



Community Involvement Activities Committee

MEETING SUMMARY

The Planning Council believes that the voice of the community is paramount. The purpose of the CIAs is to help bridge the gap between the community and service providers by creating opportunities to involve community members in the planning process. In addition, community members will receive crucial updates on changes in the Ryan White and related health/social services.

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 from 5:03 PM to 6:57 PM

Video-Conference via Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/96635953539>

Teleconference: (929) 205-6099 / Meeting ID: 966 3595 3539#

Attendees: 29 attendees including some providers

Support Staff: Tania Guaman and Vicky Saguy

Guest Speakers: Luis Ulerio, Denise Brown, Sheila Medina

1. Welcome and Moment of Silence

Warren Poole, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM and welcomed all in attendance. A moment of silence was observed for all those living with, those who have passed, and those affected by HIV/AIDS.

2. Public Testimony

There was no public testimony.

3. Approval of the Meeting Summary from March 24, 2021

The March 24th meeting summary was sent electronically for review prior to the meeting. Poole asked for a motion to approve the meeting summary. One consumer motioned and another seconded. There were no abstentions or oppositions.

4. Ryan White Part A Updates

- Support Staff reported the following:
 - The Food Bank/Home Delivered Meals Service Standard was updated.
 - Surveys to find out how well and fast the Recipient is giving out money to Ryan White Part A agencies were released. The recipient also received a survey. The report will be available soon.
 - The telehealth surveys are being reviewed by the NEMA Consultant, Postel. Results will be released soon and will be shared with the committee and public.

5. Old Business

- Topics for future presentations on telehealth, other technology issues. No topics were mentioned.

6. New Business

- Housing Panel – Luis Ulerio, Denise Brown, and Sheila Medina – New Jersey Housing Collaborative (NJHC)

- According to the statewide needs assessment findings, behavioral health, stigma, and housing are major barriers to effective HIV health outcomes.
- To address these barriers, the State launched three initiatives: 1) New Jersey Behavioral Health Integration Project (B-HIP), 2) Stigma Trainings and 3) New Jersey Housing Collaborative.
- NJHC was formed in 2017 by the New Jersey Department of Health as a response to the needs of our communities.
- NJHC aims to end homelessness and improve HIV health outcomes for people living with HIV by providing immediate access to emergency housing supportive services, developing, and expanding a network of service providers to address the housing needs of people living with HIV and expanding housing opportunities for people living with HIV.
- NJHC has three objectives:
 - 1) **Emergency Response** – The 24/7 Hotline helps the most vulnerable population with high needs of housing by providing emergency housing placements, linkages to case management, and other emergency services (food, transportation).
 - Four Emergency Housing Coordinators work across New Jersey to help clients throughout the housing placement process.
 - Since October 2017, over 1,200 intakes have been made and on 30 calls are received on any given month on average.
 - 2) **Statewide Network** – Building a strong network of providers to address the housing needs in the community can help to address the housing issue. The Statewide Network includes Community Partner Specialists, Housing Ambassadors/Housing Case Managers, Working Groups, and Housing Partner.
 - The Housing Ambassadors develop a sustainable housing plan and continuously engage and assess housing plans which includes barriers and goals.
 - Working groups with community stakeholders have been developed to discuss any problems and how to address them, to facilitate planning, identify needs and resources, facilitate case conferencing, and provide member engagement.
 - The housing ambassadors/partners will have access to the Homeless Management Information System that will provide low-income housing, transitional housing, boarding homes, and other resource available at the time. NJHC is working on an agreement with ambassador agencies to recruit other agencies. The ambassador network will be expanded to reach more clients.
 - 3) **Housing Strategy** – The housing strategy is a statewide opportunity to partner with developers, lead housing development and identify funding opportunities.
 - RPM Developers is one of the largest partners in NJ which recently created 5 supportive units for PLWH in Monmouth County.
 - The Lantana will offer some units for PLWH on Broadway and Route 21. The project broke ground and they are starting to build. No Newark residency is required.
 - NJHC applied and received a grant from the City of Newark to finance and build some housing structure and some project-based vouchers to house 10 PLWH in a new building that will be constructed late next year in Springfield Ave and Avon Ave. However, the project has not break ground yet. Clients interested in applying the units can contact the Essex County Coordinator Entry. Prior Newark residency is required. Clients in transitional housing can apply to this unit though NJHC.
 - The two buildings mentioned afore are subsidized by Section 8. There are no applications at this time for any of the buildings mentioned.

- NJHC also partnered with Monarch Housing Associates Inc to identify opportunities and partners to continue the work throughout the state since these efforts have been successful in Essex County.
- About 2 years ago, NJHC applied for a CFC voucher in Middlesex County and received 5 vouchers that were given to PLWH.

