

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Meeting Minutes January 21st, 2010

<i>Bob Duranleau</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Department, Social Services Division
<i>John Shoos</i>	United Way
<i>Cindy Namer</i>	MaineHousing
<i>Aaron Geyer</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Department, Social Services Division
<i>Josh O'Brien</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept, Social Services Div, Oxford Street Shelter for Men
<i>Jon Bradley</i>	Preble Street
<i>Ginny Dill</i>	Shalom House
<i>Jeff Tardif</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept, Social Services Div, Family Shelter
<i>Amy Regan</i>	Preble Street Homeless Voices for Justice
<i>Amanda Wells</i>	Preble Street
<i>Scott Tibbits</i>	MaineHousing
<i>Kimberly Curry</i>	United Way
<i>Heather Treadwell</i>	Family Crisis Services
<i>Elizabeth Szatkowski</i>	Youth Alternatives Ingraham
<i>Amy Grommes Pulaski</i>	City of Portland, Community Development
<i>Leah Bruns</i>	CCHPP, HPRP, PROP
<i>Linda Janson</i>	Step Up! Shelter Services
<i>Angela Havlin</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept. Social Services Division, HPRP
<i>Tom Allan</i>	Milestone Foundation
<i>Jon Sheffield</i>	Frannie Peabody Center
<i>Kathleen Babeu</i>	City of South Portland
<i>Dee Clarke</i>	Homeless Voices for Justice
<i>Grace Braley</i>	Community Member
<i>Stacy Carpenter</i>	Youth Alternatives Ingraham
<i>Cullen Ryan</i>	Community Housing of Maine
<i>Kendra Danse</i>	Youth Alternatives Ingraham
<i>Nancy Berg</i>	2-1-1 Maine
<i>Whitney Smith</i>	Preble Street Women's Shelter
<i>Lori Martin</i>	PROP/HPRP
<i>Heather Rhoda</i>	Frannie Peabody Center
<i>Mary Ellen Welch</i>	Portland Police Department, Midtown Community Policing
<i>Susannah Harnden</i>	Youth Alternatives Ingraham
<i>TJ Martzial</i>	City of Portland, Housing & Neighborhood Services

I. Introductions

Bob Duranleau, ESAC Tri-Chair, welcomed everyone and brief introductions were made.

II. *December Bed Usage Statistics – Bob Duranleau*

Bob reviewed the monthly shelter statistics for December 2009:

	<u>December 2008</u>	<u>December 2009</u>
Adolescents	9 Individuals	14 Individuals
Adults	196 Individuals	212 Individuals
Families	<u>93 Individuals (30 Families)</u>	<u>84 Individuals (27 Families)</u>
Total	298 Individuals	310 Individuals

Adolescent Shelter

The total adolescent bed nights for December 2008 were 276 while the total bed nights for December 2009 were 425. These figures indicate an increase of 1498 bed nights, or 54% between December 2008 and December 2009. Six (6) individuals stated that they were experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Adult Shelters

Adult Shelter bed nights usage increased by 8% in December 2009 compared to December 2008. Total bed night usage during December 2008 was 6081 while it was 6562 during December 2009, a difference of 481 bed nights.

During the month of December, there were 90 intakes at the Oxford Street Shelter for Men. An Intake or New Arrival is defined as an individual that has not stayed at the Shelter for a period of three (3) months or longer. Based on self-reporting, 48 individuals stated they had never been homeless before in December.

Oxford Street Shelter for Men Support Services team placed 29 individuals into permanent housing, with three (3) individuals returning to the shelter within 90 days of housing placement.

Preble Street Women's Shelter served a total of 101 women during the month of December, including 18 new intakes. Based on self-reporting, 3 of these 18 intakes stated that they were experiencing homelessness for the first time.

The Shelter placed 6 individuals into housing, with 2 women returning.

Family Shelters

There was a total of 2593 bed nights used for all Family Shelters in December 2009 as compared to 2888 bed nights in December 2008. This represents a decrease of 10% in Family Shelter bed usage between December 2008 and December 2009.

The Family Shelter placed 20 families for a total of 65 individuals into housing in December.

The Family Shelter received 25 new families (intakes) for a total of 73 individuals in December. Based on self-reporting 11 families for a total of 36 individuals stated they had never been homeless before in December, of these 11 families for a total of 36 individuals were refugees.

First Time Homelessness

For the month of December 93 individuals, or 48% of all new intakes, reported experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Homelessness Prevention & Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP)

In the month of December 2009 the Portland HPRP Program housed 35 households, for a total of 55 individuals. These housing placements represent 3,574 bed nights at the Oxford Street Shelter for Men, 755 bed nights at the Preble Street Women's Shelter, and 4 bed nights for unsheltered individuals.

