Statewide Homeless Council

November 8, 2016

**\*9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.\***

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

**MaineHousing Conference Room, behind the Reception Desk**

**SHC meets regularly the second Tuesday of each month 9:30 am-2:00 pm**

**Attendees:** Cullen Ryan, Bill Higgins, Josh D’Alessio, Don Harden, Boyd Kronholm, Donna Kelley, Elizabeth Szatkowski, Adria Horn, Dan Brennan (for John Gallagher).

**Guests:** Phone: Craig Phillips (phone), Bob Fowler (phone), Paula Paladino, Jenny Stasio, Kelly Welch, Arwen Agee, Mary Frances Bartlett, Ginny Dill, Cindy Namer, Rob Parritt

**Agenda items:** No one had any additional items to add to the agenda. Jon Bradley is working on the Rural Youth Demonstration Grant, so he will not be present.

**Minutes**: Minutes of October’s meeting were reviewed. A motion was made ty Don with a second from Donna. The motion was unanimously approved with one change to the spelling of a name.

**Homeless Policy Committee Update:** This committee met Friday briefly and Cullen presented a state/federal issues and public policy update. Please see the attached update for details.

**MCoC Updates**: Ginny gave an update on the AHAR (annual homeless assessment report) and the Joint HMIS Advisory Committee. There will be a Steering Committee Strategic Planning Retreat on December 15. Paula gave an update on the Rural Youth Peer Network application that was submitted and approved. This will help provide technical assistance for the youth PIT (Point in Time) Count in January 2017.

**PCoC Updates:** The PCoC started a new format with the first part of the meeting being the Steering Committee and second part is about community interests. They are beginning to plan for the PIT Count and they will be following up with a specific PIT Planning meeting TBA.

**Long term stayer update:**

**Portland:** Rob said there is continued progress and they are currently working with 3 lists. The original list of 70 is down, and there are very few people on the first two lists. The last list of 30, developed over the summer, is being worked on and includes some people addicted to opiates. The group is working hard to use BRAP applications to help house appropriate candidates. The last list of 30 has housed 9 people already in two months. .

**Bangor:** does not have many LTS left. They have 6-8 at times and it fluctuates down to 3-4 and they have had good success in reducing figures. One person with 4 years of homeless was able to collaborate with DHHS and get guardianship and a placement in an assisted living facility. This was a process that involved having people at the right table. The two LTS with greatest length have been housed. Their goal is to focus on one person until they solve that until they are at a state when they can take additional referrals.

It was noted that the PATH Program went to bid through an RFP process and that next year; the Preble Street CLIP program will not have PATH Funding. This is a significant resource that is being lost in Portland and it is an issue that needs to be discussed about who will be the key people to help these clients, many of whom are LTS. Many of these clients need PNMI options because of very significant mental health and/or co-occurring issues.

**GOAL THREE of Plan: Ensure Physical Health, Mental Health and Chemical Health:**

**DHHS Announcements and Updates:** There was no one present to give an update.

**Discussion Topic: What would we like to see in an ideal rental subsidy?** The group was asked what they would like to see in an ideal rental subsidy and there was robust discussion about this. The group brainstormed many ideas below:

* The model of S+C is good place to start. Advantages are that clients pay 30% of their income to rent; S+C is low barrier, flexible and permanent. S+C is committed to serving person’s needs with less rigidity around the rules.
* The payment standards are low and vary with interpretation (this is a fault) and this could be corrected for an ideal subsidy. S+C does have some barriers, and while is not ideal but the model is a favorable one.
* An ideal subsidy would have a payment standard in the STEP range.
* And ideal subsidy would couple it with support in the community, which is a benefit of STEP.
* Ease of access to the subsidy which screens people in.
* There would be a decent supply and no/little criminal justice background check and/or waivers (which STEP does).
* It was noted that it is easier to get someone to get access to rental subsidy because of low income than it is being homeless and this needs to change.
* Also, ideal is freedom of portability and terms of length. Some felt that it would be better to have less rental subsidies for a longer time frame than for having a rental subsidy for a shorter time frame.
* STEP design is not a good design in terms of its length. It was noted all populations benefit from longer term permanent housing and the housing prioritization chart should be a priority and that local/regional control to fit needs is the best thing.
* One member suggested we should ask what is the ideal rental subsidy for whom? High needs LTS. Another thing to consider is who is the gatekeeper? Centralized or local control over vouchers? This is worth discussion in the future.
* Cullen will type this in a one pager and at the next SHC meeting, members can review and fine tune what the ideal subsidy would look like.