- **Housing Questions from Consumers**

- Are there RPM buildings in East Orange? There are some RPM buildings in Newark. However, there are buildings in East Orange for moderate income people. The RPM buildings are mixed income with apartments for homeless, affordable apartments, and market rate apartments.
- What type of partnerships/agreements do you have with emergency rooms that might find the hotline beneficial for after hours? An agreement was drafted to be used with the University Hospital emergency room to serve as guide for other emergency room hospitals, but it has not been finalized yet.
- A Bergen County attendee asked if there about assistance that will help him stay in Bergen County since the area is pricey and he cannot afford it. Ulerio will send information to the attendee (NJ Buddies and Bergen County).
- A transitional housing resident in Union County is looking for permanent housing. The local county coordinated entry provide housing services to people experiencing homelessness (not secured housing). The rapid rehousing program then helps people to find permanent housing. This program provides security deposit, and rental assistance of up to two years. However, individuals must have the ability to pay rent afterwards.
- Is there something that RPM can do for PLWH who have a low or bad credit? Decisions can be appealed by explaining the credit report and including what has been done to improve it.
- Besides budgetary barriers, what type of challenges do the collaborative face?
 - The biggest challenge is the complexity of the housing system due to having different programs with different types of housing (subsidies), their own application, application process and eligibility requirement. Navigating through the system could be challenging and overwhelming for someone facing homelessness.
 - Another issue is not having enough affordable housing.
 - Not knowing the difference between affordable housing and subsidies is also a barrier.
 - The ambassadors work through clients' challenges during the intake process to match clients with the appropriate emergency housing. Ambassadors are professionally trained in mental health, and trauma informed care to deal with complex situations, guide clients through the process and help them understand the services. Client challenges include engagement, consistency with engagement and gathering all the right information during the intake.
- To find help with the security deposits is a barrier for the Ryan White population since there is more demand for that type of assistance. The Welfare Department helps patients with SSI to pay for the security deposit. Programs that cover for security deposit are available for those who have social security disability and/or social security. PROCEED (Union County) and Newark Emergency Service (Essex County) provide this type of assistance.
- Talley found an insurance company that has security deposit insurance. Partnerships with the company or developments that accept that as a payment option could be established.

- Has anyone with compromised immune systems been placed in hotels where people with COVID-19 are in quarantine? Programs through the US are using hotels to place homeless people. Concerns were shared noting that the old ventilation systems in hotels can contribute to people getting COVID-19. However, hotels are cleaned and have signage throughout the facility; and no COVID-19 exposure cases have been found in hotels or in shelter placements to date.
 - Does someone staying in a hotel have to fill out a weekly voucher? Vouchers are very limited and allows to house someone for up to 30 days. Afterwards, the person is transferred to another source of funding such as welfare, transitional housing and sometimes permanent housing. Hotels are paid on clients' behalf beforehand. The weekly vouchers ensure that clients are housed for the time needed since the housing plan can move quickly or slow and some hotels do not offer reimbursement.
 - A Somerset, Middlesex and Hunterdon County provider mentioned that a client was housed through social services but had not shared his substance abuse history. When this information is not shared with anticipation, the housing ambassador may limit the help a person can receive since housing options with those triggers may be provided. Having clients open up sometimes takes time to share their true barriers with housing ambassadors.
 - Are hotels always in bad areas? Hotels are all over NJ in different cities and settings. Clients get placed based on their intake responses. Therefore, clients get housed in areas that do not have a trigger for them. However, clients ultimately decide when to accept the placement.
 - A NJHC program recipient was placed into transitional housing in Union county (North Jersey). However, the attendee would like to be in Mercer County (South Jersey). Currently, there are not many housing placements in Mercer County, but the NJHC has a statewide network of providers that can be reached out to.
 - HOPWA is taking applications in Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, Mercer, Salem, and Warren Counties. For more information call 609-633-6215 or email hopwa@doh.nj.gov
 - The presenter's contact information was sent to the community via email after the meeting.
- Community Conversations: Going back to the New Normal.
 - As you know, in 2020 various new funding sources came into play such as housing assistance, utility bills funds gift cards that could be used for toiletries, which may now be going away.
 - What funding changes are you worried about the most?
 - People might have enough for food but might need money for toiletry, dish detergent, etc.
 - Hudson County had a cut of \$200,000 in funding. People who have food stamps might not have funds at the end of the month.
 - The Chair encouraged everyone to provide public testimony to address these issues to the Planning Council in May 19 at 1:30pm.
 - What services do you think people will need the most once the pandemic is over? Why is that?
 - Housing- "A lot of people are going to be on the streets. Landlords are going to be putting a lot of people out. They are going to need rent assistance, and back rent money... It might be a housing epidemic."
 - The CARES Act, the American Rescue Act and the Ending the Epidemic Initiative brought in different funding opportunities to the Newark EMA. CARES Act funds ended and the eviction moratorium will end soon.
- What do you think it should be prioritized for Part A funds?

- Utilities might be turned off because they are in moratorium. People can set up payment plans to pay the bills.
- Finding Permanent Housing for clients is difficult since HOPWA is not accessible in the area.
- When Senior and Disable Housing Opportunities are available, people have to complete a preliminary application to win a lottery and get placed on a waiting list.
- “Substance Use and Mental Health are going to be an issue because of the trauma from the pandemic and all the things they are going through. Opioid use and alcohol use is going to go up.”
- There is no assistance for emotional support animals that help people with their depression and mental illness.
- Transportation is a major barrier at Warren, Sussex, and Morris County. Not all people in this area have LogistiCare services or Medicaid that provides transportation. Transportation has always been an issue in the Tri-County.
- In the Tri-county, a public shuttle or bus voucher provides transportation to clients to and from a specific location. However, clients must walk to the location and it is not accessible for everyone. Hope House has helped some Zufall clients with transportation in rural areas.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, LogistiCare lifted the 20-miles restriction. People with Medicaid services must find a provider within 20 miles to receive transportation services. LogistiCare does not offer taxi services in that area.
- The Ryan White Part A Services provide transportation funding. The Morris, Sussex and Warren HIV Advisory Committee can give more information about transportation in that area. The 20-miles restriction can be brought up to Elizabeth Kocot for policy clarification.
- The Section 8 waiting list in Essex County is long so clients can be on the wait list for years.

7. Announcements

- Poole announced that he is running for Community Champion through Thera Pharmaceuticals and asked all attendees to vote for him.
- Debbie Mohammed shared her clinic link www.skyheartmedical.com

8. Next meeting

The next CIA meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 26, 2021 at 5 PM via Zoom.

9. Adjournment

This meeting was adjourned at 6:57 pm.

**There was a raffle of 3 gift cards at the end of the meeting.