Bob handed out the 2-1-1 Maine Housing/Shelter Call statistics for the month of December. There were 324 calls for housing/shelter in all counties in the month of December, out of a total of 8,807 calls. From July through December 2009 there were a total of 2,294 calls for housing/shelter, versus 2,247 calls for housing/shelter from July through December 2008. There were 98 calls for housing/shelter in Cumberland County in the month of December, out of a total of 2,727 calls. From July through December 2009 there were 799 calls for housing/shelter, compared to 825 from July through December 2008. Bob mentioned that General Assistance rents paid were up on December, even though GA intakes were down. He commented that this demonstrates that people are staying on the program, not obtaining jobs, and remaining dependant on General Assistance.

III. Homelessness Prevention & rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) Updates –

Leah mentioned that the Cumberland County HPRP has finished its first quarter. She stated that the program served exactly 100 clients; out of the 100 clients one-third were housed permanently. Josh mentioned that the Portland HPRP is off to strong start in January. He stated that a lot of people are coming in and there has already been a fair amount of housing placements in January. The program has close to 80 clients already, some are more long-term clients while some are coming in and moving out quickly. Angela stated that the referral line has been very busy, mainly with a lot of prevention phone calls. Elizabeth asked how the Portland HPRP tracks calls on the referral line. Angela mentioned that staff is taking as much information as clients give. She added that staff can't conduct screenings over the phone, though they do as much prescreening as possible. Angela mentioned that she does not have specific referral statistics yet but could put something together for the near future. Cindy mentioned that the statewide HPRP has served 359 individuals, comprising 231 households. She reported that at the HUD Regional meeting in Manchester, New Hampshire she discovered that other states aren't serving nearly as many people as we did statewide in the first quarter. Cindy asked if the new intakes coming into the shelters could have been helped prior to going into the shelter system via HPRP, either with security deposits or other prevention aid. Josh mentioned that there tends to be a difference between individuals coming to the shelters and families. At the Oxford Street for Men, individuals that are coming in are already homeless; however, more work could be done with families through the referral line prior to them ending up in shelters. Jeff mentioned that a lot of families that come into the Family Shelter have been faced with eviction, especially Portland residents, and that it's a minimal amount of money required to settle back rent. The problem that arises is that General Assistance does not grant assistance for back rent. Cindy mentioned that the HPRP funds are there and that they have to be spent; if funds could be spent to prevent families from coming into the shelter in the first place it would be ideal. Cindy stated that the money available is for financial assistance, and that there's a possibility of flexibility with how we spend funds, for example the security deposit money as part of the prevention program. If there is the need and this money would prevent families from coming into the shelter, the goal of the HPRP grant, and General Assistance available to continue stability than there is a real possibility of trying to work this into the equation. Leah stated that one of Cumberland County HPRP's problems is that they lack emergency funding to help people, for example in situations where people have been disqualified from GA, thus leaving no wiggle room with the funding to help people in emergency situations. Jeff mentioned that one problem is the necessary documentation and paperwork that many clients do not want to bother going through, as well as the need for the writ for documentation purposes, where at that point clients are already positioned for eviction. He stated that it would be imperative to work with landlords and clients so that we have documentation of the seven (7) day notice of eviction. Bob mentioned that it would be good for a small group to get together to flesh these possibilities out further. Cindy mentioned that there is a training on Monday in Augusta on available resources, and that it would be an ideal time to further discuss this issue.

