

ECHO 2015 OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes 12-1-11

Present: Co-Chair Bob Staples and members Ann Way, Helen Kutz, Ginny Corson, April Doshier, and Debra Krittenbrink. Also present were staff Linda Price and Lisa Krieg.

Excused: Co-Chair Doug Forsyth and member Jennifer Newell

Absent: Member Teresa Capps

Others present: Travis Humphrey with Norman Regional Health System, and citizens Betty Standifer, Nadine Jewell, Sarah Iselin, Ellen Frank, Bette Maffucci, and Suzzette McDowell.

The meeting was called to order by Bob Staples at 4:05 p.m.

UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAMS

EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT (ESG) [FORMERLY EMERGENCY SHELTER GRANT

Interim rules were published in November with significant changes. Effective immediately is the change in the definition of homelessness. The new definition is as follows.

The categories are: (1) individuals and families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes a subset for an individual who resided in an emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided; (2) individuals and families who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence; (3) unaccompanied youth and families with children and youth who are defined as homeless under other federal statutes who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition; and (4) individuals and families who are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member.

Effective in January 2012 a second funding round of \$522,830 will occur under the new regulations. The key changes that reflect this new emphasis are the expansion of the homelessness prevention component of the program and the addition of a new rapid re-housing assistance component. The homelessness prevention component includes various housing relocation and stabilization services and short- and medium-term rental assistance to help people avoid becoming homeless. The rapid re-housing assistance component includes similar services and assistance to help people who are homeless move quickly into permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing.

In general, the interim rule allows ESG funds to be used for five program components (street outreach, emergency shelter, homelessness prevention, rapid rehousing assistance, and HMIS) and necessary administrative costs. However, in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act, some restrictions apply to the amounts that can be spent on street outreach, emergency shelter, and administrative costs.

HUD intends to require each Continuum of Care to develop and implement a centralized or coordinated assessment system in its geographic area. Such a system must be designed locally in response to local needs and conditions. HUD also plans to require each Continuum of Care to develop a specific policy on how its particular system will address the needs of individuals and families who are fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, but who are seeking shelter or services from non-victim service providers.

This interim rule requires a number of written standards to be established by recipients and subrecipients for administering ESG assistance, in order to balance the broad discretion given to recipients in developing street outreach, emergency shelter, rapid re-housing, and homelessness prevention programs to accommodate the unique needs, strengths, and other characteristics of their communities.

A short review and discussion of the 2011 ESG applications noted that the applications were as follows: Bridges (\$50,000), Food & Shelter for Friends (\$50,000), East Main Place (\$50,000), Thunderbird Clubhouse (\$50,000), The Salvation Army (\$25,000), and the Women's Resource Center (\$25,000). COCAA also submitted an application. Only one application was funded fully – East Main Place. Two were partially funded - \$25,000 for Thunderbird Clubhouse and \$25,000 for Women's Resource Center. Food & Shelter, Bridges, and The Salvation Army received no funding. Scores for the denied grants have been requested for several months with no information provided by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. FYE 2012 applications will be due in February or March 2012.

Continuum of Care

The Continuum of Care application was submitted in October 2011. Part one was submitted with six applications. Those applications included: two Supportive Housing (SHP) renewals of \$51,337 for Food and Shelter and \$43,895 for East Main Place; two Shelter Plus Care renewals of \$37,596 for Progressive Independence and \$81,072 for HOPE; one new Shelter Plus Care application of \$69,240 for Thunderbird Clubhouse and a new Bonus SHP for Food and Shelter of \$25,315. The total of all applications was \$308,455.

UPDATE ON STATUS OF STIMULUS FUNDING FOR THE HOMELESS PREVENTION AND RAPID REHOUSING PROGRAM (HPRP)

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 included funding for a one time stimulus program titled the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program. This is a three year program that will end in June 2012 or when the funding runs out. Only \$94,692.90 remains and an average of \$30,000 is expended each month. An average of 12 families per week is being assisted (48 each month). Most are families with young children. Most families receive both utility and rent assistance. A suggestion was made that now would be a good time to request press coverage on the growing problem of homelessness and the impact that will be felt when the HPRP funding is gone in addition to the loss of ESG funding. \$150,000 was available in 2011, but only approximately \$14,000 will be available in 2012 once the HPRP funds are gone.

DISCUSSION REGARDING AN INITIATIVE TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR A SPECIALIZED SHELTER FOR THE STREET HOMELESS

In the September 2011 meeting staff and committee members were asked to come to the December meeting with suggestions on how to raise awareness of homelessness including the need for additional shelter beds. A wide-ranging discussion on the increased demand for assistance was continued. Agencies are receiving many inquiries from families with children and the chronically homeless that are living on the street. [Food and Shelter alone receives between 40 and 50 calls every day asking for help.] For the benefit of the citizens present it was emphasized that although the chronic homeless are often the most visible, they number only around 50. The balance of the 619 homeless include 201 families with children (313 children age 17 or under) and 105 single adults.

This past summer there were often 10-15 street people at Food & Shelter at night. More units are needed for families, and a single-room occupancy (SRO) is needed for the people who live primarily on the street. It was also noted that the extreme heat caused many health issues that required ambulances to be called on an almost daily basis to Food & Shelter, and last winter two of the street homeless froze to death.

The Salvation Army is looking to expand its operation, but the process is slow. Food and Shelter also plans to build 4 new emergency units on site using Rotary funding that will be provided over the next two years. Food and Shelter would like to make their existing facility available at night for the coldest winter months, but staffing would cost about \$10,000 to do so, and that funding is not currently available.

A brief discussion about possible funding sources for new shelters was initiated with no concrete conclusions. The point was made that new initiatives need to be private/public partnerships, with federal funding continuing to be reduced. A recommendation was made by one member that the committee ask City Council for funding for a study to determine the most critical needs, associated costs, and funding sources. No decision was reached.

JANUARY POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS COUNT

The January 2012 count will occur on January 26th. The City is working closely with a number of agencies including Norman Public Schools and the Department of Human Services. In addition to counting the homeless, agencies are being asked to gather data relating to the past history of those persons that are sheltered that night.

MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION

Regarding the need for increasing the public awareness of the homeless issue, agencies are in the process of documenting stories of both success and failure and including information particularly about how additional resources could have brought about a positive outcome. The Continuum of Care Committee is planning an aggressive awareness campaign, and will use the information gathered from the count in the campaign. Norman Regional System offered free radio time if that would help. A

suggestion was made to draw in other people in the community and to establish a task force for the campaign instead of just using existing agency staff.

An announcement was made that the Continuum of Care committee will be meeting on December 15, 2011 at 3:30 p.m. at Food and Shelter at 104 West Comanche. The citizens in attendance were invited to attend.

The next quarterly meeting will be at 4:00 p.m. on March 1, 2012.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.