**Other DHHS Updates:**

* SHC Blueprint: No update.
* Rulemaking: There are no new updates on Section 17. The ANSA has been instituted for CI and this needs to be implemented by December 1, 2016. It is a lengthy assessment and is very time consuming. It is not a trauma informed tool and it is another set of questions that need to be answered before getting a service. It takes 2 hours or more to do an ANSA including information gathering.

**Discussion Topic:** How do we tackle the changing population that is staying outdoors and using spice and heroin? Also how do we get unsheltered into pre-screening? Rob gave an update and discussed how when CLIP goes away (Preble Street will not be administering PATH), it will have a significantly negative impact in the Portland area. People using spice and heroin are a different demographic and the COP is getting out to find these folks and build relationships with them. It was noted there are 2-3 times the number of people sleeping out (not necessarily homeless) and this is a different breed. The issue is to develop collaborative relationships with others including detox, more substance abuse treatment and then maybe housing. We have many people doing good things but it is not collaborative approach which needs to happen. Detox is a major need and we also need to do better collaboration with law enforcement and the jails. Discharge planning from the hospitals is crucial and we should be collaborating with hospitals so they don’t discharge people to shelters when they need substance abuse treatment. They have coordinated releases with the hospitals in the Bangor area and people are not being discharged on Fridays. The City of Portland shelter has gone from seeing medically compromised folks, to people who are overdosing daily from having seizures from smoking spice and overdosing on heroin. The vast majority of those who are addicted are not necessarily homeless but they are spending their days on the street.

The opiate crisis is not a homeless issue and it impacts people with housing. The populations we are seeing have housing but they are being seen around the shelters and homeless providers are being forced to help them. There are also more people in shelters who are drug addicted to opiates. It is a real issue and affects both those who are housed and those who are homeless. The point is it is an issue across the entire population. What efforts are being done to address the opiate crisis is a reflection of what is happening across our culture. Many people are overdosing on the streets and it appears they are transient or homelessness but many are in fact housed.

The opiate crisis is not a homeless issue. Are people overdosing in shelters? Yes, definitely. It has grown now to the point that opiate/spice/synthetic drugs equal or surpass alcohol as the drug of choice. This has to do with aging demographics (older people dying) and younger people using. This has changed significantly over the years. It was suggested that we need to give a message that this population interfaces with the homeless population but it is a larger problem we all need to solve not just a homeless issue. We have a plan that says we are going to put out quarterly press releases. Perhaps we could add something for the January press release.

**Discussion Topic: How doe we get unsheltered to pre-screening?** What is pre-screening? This is the assessment to determine eligibility for Section 17 and also BRAP. We need to figure out how to make the pre-screening a better process for those outside. It is really about getting a diagnosis and assessing risk factors. This is how we are getting people through KEPRO. A clinician needs to do the assessment and this does involve time.

**GOAL TWO OF PLAN: Ensure Adequate Supply of Housing and Rental Subsides:**

Dan Brennan was present as John Gallagher was unable to attend the meeting.

**National Housing Trust Fund:** MaineHousing has submitted the plan to HUD and they have rejected it. It is not uncommon and many other states have had their plans rejected. This is new to HUD and there was a directive to HUD that they need act upon them within a few days, otherwise the plans will be accepted. As a result, HUD rejected many of them. Dan is confident the revised plan will be approved.

**Annual action plan** is out for public comment. The deadline was yesterday and MaineHousing has received a lot of public comments about STEP that they will be responding to in the next few weeks STEP is a FedHome resource that allows rental assistance up to 24 months and the STEP program is up to 12 months and can be extended as needed. MaineHousing understandings the issue and it’s a matter of policy. When people want STEP extended to 24 months, what they want is transitional housing so that it can bridge to other subsidies which is not permanent rapid re-housing.

