September 9, 2021 Continuum of Care meeting minutes

The September 2021 meeting, which took place virtually (due to the ongoing pandemic), via a Zoom conference call, was called to order and began at 11:03 am. The minutes from the July meeting were reviewed and unanimously approved.

Carrie Ferraro, from Legal Services of Northwest Jersey (LSNWJ), was the guest speaker. She explained that the moratorium on evictions would be ending shortly. Tenants at 120% of AMI cannot be evicted for money owed between 3/1/20 and 8/31/21. Tenants at 80% of AMI cannot be evicted for money owed between 3/1/20 and 12/31/21, but must also show a COVID-related impact. If a tenant owes rent from before or after the covered period, they CAN be evicted. The utility shut-off moratorium ended on 7/1/21, but there is a grace period in place until 12/31/21 and no late charges or fees may be imposed.

In order to receive full protection under the law, renters must complete a self-certification regarding income. If a tenant is going to receive rental assistance, LSNWJ may be able to help with regard to any prior settlements. COVID Emergency Rental Assistance is available for tenants at 120% of AMI or less. For those in need of a TRA or immediate emergency assistance, they should contact the County Board of Social Services. In addition, utility assistance is available through LIHEAP. Tenants should be careful in paying rent to ensure that the proper months’ rent is paid, as opposed to prior/disputed rent.

At the moment, all landlord-tenant proceedings will take place remotely. Tenants who are in need of legal assistance should contact LSNJ.

The Committee received an update on the 2021 CoC Application. There were five (5) renewal applications from Alternatives and one (1) new project each from Visions & Pathways and Volunteers of America. Information has been sent to the applicants regarding the process. The NOFO (Notice of Funding Opportunity) is due in November.

Many towns are recovering from Hurricane Ida. The COAD has been activated. Manville was the hardest hit town in the State. Many local organizations suffered, as well: SHIP was heavily damaged; Feeding Hands was flooded; Agape House suffered damage and had to move out clients. The Food Bank is extending hours to 5pm to assist people in need. Shop-Rite has donated food and other household items for residents of Manville.

The County Diversity Festival will be held on Saturday, October 9, from 12-4pm in front of the County Administration building in downtown Somerville.

Announcements:

* Agape House will likely be closed until the end of the month due to damage from Hurricane Ida. Residents have been places in hotels in the area.
* The Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board and Raritan Valley Community College will co-host a Disabilities Employment Celebration on Tuesday, October 12, from 4-7 pm.
* The Woods at Warren is a new affordable housing development that will begin accepting applications soon. A flyer with information will be sent in the CoC follow-up e-mail.
* The NJ DCA is still accepting applications for the Emergency Housing Voucher Program. Details and the application are available on the Community Development website.

The meeting adjourned at 12:02pm.

Attendees:

Jeremy Hirsch Carrie Ferraro  
Kim Cowart Shantina Cintron  
Ed Prior Rheanah Johnson  
Sandra Escobar Alyssa Martini  
Amanda Agwuegbo Kayla  
Kristina Portella Haley Hostos  
Heather Bielefeldt Beatriz Baldwin  
Jackie Blake Ashley Scardigno  
Christine Esposito Paula Laing  
Gema Diaz  
Heather Pullen  
Lisa Barnes  
Jill Lombardozzi  
Jay Weintraub  
Zack Berliner  
Ana Diaz Lopez  
Paul Grzella

Meg Isbitski

Joni Owen