IV. CDBG Consolidated Plan – Amy Pulaski

Amy passed around information regarding the HUD Five Year Housing & Community Development Consolidated Plan (2010-2015), giving a brief overview. She stated that currently the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) funds Healthcare for the Homeless (indigent care), the Family Shelter (essential services), and homeless prevention. She asked the group three questions regarding ESG funds. Should Portland continue to fund Indigent Care, Essential Services and Homeless prevention with ESG Program funding? What would happen to these programs if money was re-directed? Are there other more pressing needs that the program funds should be directed? Jon stated that the money seems to be going to where it's most needed. He elaborated by stating that considering what is going on with General Assistance and other programs such as MaineCare that it's necessary to hold on to what we can. T.J. stated that these foundational programs have been in place for a long time, and that if any funds were shifted that it could create chaos. Amy continued reviewing the plan and stated that the CDGB Priority Task Force recommended that funds be set aside to address basic needs, programs that respond to acute needs where no other assistance exists that and such response is temporary in nature. This will compete against similar applications for up to 10% of the CDBG HUD allocation. For 2010-2011 the maximum that can be set aside for basic needs is \$233,541 (with \$259,000 in requests). Amy asked the group three questions regarding CDBG HUD allocations for basic needs. Should Portland continue to direct 10% of CDBG funds to Basic Needs, as recommended by the CDBG Priority Task Force, and defined to be: programs that respond to an acute need where no other options exist and such a response is temporary in nature? What would happen to these programs if the funding was re-directed? Are there more pressing needs that the program funds should be directed? Should the 10% set aside be strictly for homeless programs, not as basic needs as defined above? Jon stated that the definition of basic needs does not include healthcare, but does include shelter, food, heating assistance, and other basic needs; though he commented that he would keep the 10% allocated for basic needs. T.J. commented that the community has commented that there are certain basic needs that the task force didn't consider. Elizabeth asked if a soup kitchen falls into the definition of an emergency food resource or an ongoing service? She stated that sometimes the emergency piece raises a red flag, as there are times when basic needs are necessary when it's not an emergency. Jon stated that the key term is "basic needs," that emergency isn't the defining factor, and in theory it's temporary help. Dee stated that if your basic needs can't be met it the situation then becomes an emergency, thus these services would become the way of meeting the need; the need for "basic needs" turns into an emergency situation, and then people become dependent on the aid. Jon stated that the commitment of the Priority Task Force was to focus on basic needs, very concrete essentials that are necessary for survival. John asked what percent went to basic needs previously? Amy stated that around 7 to 8% went to basic needs, which is why the committee decided to go to 10% allocated. Amy mentioned that this is the first year that they've gone through the scoring and awarding based on the basic needs category and that so far it's going well but the scoring is not yet complete. Amy went on to discuss how the HOME funds have been spent. She stated that HOME funds, over the last five (5) years have gone to Logan Place and Florence House. She asked if there is a need to direct additional HOME resources to build and house homeless individuals. The overall consensus of the group was that there certainly is a need. It was stated that the waiting list at Logan Place is very long, and turnover in the program is very low. Cindy mentioned that permanent supportive housing, such as Logan Place, decreases expenditures in other areas, such as the Police and etc. TJ asked if bricks and mortars are there for the physical building would the money for services be available. Cindy asked if some other funds could go to it. T.J. stated CDBG funds could go towards services but HOME funds are strictly for building. Jon added that if HOME funds were to be used to build and house homeless individuals that there is always a way to work out the rest. Amy continued by addressing the additional needs identified at the last meeting, such as homeless elderly, homeless sexual offenders, and homeless individuals with substance abuse and mental health issues. She asked if there is a way to address these populations or if there are any other areas to look at. Leah mentioned there really aren't services out there for homeless elderly individuals. Jon mentioned HOME funds

are the obvious possibility for addressing these. Heather mentioned that across the country there have been tax credit programs for assisted living for homeless elderly persons, that there are models out there for these types of services. Amy asked, of these three populations what would be the most pressing to address? Dee stated people with mental illness that aren't being treated remains a significant issue. Elizabeth stated that this category of individuals covers a broad group of people. Tom agreed and stated that people with untreated substance abuse and mental illnesses often cross over into the other categories, such as homeless elderly and sexual offenders. Amy stated that the sex offender group is the most difficult to advocate for and find solutions for, especially if the City approves the proposed proximity restriction. Elizabeth commented that looking at the shelter statistics the homeless youth population is growing and that this is another population that needs special attention. Dee stated that very low income families and individuals that don't fall into another specific category lack affordable housing. Leah agreed and commented that if income is the only box that someone has to fit it would be a lot easier for people to gain access to services. Amy asked what the income restriction would be in terms of this group of individuals. The group stated at or below 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI).