Cullen took a few minutes to update Dan on the previous discussion of what would an ideal subsidy look like? The current admin plan for STEP states that a tenant can get a waiver for 3 months and then can reapply for a waiver up to a total of 24 months. In the past, the average length of stay on STEP was 10 months, even when it was the RAC program. STEP is not a bridge to another subsidy because it is permanent. Waivers have been given in the past and if it’s a housing stability issue, tenants won’t be thrown off the program. There is the flexibility within STEP. Now that MaineHousing has received the public comments they will be reviewed to determine if the policy will change. Now as the landscape changes, since we don’t have S+C and since it’s more difficult to get access to BRAP we want to maximize all resources and then you need to look at STEP.

STEP is very low barrier and you can use it in a service area. It’s a good resource and has a lot going for it. It’s a slippery slope when you try to tweak the subsidy to use it for things other than its intended use. Part of the discussion is about what would make STEP work better? Is STEP a good tool for LTS? What is the difference between 12 and 24 months? It does make a difference for some.

STEP addresses a different population, not CH and LTS. There are not enough S+C vouchers and BRAP has more barriers, so the answer is not whether STEP works with an extension of up to 24 months, but rather the issue is to focus on what we need for CH and LTS.

We need to have a way to get STEP to be called something that allows people to be eligible for SPC/BRAP when the program is changed. Calling STEP transitional housing is something that would involve the CoC’s and it would impact the housing inventory chart and it would also need to look at gaps and needs. Cindy reviewed the data and it is showing that STEP is being used for some of the most challenging populations. Many of these folks are a month away from the 180 days of homelessness. The STEP coupons are not targeting the population they are struggling with (CH/LTS). It is a valuable tool but not for all people like the more challenging people with complex needs. We have to be mindful about who we target resources to. It has a lot to do with the assessment tools i.e. VISPDAT and other assessment tools.

There is a lot of strategy on how best to serve the client and it is up to providers to determine what best meets their needs. MaineHousing tries to provide resources to add and then providers use their judgement. It was noted that not everyone understood STEP can go up to 24 months, and Dan stated that we can educate Navigators about what STEP does including the waivers and he recommends we start in this direction. What is the message that would best educate the group: the STEP Program is an initial 12 month program and there are opportunities to extend it up to 24 months based on individual circumstances and their housing stability plan.

It was noted that if you extend the length of time, STEP is a finite resource and there will be less vouchers available. We should be educating people about the prioritization chart. People working in shelter don’t have a tool to readily address CH/LTS resources of SPC and BRAP because they don’t have MaineCare to get an assessment for a diagnosis. So you screen them out of all possible vouchers.

The idea of navigation was the essence of Goal 1 of Maine’s plan to end and prevent homelessness. Shelters have retooled and have allowed them to do the essence of the plan. As a policy decision, clearly we lack a resource that is low barrier designed to help the CH/LTS population. The RAC+ program was a 2 year rental subsidy that worked well for certain populations. When the STEP program began, it was designed to be a 3month program with 3 month extensions. STEP comes with navigation support by design which was missing from the original STEP Program. We need to talk about policy decisions, as some members are still hearing we need permanent, then 24 months, and that people would rather have 50 vouchers for 24 months vs. 100 vouchers for 12 months. It is a finite resource and the homeless prioritization chart says let’s get the job of ending homelessness done by housing the CH/LTS first. The decision of which tool to use in the field is up to the navigators. STEP has always been a 12 month program and has 3 month waivers as needed. Cindy reviewed the history of the STEP program and that is was always for one year. RAC was transitional. RAC was 6-9 months average length of stay. It is important to educate people what STEP is. It makes sense that there should be another type of subsidy and it does not make sense to tweak STEP into something it was not designed or intended to be.

**ALL FOUR GOALS OF Plan:**

**Recap:** A suggestion was made to get data and reports and review on a regular basis. The STEP data Cindy shared earlier was very helpful and this would help to provide a clearer understanding of what STEP does.

**Task Force:** Do we want to create a task force to work on the plan? Bill, Donna, Josh, Rob, Adria, Cullen, and Elizabeth all volunteered. Cullen will set a meeting for this task force to work on the plan. Josh suggested we set aside a half hour in a future meeting to review the plan and what was accomplished and where we fell short. It is good to review successes but also look at the changing landscape. It was agreed that next month, the SHC will look at the annual report due by December 31 to the state and update it. There was a robust discussion on the Plan and its history which was reviewed for all members.

