

## YYA Homelessness Committee Notes

November 18, 2021

4:00-5:30pm

**Participants:** Shelby Dempsey, BCRHA; Simone Barrows, YAB; Levi Solano-Jimenez, YAB; Ben Hernandez-Kliman, YAB; Michele LaFleur, CAPV CoC; Heather Welty, CAPV Youth Programs; Olivia-Gilbert-Lilly, YAB; Lydia Davis, CAPV Youth Programs; Georgia Welch, CAPV YAB/Youth Programs; Olivia Bernstein, MHA; Andrea Thompson-Dexter, CAPV Healthy Families; Matt Attesi, Gandara; Holly, YAB; Kim Lee-MHA;; Shaundell Diaz, CAPV CoC; Teri Koopman, CAPV CoC, Kris; Sarah Aleece

### Introductions & Check-Ins (Simone)

#### YHDP Project & CoC Updates

##### MHA (Olivia)

- Moved some young people into housing through PSH
- Hired new staff for Housing Navigator position

##### Gandara (Matt)

- Working on bring on another youth and working on shared living space in Turners Falls
- Finding the landlord was luck-MHA staff were at a meeting and just happened to connect with someone
- Hopefully we can house more but am worried about winter

##### CoC's YHDP Updates (Teri)

As of 11/18/21:

- Total Number of New Youth Referrals: 5 referred (1 to MHA Navigation; 4 to Gandara-1 to RRH and 3 to TH)
- Total Number of Youth Housed: 4 Currently
- Total Number of Youth Currently on BNL: 75
  - *Includes 12 YYA who are listed as "no contact" and are slated to be re-categorized within 6 months months*

##### YAB Updates (Levi)

- There will be some upcoming YAB meeting cancellations due to the holidays
- Building Bridges will not meet this month; one will be scheduled in December
- At this week's YAB meeting we discussed the YAB Collab and shared feedback on the Statewide Homeless Youth Campaign poster
- We filled out a root cause form which will help us get a better look at what structural cause is and related policies
- During October Building Bridges we discussed documentation as a barrier to receiving services

- Lydia shared that discussion re the DCF care package project continue; the plan is to distribute them in February

### **YHDP Replacement Project Changes (Effective October 2022)**

- For recent NOFO submission, HUD instructed YHDP projects to submit replacement project applications (rather than renewal applications) if there were any changes from prior application; All 3 County CoC YHDP Housing Projects submitted replacement applications-all are, at a minimum, seeking to waive match funding
- DialSelf's replacement application entails no significant programmatic changes
- Olivia shared that MHA requested some minor changes related to Housing Navigation-they decreased the proposed number of youth to be served from 75 to 45 as the initial number was unrealistic for this area.
- Matt is uncertain of what was included in Gandara's final replacement project application; Teri noted that the number of TH beds were reduced from 6 to 4 (those at SHINE), RRH beds were increased, and the agency eliminated short term vs long term RRH-all spots are long term if needed

### **Statewide Homeless Youth Awareness & Connection Campaign**

- The State's Homeless Youth Awareness Campaign was introduced during the last YYA Committee meeting
- One of the goals is to raise awareness and support for programs that work to prevent and end youth homelessness in Massachusetts; Their primary goal is to get youth experiencing housing insecurity readily connected to resources
- Youth were involved in the developing the campaign-emails were sent out to all YAB Collab members approximately 1.5 years ago inviting them to participate (but no 3 County YAB members joined the development)
- EOHHS created posters & flyers (English on one side/Spanish on the other) and mailed them to agencies in each region (in 3 County they were sent to DialSelf, MHA, Gandara, CAPV, BCRHA and Louison House); Agencies are localizing the poster by adding stickers with the name of the local YSP providing Emergency Housing Services:
  - Dial Self –Franklin & Hampshire
  - Louison House-Northern Berkshire county
  - BCRHA-Rest of Berkshire County
- This Monday, November 22, EOHHS is launching the campaign in Lynn with Secretary Sudders; they are offering to pay youth who wish to attend a transportation allowance, \$75 to participate and an extra \$50 if they agree to be on a panel
- The CoC is developing a local press release that will tie in the Landlord Engagement Initiative
- EOHHS had hoped the YABs would get involved in distributing the posters and host their own events; Some of our YAB members were not happy with the poster images-this was conveyed to EOHHS and they used YAB Collab discuss this issue and gather YAB feedback from across the state; We also informed EOHHS that the YAB would share their thoughts during YYA Committee and then follow-up with an email to EOHHS regarding their concerns