V. *Governor's Proposed Supplemental Budget Reductions*

Cullen stated that the budget cuts proposed by the governor are pretty drastic and that there is a very limited window to advocate and speak our minds to affect change. He stated that the Statewide Homeless Council is worried about many areas, such as the proposed reimbursement change for General Assistance. Bob stated that the proposed change is to eliminate the 90% reimbursement. Currently all towns get at least 50% reimbursement; however, when towns meet the threshold they're moved into the 90% reimbursement category. Very few towns meet the threshold to qualify for 90% reimbursement, but Portland does and would lose \$1.2 million for the current year, and FY 11 would be closer to \$1.4 million due to increased expenditures in GA. Municipalities *may* presume responsibility for homeless people, as Portland does, so this loss would be devastating. Cullen mentioned that we are already see losses due to other changes, such as the change to Targeted Case Management (TCM), and that this would be a devastating blow. Cullen stated \$900,000 goes into the Oxford Street Shelter for Men, if the budget goes through it would be a loss of \$600,000 to the shelter. He added that there are cuts in other areas that would be destructive, such as the proposed 10% across the board cut to all MaineCare services. Over the past seven (7) years there have been strategic cuts to DHHS year after year; however this cut is not strategic. The problem with this across the board cut is that organizations that have taken on the burden of cuts are as lean as they can get, thus they putting them in danger of collapsing and falling apart. Other cuts proposed that would drastically affect services would be limiting outpatient visits to 18 outpatient visits per year and a total of 15 lab tests. Individuals with medical conditions that require more than this, such as people with bipolar disorder, diabetes and other conditions that require frequent and multiple blood tests would be greatly impacted. The proposed budget also includes extending the 45 day waiting period to obtain a MaineCare card to 90 days, affecting individuals awaiting disability determinations greatly. Cullen added that many of these cuts, with the exception of GA, turn their back on federal funding. Additionally, by cutting out these sources of care people will eventually find themselves in emergency/crisis categories down the road. Cullen asked everyone to speak to their legislatures, writing, emailing, and inviting them to visit the shelters and see the current conditions and how greatly these changes would impact the population we serve; we're at capacity, and if not for HPRP we'd be well over capacity. John asked Bob if ESAC could draft a letter and have people sign on behalf of their organizations to send to the delegation. Elizabeth asked if we'd include advising for increased revenue; Cullen stated that the Statewide Homeless Council voted unanimously to do this. Everyone voted in favor. Bob distributed GA FY 09 Year End Reports which contain information on GA client numbers, such as total number of cases and individuals granted assistance, and overall GA expenditures. Bob stated that he and Vickey have been putting together data that demonstrates how drastic the impact would be in General Assistance should the Governor's proposed budget pass. If anyone is interested in this information please email Bob. Tom

added that it may be beneficial to include that the 10% MaineCare reduction is discriminatory; it puts an unfair burden on the most vulnerable populations.

VI. *Preble Street Florence House Referral Process Update – Amanda Wells*

Amanda stated that they've started pre-applications for Florence House. She added that they are starting to receive a lot of calls from providers. Currently they're targeting people to meet the requirements for permanent housing, including chronically homeless individuals based on HUD's definition. They are looking at folks in the shelter now that have been there for a long period of time for the twenty-five (25) efficiency apartments. Florence House is scheduled to open sometime in the early spring; thus it is not an immediate option at this point. Jon added that they're getting calls from agencies because everyone needs housing. He stated that it can take a lot of time talking to people who want to refer someone who's already housed but wants to move for whatever reason. Jon asked that everyone please get the message out regarding the referral process. He stated that if you're aware of people who are chronically homeless certainly refer them; however, referring people that will not be eligible is very time consuming and by law we have to take and review all applications, lengthening the process overall. Amanda discussed the other components of Florence House, stating that it is their hope that the shelter portion will be an emergency shelter. Screening for the Safe Haven will be mostly an internal process, looking at women targeted for the efficiency apartments that didn't secure one, women with illnesses, substance abuse and other determining factors. Jon added materials are already drafted regarding the referral and application process to send out, and will be sent out within the next few weeks. He stated that applications are only available via the Preble Street Women's Shelter and/or Logan Place. Pre-applications are conducted by Avesta and Portland Housing. After the pre-application process once someone's name comes up they then complete the full application with staff, including verification of chronic homelessness as well as gathering of other necessary documentation.

VII. *Annual Point in Time Survey – January 27th – Scott Tibbitts*

The annual Point in Time (PIT) survey is on Wednesday, January 27, 2010. Bob stated that there is a Point in Time survey training, conducted by Scott Tibbitts of MaineHousing, immediately following ESAC. He encourages shelter providers to attend.

VIII. *Other Business –*

Bob mentioned that the HUD Continuum of Care had a very quick turn around this year, and stated that all of the renewals have been renewed. He stated that we are still waiting on the new 2-bed S+C approval.

Bob asked the group to move the next meeting to February 25th instead of February 18th, due to school vacation. All were in agreement.

NEXT MEETING:
Thursday, February 25th, 2010
8:30 – 10am
Refugee Services Area
190 Lancaster Street

Please contact Robert Duranleau, Health & Human Services Department, Social Services Division at 775-6315, extension 224; John Shoos, United Way at 874-1000, or Dee Clark, Preble Street at 775-0026; if you should have any agenda items for the next meeting.