



Wednesday, June 17, 2020, 9:00 a.m.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
Kevin Stiff, CoC Leadership Council Chair
Chris Johnson, Chief Executive Officer Suncoast Partnership

- I. **Welcome by Leadership Council Executive Committee Member**
- II. **Approval of April 15, 2020 Minutes**
- III. **Presentations:**
 - a. **Update on County Emergency Operation Commands COVID-19 Response and Hurricane Season Preparations/Shelter/COVID-19 Considerations**
 - i. Steve Litschauer, Manatee County EOC Chief
 - ii. Ed McCrane, Sarasota County EOC Chief
 - b. **Diversion is the First Conversation – Inconvenient Housing is Housing**
 - i. Taylor Neighbors
 - ii. Amanda Erickson
- IV. **Suncoast Partnership Updates**

HUD NOFA Update

PIT Count
- V. **General Announcements and Public Comments**
- VI. **Adjourn**

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Annual CoC Meeting

Wednesday, August 19, 2020

9:00-10:30 a.m.

Location: TBD

Up to date News, Notices and Meeting Schedules can be found on

www.suncoastpartnership.org



Continuum of Care Meeting

June 17, 2020

Location: Teleconference via Zoom

I. Welcome

Kevin Stiff welcomed the attendees at 10:32 and Lauren Davis provided a rollcall for agencies and participants on the line.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the April 15, 2020 CoC Meeting were sent out electronically and Kevin Stiff requested a motion and a second to approve the minutes. Nancy Deloach motioned to approve the minutes with Michael Richker of G.R.A.S.P providing a second. With no additional discussion, the minutes were approved unanimously.

III. Presentations

Update on County Emergency Operation Commands COVID-19 Response and Hurricane Season Preparations/Shelter/COVID-19 Considerations

Chris Johnson introduced Steve Litschauer Manatee County Emergency Operations Command (EOC) Chief. Steve Litschauer stated many of the updates provided are not specific as he and the Sarasota County EOC are in communication regularly. Steve

EOC Chief Litschauer updated the CoC with the following information related to COVID-19:

- In Manatee County, there have been daily briefings on COVID-19 response, which has been reduced to once a week;
- In Manatee County, there are specific workgroups to address community feedings and the homeless;
- Many agencies are requiring individuals to wear masks while in the building and masks are available for pickup for those in need;
- Manatee County and Sarasota have the drive-up testing site at University Town Center, as well as a walk-up site at Lincoln Park in Palmetto and Home Depot on Cortez Road. MCR Health and the Department of Health are doing various tests at sites throughout the county.
- Manatee County has tested 7% of the population.

EOC Chief Litschauer updated the CoC with the following information related to hurricane preparedness:

- Hurricane preparation is essential during this time and to know their evacuation level, strength of their home, and exit plans for those in need of evacuation. The current capacity for shelters is 35% of what is normally is due to the COVID-19 pandemic and CDC guidelines. EOC Chief Litschauer requests citizens not utilize shelter for evacuation plans, so those without homes can be sheltered.

- Manatee County has a homeless transportation plan for the homeless population to be transported from 5 different locations throughout Manatee County to a shelter with available beds.
- EOC Chief Litschauer stated shelters may protect you from the storm, but shelters cannot protect you from COVID-19. Shelters should be used as a last resort for an evacuation plan.

Steven thanked the community for the engagement in workgroups on the ongoing collaboration on both COVID-19 response as well as hurricane preparedness.

Diversion is the First Conversation – Inconvenient Housing is Housing

Chris Johnson introduced the question of, “Is what I am doing preventing and ending homelessness or promoting and extending homelessness.” With that question comes the concept of diversion being the first conversation to have with clients.

Lauren Davis expressed the notion that service providers and those having diversion conversations lead the conversation with their hearts because our brains know many clients trying to access the system, may never get a referral to the project. Before using our brains to enter data into the system, use your heart to lead the conversation in resolving their homeless situation.

Amanda Erickson and Taylor Neighbors, of the Suncoast Partnership, did a presentation on Diversion. Diversion is an essential step in the homeless response system and effective way of ending a client’s homeless situation before it ever begins.

Diversion involves in problem-solving conversations with clients attempting to access the homeless response system and engage in active listening with clients to diver them from the system. Diversion assists clients with articulating their needs to assess the crisis, for instance, “What would help resolve your housing crisis today” is a great question to ask clients during a diversion conversation. Conflict resolution by mediating with family members or roommates, connecting clients to support systems, linking clients to mainstream resources, and utilizing flexible funding are all methods of attempting diversion.

Diversion occurs at any point where a client is attempting to access the homeless crisis response system. Diversion conversations may happen multiple times with multiple agencies, so it is imperative the CoC is communicating the same message to the client regardless of which agency the client may be speaking to. Clients may be given the illusion by entering shelter or other programs, they will get a housing intervention service. This is not the case and we as a CoC need to consistently convey that message to clients.

If clients have absolutely no support system or alternative housing options, we can bring them into shelter but need to couple this with Early Intervention strategies. Early Intervention pairs case management and possible financial assistance to quickly exit that client out of shelter and into housing. As a community we should utilize diversion because it reduces the new entries into homelessness, cuts down on waitlists, reduces

demand for limited resources, allows the CoC to focus our limited resources on those who cannot otherwise resolve their own homelessness, it is cost effective, and reduces the trauma on the clients.