## **YAB Feedback Regarding Campaign**

- Simone shared that the poster disturbs her-reminds her of the old Autism Speaks commercial; Thinks the poster is depressing and the black and white images should be changed as there is not much color
- Lydia reports that Olivia feels that if the goal is to have youth self-identify and access resources then the underlying assumption is that they don't see themselves as experiencing homelessness; Olivia feels this is a band-aid solution-the bigger issue is quality of services and barriers; The barriers are too high-you have to be literally be homeless before you become eligible and documentation can be a significant barrier to services
- Georgia noted that it can be painful to see someone sleeping in a car
- Teri informed that during morning meeting, Ayala said they are not pushing the YABs to get involved-we can do a limited campaign now and our own customized campaign later; Some local agencies are moving forward with poster distribution (e.g. Stacy Parsons and Louison House feels like it's a good way to open communication with schools)

## **Legislative Updates Impacting Youth Housing** (*Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH*)

- Pamela introduced the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness-a joint effort of 3 County CoC and Springfield CoC; Seeks to prevent and end homelessness in Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire Counties via housing first approach that centers on racial equity
- Pamela shared pages from the website and the blog link-the blog is their way of staying in touch re advocacy; Currently has 545 subscribers; Invited participants to join-if you subscribe you will be a part of our movement to be heard
- The blog is a way for us as a region to make an impact-e.g., you'll get one of the networks action alerts and you just need to click, fill out some information and hit send and you've made a difference; There is a lot of apathy now so when legislators receive 10 emails they notice; We need to be engaged and hold legislators accountable
- Pamela scrolled through advocacy items listed on their website noting there are a range of advocacy items which impact YYA experiencing homelessness (e.g. stopping evictions & foreclosures, forcing landlords to obtain assistance, getting legal representation, easing access to state IDs)
- Make activism is a habit; Get used to making a call-the person who picks up the phone at a congress persons office is someone young like you so it's like talking to a peer; Pamela has been doing this for 30 years and her heart still beats fast when she goes to make a call
- We are at the start of a legislative session and 6000 bills have been filed-if they don't make it in the next two years they have to be filed again
- Pamela suggests get some training re how the process works, join the blog, and register to vote; She is also happy to connect us to someone or another coalition-it's all about relationships
- Cities and towns in the state will get millions of dollars via the States' American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) budget; The City of Greenfield is receiving \$600 million for housing and homelessness work (PSH, developing affordable housing and repairing housing); Senator Comerford has her own pot of money and is allocating \$800,000 to housing in Franklin County

- Pamela inquired about participants' experience with approaching congress; Lydia noted that they participate in an event yearly where you talk directly to legislators; Has felt jaded about how much difference she can make so it's helpful to hear that they don't get 100 emails
- Heather is pleased to know that emails can be impactful because picking up a phone and cold calling is very anxiety provoking
- Pamela noted that the most powerful relationship is that of a constituent; Change is incremental until it happens; Connect to the mission and feel connection with others
- Michele appreciates the action call emails-they are easy to respond to and he even gets emails back stating that they agree
- Pamela noted that if you are interested the first step is get connected and learn more; We can spend some time learning more and can invite a legislator so they can get to know you-she is happy to facilitate this

### **YHDP Demonstration Period Project Evaluation**

- As requested during last meeting, Teri developed a Quickfacts re the YHDP Demonstration Period Evaluation Process (which included a description of YHDP); this was emailed to YYA Committee contacts twice-the final being a last call to participate in one of three evaluation groups (surveys, policies and data)
- There has been no responses to date, and since it was determined that providers cannot participate in the evaluation process, we will proceed with the YAB evaluating the two areas they expressed interest in reviewing-surveys and policies; This is an internal evaluation only-it will not be shared with HUD
- Status of Surveys: We are collecting more surveys as only 8 have been received; Providers have until December 3 to obtain responses from new program participants who are willing to complete the survey (Survey 1-pre-service/systems survey)
- Michele will then take out all the recognizable information so identities are not revealed and will break down responses by demographics; there will be rows of anonymous response and some tables by population
- Status of Policies: CAPV collected policies for self-evaluation this summer and forwarded them to providers to see if there are any they wish to update, add or remove; No responses yet but will send a reminder; Once policies are finalized we will narrow them down for the YAB to review because some of the providers shared a lot of material
- Status of Data: The one time report that Green Mountain was going to develop is too expensive (and no committee member has stepped forward to review the data); Rather than spend thousands of dollars on a report we will use only one time, Michele will develop a report using the new HMIS system (which will go live shortly) but he is not sure of when this can be accomplished; Once the data is obtained CoC staff can review and e.g. incorporate into spring site visit monitoring
- Georgia requested Michele's assistance at the YAB evaluation meetings to help figure all this out

**Next Meeting: Thursday, December 16, 2021 4:00 – 5:30 pm**