**SHC 2017 Goals:** The group spent time discussing the history of the council, its purpose and structural issues. The group felt that they need to solve the structural integrity issues first and figure out who needs to be at the SHC meetings including education, DHHS, MaineHousing, hospitals, etc. Sometimes you don’t know who you need at the table until you know what it is you are focusing on and what your needs are. There is a benefit to working backwards to fulfilling gaps. In the past 12 months, the SHC created a blueprint for DHHS and if DHHS addressed the items in the plan, it would have a positive impact on homelessness. This was written and submitted it to DHHS and they have not had a response back from DHHS. We need the bodies to review and consider and open a dialogue with the SHC. When DHHS has an impulse to make a policy change, it is devoid of key thinkers around ending homelessness.

Should we change our tactics? Maybe we need to send a small group to DHHS there. This would be a good goal for 2017. Also should review the Medicaid waiver and make this a 2017 goal. One idea is that Governor Baldacci attended one SHC meeting and it was challenging. Perhaps we could set a goal of having a meeting with the Governor and Commissioner in early 2017. One suggestion was to have a briefing on the state of homeless report about where we are in Maine. Meet with the Governor and Commissioner to present this report and then follow up with another meeting to discuss the Blueprint and white paper. Conceptually, you could actually structure the message and do a report where we were, where we’ve been and why we’ve been successful and here are the gaps we know that will contribute to a reduction. This could be published and in the news and it would be a way to leverage our own successes. Josh added what became of the 3 million dollars that was developed for the shelter.

**Population Updates:**

* Homeless Single Adults: LTS was discussed earlier.
* Veterans: recap: On 10-25 there was a statewide strategic planning session and 85 people showed up. There was a facilitator and he kept us on task. It was a success and a lot of people who aren’t at the table all felt part of the idea. Adria just now got the final roll out from the facilitator which is 38 pages and she will cull out the key highlights. People were asked what you think outside the confines what a plan would be. A lot of rigidity in the thinking of some people. Yesterday, Aria had attended a Commander’s Call meeting, where she distributed a 1 page handout entitled “I’ve come across a veteran experiencing homelessness…Now what do I do?” HUD VASH update: They have issued 98% of the vouchers (196 total). 55+: COP is seeing more of these folks. Rob did a report for John for a grant for seniors and OSS served 500 people over 50 last year and many are presenting with serious health care issues.
* Homeless Youth: MaineHousing has agreed to be the collaborative applicant for the Homeless Youth Demonstration Grant. The Homeless Voices for Youth had their first community meeting and on the day two they had corrections at the table which was positive.
* Domestic Violence: No updates for statewide. MCEDV does know that FCS will be attending the SHC meetings going forward.
* Family Homelessness: No update.

Next Meeting Topics: Press release quarterly around opioids, the ideal subsidy, goals, how doe we get people a diagnosis and into shelter and review of the 2011 plan. Cullen asked that Paula use the large screen to project that Annual Plan and Annual Report.

**Next meeting December 13, 2016 MaineHousing 353 Water Street Augusta, Maine**

**Policy/Advocacy Update – 11/4/2016**

**Federal Legislation Update:**

**FY2017 Appropriations – Continuing Resolution (CR) –**Congress passed a continuing resolution on Wednesday 9/28 to fund the government past the start of Fiscal Year 2017, through December 9th. The bill involves slight across the board cuts in order to comply with the Budget Control Act, but otherwise programs will continue to be funded at their current levels. After passing the CR, Congress plans to adjourn earlier than expected.

When Congress finally does take up appropriations, they will be working with the following numbers:

