May 11, 2023 Continuum of Care meeting minutes

The May 2023 meeting, which took place virtually, via a Zoom conference call, was called to order and began at 11:01 am. The minutes from the March meeting were reviewed and unanimously approved.

The meeting’s guest speaker was Chris Plaugic. He is with RWJ Barnabas Health and works with their Healing Homes program. Healing Homes is a transitional housing program that is non-HUD based, in which residents can stay in the home for up to 2 years. Residents must be employed, have manageable healthcare concerns, and be housing insecure. They also must meet HUD income guidelines. Residents do not pay rent or utility costs, but they are responsible for their own meals.

There is also a financial literacy aspect to the program. Residents must be in a savings match program in which they save 30% of their income every month, go over their budget once a month with a counselor, and attend a financial literacy course.

Since the homes are considered property of the hospital, no animals are allowed, including service animals, since animals are not allowed to sleep on the premises. In addition, pets could become a legal liability issue.

In order to apply, applicants must fill out a pre-screening application and submit the following documents: tax return, four (4) most recent paystubs, credit reports from all three (3) agencies, a resume, references, documentation of all income, bank account statements from the last two (2) months, and a social security number or tax ID. All applicants must be documented in some way so services can be provided for them.

After the “Safe Space” portion of the meeting, there was an update on the Coordinated Entry system. Red Rock is now full. The residents in the CoC units are very diverse and are a good representation of the people in the system.

Katelyn from Monarch provided an update on the CoC Application Process. HUD announced the 2022 awards – Somerset County had three (3) renewals and two (2) new projects. Grant Agreements have not been sent out yet. The 2023 competition will start soon, hopefully later in May or in June. The process is as follows: applications will be released, existing programs will be monitored, the CoC Application Committee will review applications, and then the applications will be submitted to HUD. The Application Committee is open to any members who are interested in being a part of the review process.

Two agencies requested Letters of Support. Visions and Pathways requested a Letter recently and information was sent out to the CoC Committee via e-mail. There were no objections and the Letter was provided within the last week. In addition, Volunteers of America (VOA) requested a Letter of Support for $115,000 in funding for a program with DCA. Information on the program was sent out prior to the meeting. The funding would be for two (2) positions to support the Homelessness Prevention Program. These positions would assist individuals in Somerset and Morris Counties who have been selected for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. There were no objections to providing the Letter and it was approved by the Committee. Should they be funded, VOA was asked to provide an update on how the program is going to the Committee in November.

Agency announcements will be sent via e-mail after the meeting and, as such, are incorporated as part of the minutes.

The meeting adjourned at 11:58 am.

Attendees:

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| Jeremy Hirsch | Rheanah Johnson |
| Kim Cowart  Ed Prior  Chris Plaugic  Zoila Gonzalez | Paul Grzella  Carolyn Solon  Linda Rapacki  Cynthia Ramsey |
| Alyssa Martini  Kayla Ellis  Heather Pullen | Jay Weintraub  Gema Diaz  Stephanie Billitz |
| Steve Katz | Jennifer Guyette |
| Susie Suter | Brooke Gibbs |
| Lisa Federico | Chelsea Decker |
| Oscar Cordoba | Joanne Hala |
| Tamika Levels-Hood  Christine Esposito | Maria Marnell |
| Sofia Bandeira |  |
| Dan Hohman |  |
| Corey Panati  Katelyn Ravensbergen |  |
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