

YYA Committee Meeting Notes

April 21, 2022

4:00-5:30pm

Present: Phil Ringwood, DIAL/SELF; Shelby Dempsey, BCRHA; Simone, YAB; Benna, YAB; Stacy Parsons, McKinney-Vento Liaison; Emily English, Gandara; Michele LaFleur, CAPV CoC; Olivia-Gilbert, YAB; Lydia Davis, CAPV Youth Programs; Cat Dysthe, Statewide Youth Ambassador; Olivia Morris, YAB; Heather Welty, CAPV Youth Programs; Harry, YAB; Lynn Spicer-Lindquist, Gandara; Georgia Welch, CAPV YAB/Youth Programs; Rhea/Kaia, YAB; Zanyia, YAB; Alta Miller, CAPV Youth Programs; Teri Koopman, CAPV CoC

Introductions/Check-Ins-Simone

YHDP Project Updates

Gandara (TH/RRH)-Emily

- Continuing to do housing search
- TH housing is full
- Recently hired a Coordinator and posted for an additional Housing Specialist
- We are about to house a new young person (doing inspection)
- Have 4 families in TH and 8 in housing search

Dial/Self (RRH)-Phil

- Have 4 RRH positions-one person is housed and the others are in housing search
- One is trying rent in a town that has no other rents for comparable rent reasonableness determination and the rent is way above FMR

MHA (PSH/RRH/Navigation)-Phil

- DS has been partnering with MHA and they moved 2 YYAs into DS RRH units

EOHHS Project: BCRHA (TAY, Moving to College, FYI Vouchers) –Shelby

- There's affordable housing in N Berkshire County but people want to stay Pittsfield
- Have been doing a lot of homeless prevention work
- We are beginning to receive referrals for people who are incarcerated, and have been providing them info to prep for exit planning
- Thinks this increase is due to outreach they have been doing (BCRHA is present in court) and word of mouth
- Have been assisting may people complete RAFT forms

CoC Updates (Since March 17)-Teri

- **Total Number of Youth Referred:** 4 new referrals (3 to MHA Navigation; 1 to Gandara RRH)
- **Total Number of Youth Housed:** Currently 24 housed; 1 in the housing process, 1 recently housed, and 1 exited to housing from PSH

- **Total Number of Youth Currently on BNL:** In total 65-28 on the old BNL (including 7 youth who are currently no contact and are slated to be exited from BNL if there is no contact for 6 months) and 37 on the new BNL

YAB Updates (Lydia and Georgia)

- **Building Bridges**-Meeting next week 4:00-5:00 pm; Going to do slow down, spend more time on games, seek feedback re potential topics; It's been one year since building bridges meetings began
- **DCF Care Packages**-Have been making care packages for folks exiting DCF experience; Currently tweaking form and will start making care packages when we get referrals; YAB met and made some crafts to include along with the essentials and comfort items
- **Legislative Advocacy Training with Pamela Swartz of WMNEH**-Will meet with her tomorrow to discuss; Hope to offer first training in May; May target YAB or YAb & Youth Council; Topics of interest are issues/bills related to YYA homelessness

Youth Count: April 4-May 6, 2022 (Cat Dysthe, Statewide Youth Ambassador)

- Cat is the Youth Ambassador for west and other regions; Thinks the legislative advocacy idea is cool
- **PPT presentation: MA YOUth Count! 2022**
 - Anonymous survey to learn about YYA who have experienced homelessness or housing instability
 - Results inform state where to push/prioritize funding
 - Youth Count History-Began in 2009 when no state funding dedicated to YYA Homelessness
 - By 2015, state allocated \$8 mill in supporting services-each region gets approx. \$650,000 per year for services for YYA experiencing homelessness
 - Youth Count stats
 - Most left before 18 (avg age =17.1)
 - 17% exchange sex to meet needs
 - 15% don't have diploma
 - 9% unsheltered (e.g. live in cars or outside)
 - YYA Homeless Pop:
 - BiPOC-63%
 - LGBTQ+ 36.2%
 - foster care history 36%
 - Juvenile Justice Involved 31%
 - Pregnant/Parenting 14%
 - MA stats: 1,389 unacc homeless students (12 Grade and younger); 1,080 unaccompanied youth not in school
 - \$20 compensation for completing survey
 - Survey Link (English, Spanish, Portuguese): [Massachusetts YOUth Count 2022 Survey Tools – \(mahomeless.org\)](#)
- Has social media links which can be posted

- Cat shared re events other regions are holding: Essex County is doing an Open Mic on April 28 ([younityopenmic.png \(dropbox.com\)](#)); Lawrence having pizza catered with tablets and paper surveys; Some get-togethers both large and small
- YYA Committee Members reported on local efforts:
 - Heather has taken on CAPV outreach this year; Has reached out to contact list and local providers; Primarily an email campaign; Also modified EOHHS poster to make a CAPV Youth Count Poster: [Community Action Youth Count Flyer 2022 \(canva.com\)](#) ; YAB were offered paid opportunity to send link to 5 people
 - Stacy noted that schools can't administer the surveys but can post; She has been working with teen center, coalitions, and libraries; Best marketing tool with youth is word of mouth
 - Phil shared that DS has rolled out venmo and CVS gift cards and will do boosted social media starting next week
- Youth Count Dash Board-41 youth in our region have completed the survey to date; Phil informed that last year we only had 27 respondents

