



OFFICE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

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COVID-19 RESPONSE AND THE HOMELESS SYSTEM

WEEKLY CALL: FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 2020

Staff: Jackie Scott, Cheryl Mattis, Stephanie Abide, Rose Burton, Jennifer Corcoran, Liz van Oeveren, Keisha Benjamin, Colleen Baumgartner, Cara Baumgartner

Partners: Jackie Douge, Jen Broderick, Karen Booth, Ayesha Holmes, Jenn Pollitt-Hill, Sheryl Neverson, Jim Sents, Jack Kavanaugh, Darlene Jolly, Donna Sturdivant, Melissa FitzGibbon, Tina Field, Aimee Olivera-Sanchez, Simone Blanchard, Cheryl Rowe, and Cheryl Neely.

Guidance, Information & Updates:

Jennifer Corcoran restated basics on guidance being provided for emergency shelter from Federal level – space, supplies, staff. HUD is having weekly T&A calls Fridays at 2:30 pm. Recordings of their previous calls are on their website. HUD will be relaxing requirements during the pandemic. They are considering doing a “mega waiver” for providers. They are also considering extending service for clients beyond 24 months.

Liz van Oeveren updated us on the State level. Congress is debating a bill that will give four billion dollars in ESG funding, of which seven million may go to Maryland. DHCD is submitting emergency costs to FEMA. DHCD needs local information to apply for costs. Liz will send a survey from DHCD to shelter providers.

Stimulus funds will go to homeless people if they are already receiving social security or disability benefits and will be direct deposited. For people not receiving these benefits, if they filed a 2018 or 2019 tax return, a check will be mailed to the associated address. If none of the above apply, the person will need to file a 2019 tax return.

New CDC guidelines for shelters will be released shortly.

Keisha Benjamin gave an update on HMIS. OCP is working on a webpage that will be a place to store local, state and federal information. Please send links if you have new information to share. HMIS data needs to be kept up to date. Federal and State are collecting data to quantify Howard County’s need. We are more likely to receive resources and have them delivered faster with correct data. Additionally, make sure that data on clients that have heart, lung, or diabetes issues are entered in HMIS. This will allow better service to those most at risk.

Rose Burton gave a response to last week’s requests. DCRS has submitted the shelters requests for PPE with the department’s request. Shelters should also fill out the survey from the Health Department regarding their needs.

A woman’s group has volunteered to make face masks. If interested, you should contact Rose. These masks are made out of cotton to health care specifications, but they are not sterile.

Corrections – Cheryl Rowe

The corrections team is meeting regularly. Cheryl will be going out to homeless camps Tuesdays and Fridays. The Day Resource Center (DRC) will visit the camps Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. These visits help people access showers, laundry, toiletries and food services. Working on getting cell phones to the homeless.

Jennifer Corcoran noted that there needs to be daily data entry for outreach activities. Rose Burton asked if coordination is happening between Cheryl, DRC, and Humanim? Cheryl says she is already coordinating with DRC and can add Humanim.

Humanim – Karen Booth

New street outreach worker will begin field work with clients today. Would like to setup a meeting between him and Cheryl Rowe. Josh Bombino will pickup leftover backpacks and MREs from the PIT count to give to homeless clients. Humanim is in need of PPEs.

Day Resource Center – Tine Field and Melissa FitzGibbon

The DRC will be handing out food and supplies to homeless camps and individuals Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Bottled water for drinking as well as hygiene are a continuing need for the homeless. DRC will also be making food deliveries to residents at Leola Dorsey Community Center.

Grassroots - Tine Field and Melissa FitzGibbon

Have not had a resident test positive for COVID-19 yet. There are open beds at the shelter, which they are trying to fill. Limiting interaction between those staying at the shelter. No longer serving communal meals. No longer allowing the public or visitors in the shelter. If a resident leaves the building, they have to pass a health and temperature check to reenter.

Using Signup Genius to provide community meals. They are dropping off heat and go or cold meals to clients. If a client is struggling with access to food, please have them call Grassroots hotline.

Substance use treatment is being limited to three people per room to comply with social distancing. Many services are now being performed by phone instead of in person.

Volunteers of America (VoA) – Jim Sents

VoA stated they have provided 14 days worth of food to residents of Leola Dorsey. Grassroots reported they have heard from some residents that they are confused about how to get food. VoA has sent out a memo but will contact them again. VoA staff have started working remotely instead of being onsite. They are using Telehealth to administer PRP. Due to limited computer access, VoA has begun delivering tablet computers to residents. They are also working on getting them more minutes on their cell phones. Further discussion is needed between providers and DCRS to be sure residents with health issues are being monitored.

HopeWorks – Jenn Pollitt-Hill

Nothing has changed since last conference call. Greatest need is for PPEs. Rose Burton will reach out after this call.

Veterans Affairs (VA)

Most offices and clinics are closed. Veterans should call their providers for information about where to receive service instead. Staff are teleworking so may be able to help over phone or computer. VA still has their vehicles available but can only use them to drop off food and such instead of transporting clients.

Bridges to Housing Stability – Jen Broderick

Holding steady. Checking on clients and delivering food and resources to them. Gift cards have been distributed to clients able to go out to stores. Food instability is the main client concern. Grassroots asked that clients call their hotline for assistance with grocery deliveries.

Next Call: Friday, April 3, 2020 – 12:00-1:00PM; WebEx invite to follow.