* **Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (Section 8)**: The Senate has proposed $18.36 billion, plus $11 million for a voucher mobility demonstration. The House has proposed $18.31 billion. The Administration budget proposed $18.45 billion. Administrative fees are below the Administration’s request of $2.08 billion, at $1.77 billion in the Senate and $1.65 billion in the House. No new vouchers would be funded under any of these proposals.
* **VASH:** $57 million for new vouchers in the Senate (of which $7 million is for tribal VASH). The House only included the $7 million for tribal VASH.
* **FUP:** $20 million for new vouchers in the Senate, targeted at youth aging out of foster care. $0 in the House. The Senate bill also included report language containing several provisions we have been pursuing, such as widening the age range to 14-24, extending the timeline to 36 months, and directing HUD and HHS to develop guidance and training materials to improve connections between housing and child welfare agencies, and remove barriers to access.
* **McKinney-Vento**: The Senate proposed $2.33 billion, which would cover renewals and the Youth Homelessness Demonstration described below. The House increased the Homeless Assistance Grants account by $157 million over the Senate’s number, for a total $2.487 billion allocation. We think that this is in recognition of the fact that, in the recent CoC funding round, HUD majorly shifted money toward high performing projects, which Republicans had been asking for. However, key districts lost funding in the reallocation, so the House targeted $40 million in ESG formula grant funding towards “communities that lost significant capacity.” Both of these are less than the Administration’s proposed $2.664 billion, which would have included funding for an additional 25,000 units of supportive housing to end chronic homelessness.
  + **Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project**: $40 million in the Senate for testing strategies to end youth homelessness, out of a total Homeless Assistance Grants allocation of $2.33 million. $0 in the House. HUD recently released the first round of YHDP grants and CSH program staff are helping their communities develop proposals.
* **USICH Reauthorization:** The US Interagency Council on Homelessness sunsets in 2017. The Senate reauthorized it; the House did not. This is a key issue that will need to be worked out in conference.
* **HOME:** Both chambers matched the President’s request of $950 million, level with last year.
* **CDBG:**The House offered level funding from last year, $3.06 billion, and the Senate offered $3.0 billion, both greater than the President’s request of $2.88 billion.
* **SAMHSA mental health for the homeless programs:**$49 million increase to SAMHSA for opioids treatment, prevention, and overdose reversal and $30 million increase for the Mental Health Block Grant. Level funding for homeless programs.

**Fall 2016 Local Member Engagement Campaign (NAEH) -** Members of Congress are now home in their states and districts for the election season, returning to session Monday, November 14. This presents an excellent opportunity for a final push to increase McKinney spending by $237 million to $2.487 billion in FY 2017!

The $2.487 billion was in the House version of the T-HUD bill and represents the largest one-year increase for McKinney in 20 years! Now is the time to follow up with the housing staffers you met with and engage Members directly through the [Fall 2016 Local Member Engagement Campaign](http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/fall-2016-local-member-engagement-campaign) while they are home! Here’s what you can do:

* [Host a Member for a site visit!](http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/fall-2016-local-member-engagement-campaign)Hosting a Member of Congress for a site visit of your McKinney-funded program is the most effective thing you can do while they are home to engage them in the effort to end homelessness.
  + The *most important* members to engage are Members of the [House](http://appropriations.house.gov/about/members/transportationhud.htm) and [Senate](http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/subcommittees/transportation-housing-and-urban-development-and-related-agencies) T-HUD Appropriations Subcommittees, and Congressional Leadership.

**Make Room Campaign –** Make Room is a nationwide campaign aimed at bringing attention to and ending the rental affordability crisis in America. The campaign aims to give voice to struggling renters and elevate rental housing on the agendas of our nation’s leaders.

* + The National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) and more than 400 organizations across the country have joined with Make Room to send 1 million messages to Congress to get housing affordability on the national agenda by Election Day.
  + Use Make Room’s first-of-its-kind online advocacy platform <https://1-million-messages.makeroomusa.org/> to tell Congress to act now!
  + Organizations can also join the Make Room campaign by signing onto a national letter to Congress and use Make Room’s advocacy toolkit to raise awareness locally.

**H.R. 4888: Ending Homelessness Act of 2016** – ***No new action/update.***Introduced on 3/23 by House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Maxine Waters (D-CA). This legislation would provide $13.27 billion in new funding over five years to several programs and initiatives that would provide significant resources to end homelessness in America. These funds are in addition to the annual funding amounts for existing HUD programs.

**S.993/H.R.1854, The Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act – *No new action/update.*** Introduced by Senators Franken (D-MN) - Cornyn (R-TX) and Representatives Collins (R-GA)-Scott (D-VA). The Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act (CJMHA) recently passed the Senate and the House Judiciary Committee with bipartisan support. It has beneficial provisions from the prospective of ending homelessness.  In Maine we have always seen a pattern where people with mental illness are swept into jails, as well as homeless shelters.  The people would be much better served and at far less cost in permanent supportive housing. The bill includes provisions around screening people who interact with the criminal justice system for mental health conditions and connecting them with services, at all points in the justice system from intake to transition.

**State Legislation Update:** The Legislature has adjourned Sine Die. The next Legislature will begin in January 2017.

**2016 Election:** Election day is Tuesday, November 8th – vote!