



## MAINE STATEWIDE HOMELESS COUNCIL

October 13, 2020

Minutes

9:30-12:30

Virtual Location: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/352415877>

and/or call 1(646)749-3122, Passcode 352-415-877

**Members:** Stephanie Primm (KCHC, SHC Chair), Donna Kelley (WCAP, RII), Cullen Ryan (CHOM, RII), Cheryl Harkins (HVJ, RI), Donna Yellen (Preble Street, RI), Ginny Dill (Shalom, RI), Josh D'Alessio (PCHC, RIII)

**Guests:** Betty LaBua (MaineHousing), Tracy Allen (KBH), Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing), Alice Preble, (DHHS/OCFS), Melanie Buber (HSA), Laurie Murray (MaineHousing), Lauren Bustard (MaineHousing), Kate Easter (MCEDV), Denise Lord (Maine Housing), Rota Knott (Tedford), Amelia Lyons (Dept. of Ed), Kelsey Brown (HUD), Lisa Letourneau (CDC), Jamie Blackburn (CSH), Kelly Watson (MaineHousing), Jenny Stasio, (TTD), Bill Higgins(Homeless Advocacy for All), Rich Hook Wyman (VOA), Anna Smith (CSH), Sarah Gallagher (CSH), Joe Locke (MaineHousing), Aaron Geyer(COP), Chris Bicknell (New Beginnings), Sue Gagnon(DOC), Brad Sealfron, Mohamed Abdi, (City of Lewiston), Cara Courchesne (MaineHousing)and Susan Randall (Homeless Advocacy for All)

**Minutes:** Betty LaBua (MaineHousing) and Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing)

**Approval of Minutes:** Cullen motioned for council to accept September's minutes. Cheryl seconded. September's minutes were approved.

### CSH Project Update:

- **Update on Process-** Sarah Gallagher started the update on the progress of the yearlong project by sharing updates on regional focus groups and data collection. The regional focus groups, located in Portland, Bangor, Augusta/Lewiston as well a rural areas, consisted of the following reoccurring themes:
  - Rural/urban divide and importance of regionalization
  - Increase use of cross system data
  - Triage and Diversion are priorities
  - Lack of quality, affordable and supportive housing stock
  - Intensive, community based SU and MH services
  - Training and fidelity to best practices, housing first and quality of interventions
  - Desire to integrate with Coordinated Entry
  - Landlord outreach, navigation, education and improved landlord mitigation fund
  - Impact of COVID-19 highlights need for integration with mainstream services
  - Replicate and scale successful, local innovations(LTS, and FQHC partnerships)

Sarah opened the floor for discussion by asking if any common threads were absent.

The following themes were added:

- Access to low barrier shelters in Portland
- Addressing the winter needs of the unsheltered

- Flexibility in opening temporary emergency shelters
  - Increased training for people providing support services in warming centers
- Jamie displayed a variety of ways to understand the system flow from 211 to permanent housing through different graphs showing A Statewide Homeless System Inventory, Inventory and Utilization by Region, Key Metrics by SHC Region & DHHS Districts, In-Flows through 211&HMIS, The Path to Permanent Housing and Returns to Homelessness for those Placed in Permanent Housing(after 2 years). These graphs, are a starting point for conversations, in particular, when addressing the factors contributing to 469 (17%) of households returning to homelessness in two years.
- **Review of Mapping**-CHS created four different interactive resource maps identifying the distribution of resources by 211 Housing Referral Calls, population, SHC Regions and DHHS Districts.
  - **Regions**-A lengthy conversation circled around the number of regions/districts defining the Maine Homeless System Redesign, mainly 3 versus 8. The following list of comments and questions surfaced,
    - Data, culture and capacity are important criteria for the regional design.
    - What are the roles of districts and regions? How are they similar and how are they different?
    - What has been successful in similar states?
    - How will reality of human behavior vs how we view the state be addressed?
    - 8 will further fragment the state by dividing resources and will add too many meetings for stake holders to attend.
    - Zoom works to tie the state together and strengthens regional councils, 8 will make communication difficult.
    - What are CES plans for dividing the state?
    - If not 8 or 3, what number will strike a balance so that all people will get an equal experience?
    - As CES is rolled out, 8 is a great way to provide services.
    - The number eight is a starting point, regions/districts can merge or change.

Attendees agreed further an in-depth discussion is imperative. It was decided an hour inclusive, follow up meeting will be scheduled using a doodle poll. A meeting synopsis will be presented at the November SHC meeting

## Council Updates

- **MSHA:** In place of conducting the Annual Navigator Training, there will be virtual ESHAP office hours held on October 22, 2020. There will be 100 people attending training on Rapid Rehousing in November and December.
- **Due to time constraints, I&II Regional updates were submitted via email**
  - **Region I:** The numbers of people who are unsheltered in Region I continues to be highlighted. Last month the struggles that people are having doing in home visits due to COVID were discussed. This difficulty will be continue to be addressed. There are currently multiple housing vouchers available but it continues to be difficult finding places for people to use these vouchers. Shirley noted that there is an ongoing frustration amongst people with vouchers and are unable to use them. The lack of natural and professional resources continues to

be an ongoing topic. With RRH, being able to offer financial incentives is helping to get landlords to be more welcoming to those who have criminal backgrounds, evictions and bad landlord references.

- **Region II:** The group voiced concerns about lack of warming center options and the concern about colder weather coming. Also, there is concern about lack of available housing for those looking for housing, especially with no evictions happening.
- **Region III:** There continues to be a need for warming centers. Shelters are full to capacity and there are currently 80 people are living outside.
- **Legislative Updates:** At this point in time, no SHC action is warranted regarding State and Federal Legislation. At the State level, the Legislature has not reconvened. Federally, Congress continues to negotiate the fourth stimulus package.

### **Council Planning**

- **Communication:** Cara Courchesne, MSHA's Communication Coordinator, will be assisting with the Statewide Communication effort to show "what the face of homelessness" looks like. Sharing audio and verbal stories will be a major part of the media tool kit designed to remove judgment and paint clear portraits of people experiencing homelessness. Cara will help with messaging, coaching and overall media support.
- **MSN:**Tabled until November.

### **Pandemic Related Issues**

- **Current Status:** Fortunately, by using universal precautions, there has not been a COVID outbreak. Unfortunately, there currently is not enough shelter space for the increased demands. There is also growing trepidation over the anticipated increase of needs, during the winter months. Lauren mention shelter grants will continue into the spring. The lack Warming Centers continues to be a major concern. The 24 porta-potties located throughout Portland will not be available in the winter months. Katie announced at the ongoing Thursday meetings of Shelter Directors a guideline for shelters during the COVID era is being drafted. She invited anyone interested in attending to email her, [katie@shelterme.org](mailto:katie@shelterme.org).
- **CDC Update:** Dr. Lisa Letourneau (CDC), announced there will be an opportunity for shelters to serve as testing sites for the rapid COVID-19 Abbott BinaxNOW tests. The beauty of these tests is that they offer results for symptomatic individuals within 15 minutes. They are not designed for asymptomatic people. Lisa will send an email outlining the specific requirements. It needs to be decided if the SHC will be responsible for the coordination of disturbing tests. Lisa will send an email sharing a list of free flu clinics.

**Next Meeting:**  
**Tuesday, November 10, 2020**  
**9:30-12:30**

**Maine Statewide Homeless Council | c/o MaineHousing | 26 Edison Drive| Augusta, ME 04333**

*Developing policies and strategies so that everyone is pushing in the same direction to end and prevent homelessness in Maine.*