

Coordinated Entry Workgroup

6751 Columbia Gateway Drive, Suite 300 Columbia, MD 21046

**Minutes of the June 15, 2018 Meeting**

Gateway Building - 6751 Columbia Gateway Drive, Columbia, MD 21046

**Attendance:**

Department of Community Resources and Services Staff: Jennifer Corcoran, Elizabeth Van Oeveren, Charles Smith and Cara Baumgartner

Attendees: Jen Broderick, Shanika Cooper, Katie Dant (by phone), Linda Zumbrun

**Meeting called to order** by Jennifer Corcoran at 1:12 pm

During the process of updating the Plan to End Homelessness (PEH), DCRS’ activities center on Coordinated Entry, expansion of Rapid ReHousing capacity, and System Performance Measures. The Department would like to work on these projects collaboratively with the community.

**Increasing community awareness of the Coordinated System of Homeless Services**

The Committee discussed the tension between wanting the community to know the system is available vs how much help is available given the reality of limited resources. Rather than doing more to publicize an already overloaded system at this point, the Committee agreed to reach out to specific subpopulations and faith communities to better understand the level of need. The initial steps for this could be accomplished through work with Trent Hall and Daniel Kershner at DCRS. Education could be provided to PPWs, social workers, the Health Department, law enforcement, DSS, mental health practitioners, food pantries and service organizations to educate them about the resources available so that they can ensure households in need are connected to the system. Service organizations include: Kiwanis club, Rotary club, Elk/Moose Lodges, sororities, and fraternities.

The Committee then discussed how to handle the process of households filing grievances and nondiscrimination complaints. Staff from Grassroots and DSS shared how their agencies handle these issues. Grassroots also shared that it is difficult for their staff to navigate service questions with households because there is not a clear system for who will be prioritized for case management and FFA, which are the largest resources within the system, when they will be contacted, or what assistance will be available to them. In general, Grassroots is comfortable continuing to manage grievances/complaints, but they sometimes need clarification and back-up from the Services Coordinator. Procedures will have to be developed for when and how concerns are raised to the level of the CoC Board, which would serve as the ultimate controlling body. Grassroots will start collecting examples of households who have lodged complaints.

**The Coordinated Entry System will have to be evaluated for performance; we will discuss each step of Access/Assess/Prioritize/Refer as we cover them. Regulatory requirements for system access points were discussed at the May meeting.**

Questions and Challenges

The Committee discussed how to define an “accessible” system both in terms of regulations and their operationalization at the Grassroots hotline as the “Single Point of Entry” as well as for the purpose of measurement/evaluation. It was noted that there needs to be a special emphasis on those who are least likely to access the system without special outreach.

Accessibility could be about the number of households who present to access points or about the percent who receive services. It could also be about the number of households who are aware of and knowledgeable about CSHS. These numbers could be impacted by those who do not seek assistance, or who seek assistance but are not eligible, such as those who are not considered residents because they have not been in the County for six months. (One quarter to one third of callers who seek help do so because they are stranded in Howard County.) There is not extensive information entered into HMIS on households who are not eligible for the system, making possible data analysis difficult. Most ineligible households who want to stay in the area are sent to Baltimore City, unless an exception is made as in cases of domestic violence or human trafficking. Those who are stranded here receive creative problem-solving like providing bus tickets or helping them contact a relative.

The Committee agreed it is reasonable to posit that the long-term unsheltered population are those least likely to access the system without special outreach. Members are interested to know whether the opening of The Residences at Leola Dorsey has impacted this population’s perception of the likelihood of receiving assistance.

The Committee also discussed the fact that households report widely differing experiences of the Single Point of Entry when they are subsequently enrolled in projects. Because households don’t know which staff they spoke to, it is hard to know where they received the information they report. More work is needed to create a standardized experience. Additionally, even though they may be told they will be contacted, households don’t seem to know what is supposed to happen after they complete a housing assessment. There needs to be clearer messaging to households in need.

Measurement/Evaluation Strategies

Charles Smith provided an overview of performance measurement and evaluation, which are conceptually different. The former involves tracking information over time but does not give in-depth information. The latter is a one-time process that is used when a question is hard to get at or a population is difficult to reach. An evaluation might be repeated at set intervals (ie, every five years). The method chosen is driven by the question being asked.

Possible quantitative and qualitative data to gather include:

Number of households requesting assistance

Number of households served

Knowledge that CSHS exists, and knowledge about particular aspects of CSHS

Comparison of households presenting by zip code to levels of poverty in each zip code

Number of households seeking assistance through Grassroots hotline vs through 211

Length of time between presenting to the system and being referred to a project

Quality indicators for households seeking assistance – length of time to complete assessment, perceived respectfulness of assessor, resources provided

Assessor staff attitudes towards households seeking assistance

Assessor staff belief about their knowledge of the system vs their ability to accurately answer questions about the system

Assessor staff knowledge of resources within the broader community

**Meeting adjourned** by Jennifer Corcoran at 2:50 pm.

Minutes submitted by Cara Baumgartner