PIT Count Data (Michele)

- Still in process (waiting to get surveys back) but nearly completed
- PIT is an annual count of everyone in region or CoC who is experiencing homelessness (sheltered or unsheltered) one a specific night; This year we counted others who don't meet HUD's definition and included (e.g. couch surfing)
- 2021 count was very low (15 total and only 1 unsheltered)
- This year its higher-there were 30 YYAs ages 18-25 were counted (12 in emerg housing, 15 in transitional housing & 3 literally unsheltered)
- Michele will create a report with youth broken-out

YHDP Demonstration Period Project Evaluation (Rhea)

- YAB agreed to review project policies for YHDP Demonstration Period Project Evaluation
- Rather than review all policy measures, they prioritized three:
 - **YYA Voice in Project Performance:** Policies include opportunities for YYA to provide feedback to projects
 - **Demonstrates Use of Positive Youth Development (PYD):** Policies allow YYA to have voice on programs, emphasize their strengths, enable them to set their own goals, and provide them opportunities for leadership
 - **Social/Emotional Wellbeing:** Policies require that YYA be supported re social and emotional well-being - including mental health supports and peer and family connections
- Feedback for all 3 agencies were provided in writing (YAB decided not to score using scoring tool)
- YAB paid a lot of attention to grievance policies because they were important to everyone

MHA-Grievance Policy

- We felt like it could be intimidating; youth may fear retaliation
- It would be helpful to have support phone numbers

- One challenge is if the person handling the grievance is the person you have the grievance with; You can't bring up your grievance with them

General thoughts-Accountability should be part of the policies; Sometimes it felt like a lot of talk about stuff happening in policies but not a lot of showing that stuff was happen as stated

Gandara-Grievance Policy

- Thought that encouraging you to address the issue directly with the person felt like being told to deal with it yourself; Doesn't feel great to be told to go handle it yourself; If you come forward and say something then you have done something and would like support
- Don't need a lesson re how conflict works
- Its concerning that someone would have to talk to the staff member that they have concerns with-there is a power imbalance
- Maybe identify diff response levels/days for diff types of problems-5 days is too long for some situations
- Better way to say it "Staff are trained in how to mediate conflict without being biased. If you need help addressing conflict with another participant or staff, you can reach out to a staff to help you resolve the conflict"

General thoughts- Re LGBTQIA+ signage, it felt like bragging-talking up how LGBTQ+ friendly they are without showing it; But it's good to have it in writing

DS-Grievance policy

- Make it clear who the youth is supposed to address a grievance to
- It requires trust between staff and participants
- Great-super direct about what will happen when they appeal

Case Plan-Asking personal questions at the beginning when you don't know staff or developed trust; Would help to know what the information is going to be used for

Youth Leadership Commitment-Some DS participants said they have not been asked for feedback, didn't feel like they had a role, and weren't offered opportunities for leadership dev

Individual experiences

- It's difficult to have these conversations-some YAB members have had first-hand experiences with these orgs not always following their policies
- Need to build trust between staff and participants
- A lot of people said no one was asked for feedback or that they had a role
- Self-scoring felt weird and confusing

Discussion

- Heather thanked them for their work; Noted that trust building is the pathway & if we want to center accountable we have to be uncomfortable to make change
- Emily is happy that the policies are a living document-it gives us a chance to re-evaluate and see if that is what we meant when it was written; It's an opportunity to adapt and change-take feedback, re-evaluate and see what happens

- Phil appreciates looking at the language-see how its landing and what adjustments can be made; He appreciates the feedback-some things were surprising and didn't line up so he would like to talk with folks to see
- Simone noted that certain programs have handbooks and there are a set of guidelines and expectations; Programs should put more effort into following the expectations-not just put words down but follow them
- Stacy inquired when the next evaluation cycle is and Teri noted that off site monitoring is currently happening, YABs feedback has been shared and it will be discussed with providers during offsite monitoring
- Stacy noted that this more than monitoring-there is a theme of trustbuilding and it would be helpful to address this
- Emily stated that we need time to re-evaluate the feedback; Sometimes the YAB was busy doing other things when Gandara asked them to meet with us; Where is the space where we can talk in detail about YAB concerns; YYA Committee might be a cool space-and we are not pulling YAB members out of other things
- Lydia thinks it sounds good; She noted it was a much busier time when Gandara wanted YABs input; Sometimes the YAB likes to discuss in their own space; We have discord service and you can let us know what you want and we can discuss where/how to do it
- Georgia agrees with Lydia; thinks discord is a great new way to connect; email does not work for everyone; YYA committee could be an option during scheduled time AND YAB might want to have private time to discuss; Can put the ask in discord and YAB decides when and how to proceed
- Phil wants to take this back and review with program staff (those implementing the policies and practices) and find out what follow up questions they may have; Will take some time before coming back to this space

Announcements:

- Phil late breaking news-looks like state just set aside \$500,000 to renovate a building in N Adams dedicated to youth housing
- Lynn Spicer introduced themselves as Gandara's new SHINE program coordinator

Next Meeting: Thursday, June 16, 2022; 4:00 – 5:30 pm