Amanda and Taylor conducted role-playing for the CoC to provide examples on how to divert clients from the homeless response system. The following scenarios were presented:

- A literally homeless client coming from out of state was interviewed. Taylor asked where they stayed last night and for how long. The client reported they had been staying in their car since they moved from Pennsylvania a week ago to pursue their dream of being on the Siesta Key MTV show. The client indicated they had previously been staying with their father in Pennsylvania and this was their first time on their own. Taylor made sure to ask if the client's previous living situation was safe, to which the client responded it was but they were fighting over various things. After ensuring the client was safe returning home, Taylor provided the client with the full picture of what homelessness looks like in our community. There are 367 clients on our By-Name List and over 500 who are literally homeless and not yet engaged in services and we work off the BNL to house those most in need. Taylor also informed the client job resources are also limited because of the current pandemic, so the best idea is for the client to return home and save up and make a better plan to move down to the area. The client stated, "It doesn't sound like there are services for me here," to which Taylor indicated "there are not, but I can connect with your father to get you back home safely." The diversion conversation ended with the client returning to Pennsylvania with a referral to an agency to assist with filling up the client's gas tank so they could make their way home.
- A doubled-up family who is inconveniently housed who is looking for shelter. The client indicates living conditions are tense after a year and a half of staying with a family member. After ensuring the client is safe in the home, Taylor asked additional questions regarding the tension in the family and offered solutions on how to resolve the issues. Taylor explained while it may be an inconvenient situation, the client is housed. Taylor asked the client, "what would make the situation better," to which the client responded, "She isn't sure because she has a fulltime job and is supporting the needs of her and her child." Taylor recommended the client begin contributing to the household monetarily to reduce the tension in the household. Taylor asked if talking to the other family member would assist in reducing the tension, to which the client indicated "maybe." Taylor explained to the client an outsider's perspective may help reduce the tension in the family. The diversion conversation ended with Taylor talking to the other family member who indicated the family member is watching the client's child which is a strain for them. Taylor provided the client with a referral to a daycare center to reduce this stress on the family and reduce the tension in the household. The client agreed to meet with Taylor to set up the daycare referral, budget, and set long term goals.

- The final conversation was a homeless prevention case in which the family was still housed but facing eviction and seeking a referral to service provider with rental assistance. The client indicated to Taylor the client's landlord has issued a five-day notice of eviction 2 weeks ago, but nothing has been legally filed. Taylor asked what the total amount late is, to which the client stated was \$2,400 and did not have anyone who can help her, does not have any savings, and nothing left from the stimulus check. Taylor wanted to make sure the client is safe, to which the client stated they were. Taylor explained we have homeless Prevention funding that we partner with other agencies because Suncoast Partnership does not provide direct client services. Taylor asked the client if they are comfortable speaking with the landlord and partnering agencies to keep the client housed, to which the client indicated they are okay with that. Taylor asked if the client was looking for a job or had applied for unemployment, to which the client indicated they applied for unemployment but haven't received it and is applying for jobs, but hadn't had any luck due to COVID-19 pandemic. Taylor encouraged the client to follow-up with the places the client had applied to and she would follow-up with the client regarding the homeless prevention assistance.

Taylor indicated though these are condensed versions of a diversion conversation, there are actual calls received from clients seeking assistance.

Arthur Levine asked if there are numbers for those seeking assistance due to COVID. Chris indicated we are seeing an increase and are continuing to monitor the influx. Chris stated the eviction moratorium and prevention funding is assisting in the community.

IV. Suncoast Partnership Updates

HUD NOFA

Chris provided updated the community there are no updates regarding the HUD NOFA. HUD is focusing on COVID-19 response, but Suncoast Partnership will update the community as we receive more information on this.

PIT COUNT/Dashboard

Chris shared the dashboard posted to suncoastpartnership.org/point-in-time which contains the Point-in-Time numbers broken down to a Tableau report that can be broken down in a variety of ways and includes the data from 2016 and on. Chris stated all of this information was compiled by the data entered into CSIS and will be a fantastic tool for the community when analyzing data.

Chris showed where the Community Dashboard is and where the CoC is at regarding CoC Performance Measures.

System Capacity and Flow

Chris displayed the services from January to May to display the overall reduction in services caused by COVID-19 pandemic. Overall there is a decrease of 48% of total clients served, decrease of 47% for services provided, decrease of 55% of new clients, decrease of 48% in



coordinated entry intakes, decrease of 28% in permanent housing exits, and other key elements in the system capacity and flow.

The Suncoast Partnership will continue to monitor the flow of the system to evaluate the data to determine if there are unmet needs of the community.

Tracking COVID-19 Impact

There are two new questions in CSIS entry/exit assessments that ask, “Are you at-risk of homelessness or currently experiencing homelessness due to COVID-19,” and, “If yes, why?” Any user who is accessing CSIS and has these questions on their assessment or interims needs to be asking these questions. Chris encouraged users to use these questions because this will be the only place in CSIS we can use to get a pulse on COVID-19’s affect on our community’s homelessness.

Jennifer Fagenbaum of Family Promise South Sarasota County asked if there are clients over the last month or two entered into project, if they should go back and answer these questions. Chris stated yes and thank you for going back and doing this. He encouraged all agencies to ask these questions going forward and if possible, go back an answer them as well.

V. General Announcement and Public Comments

Kevin asked the CoC for any updates or announcements.

Scott Eller announced C.A.S.L. was awarded another permanent supportive housing (PSH) project in Charlotte County to build an additional 84 units for those literally homeless clients in need of PSH. Scott indicated they have been working with the HOT team closely to connect clients to case managers quickly, and although a client recently passed away, that client was housed when he passed and did not pass away literally homeless on the streets.

Lauren Davis announced the Florida Housing Coalition’s training regarding ESG CARES funding hosted by Susan Pourciau. Lauren recommended any agencies receiving these funds attend this training.

VI. Adjourn

Kevin adjourned the meeting at 10:09 a.m.