one for a DV Coordinated Entry.

**Youth:** Providers are conducting a statewide analysis of youth homelessness to develop a 2019 work plan. The new Youth Action Board recently received approved by the CoC to be compensated (paid!) for their time and travel. The YHDP awards should be announced soon. Next week there is a meeting to discuss Foster Care Youth who end up in shelters across the state – we need more and better options. Tomorrow there is a call with Matt Aronson to discuss the Coordinated Community Response Plan – part of the YHDP process.

**Next meeting will be August 14th.**