

Region V Systems
Promoting Comprehensive Partnerships in Behavioral Health

HOUSING STEERING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

July 21, 2006
1645 'N' Street, Suite A
Lincoln, NE
10:00 a.m.

Present: Dennis Hoffman, CenterPointe; Sam Ridge, CMHCLC Independent Living; Jay White, CTP/Heather; Mark Yoakum, Consumer; John Turner and Marti Rabe, Region V

1. Welcome / Introductions / Minutes

No introductions were necessary.

Turner welcomed those in attendance and commented that he had been in his current position for nearly a year. He also commented on the usefulness of the Housing Steering Committee throughout the process of getting the Rental Assistance Program to its current level, and how it will continue to help in the future.

2. Specific Case / Other Discussions

- Turner was asked whether he continues to seek landlords. He commented that he is especially interested in getting more landlords in rural areas.
- Turner remarked about the value of getting input from other landlords regarding repairs and other issues.
- When asked if he has received much feedback regarding his clientele, Turner remarked that most landlords are willing to work with Rental Assistance because they know they have a contact person if problems arise.
- Compulsive decision-making has created problems—a client had decided she wanted to move out. The client was told that she was not eligible for another apartment until her first unit was rented, and she eventually moved back in there. Turner felt that helped to keep the RAP-landlord relationship intact.
- Another client had sold the landlord's window air conditioner. The landlord called Turner instead of the police, and the landlord is willing to continue to work with the client. Turner emphasized that he would like to see the client realize his error and is trying to be responsive to the treatment team, but he is hesitant to have a set policy about how to handle these sorts of things. Clients need to have a sense of responsibility and accountability for their behaviors.
- Turner noted that clients are required to have authorized behavioral health services, and he has found that it is best that clients have case management and med management as needed. He has chosen to leave that sort of decision-making regarding services up to the treatment team.
- When asked whether Turner could recommend services, he commented that he is trying to follow guidelines that allow for housing choice and trying not to impose "house rules" on clients.
- Ridge commented that the clients who succeed tend to be those clients who have something to do, with activities that keep them involved.
- Turner noted that he feels it is important for him to back out of the service component of RAP. This approach seems to work well with case managers.

3. System Issues

LB40A Update and Rural RFP:

- CenterPointe has applied for a HUD 811 grant for new construction of a 10-unit facility, as well as a Shelter Plus grant, which would allow them to buy the current facility of Fresh Start. Both of these projects are based on partnerships with other entities and the Region, and both projects have a good chance of being funded.
- Turned reported that Region VI is moving ahead with the RFQ process for their LB40A funds. Announcements for funding will be made by August 23, following a review process by their BHAC and Board.
- Region V is moving toward RFPing the remaining \$125,000 to be used for rural areas. Turner also commented regarding a notice for Rural Community Development Initiative Housing funds and suggested that some collaboration with this entity may be possible.
- Ridge mentioned the Southeast Development Corporation as a resource for rural communities. This group collaborates with businesses and banks and is involved in getting a lot of projects going, including senior housing.
- Nebraska Housing Developers was identified as a useful resource as well.

RentWise:

- Some comments regarding RentWise were made during the previous discussions. RentWise emphasizes what it's like when you sign a lease and the responsibilities a client needs understanding of.
- There was discussion regarding having a "club" or meeting where clients could support one another, work on independent living skills, and learn more about RentWise.
- When asked whether RentWise would be "mandatory" for RAP clients, Turner commented that currently it is strongly encouraged, but not mandatory. Turner commented that he is still working on the process of implementing RentWise. Turner would like to work together with other trainers, each focusing on their particular areas of interest or strength.
- White commented that he would like to see a system with a consistent, ongoing training program. He feels that it should be an expectation that clients would take the RentWise training as they begin to plan for transitioning to RAP. He feels it is important to begin to introduce the idea early and stress the positive affect it will have on the client's ability to function well once the transition occurs.
- There was discussion regarding whether or not the LRC would be willing to teach RentWise. White commented that, in most cases, clients are discharged from LRC into a more structured environment. For clients being discharged to PIER, CenterPointe adult res or day rehab, the Midtown Center, or the Heather, the training would be appropriate.
- White indicated that the Heather would be a good place for RentWise trainings to take place. He felt that classes of ten or less would be optimal.

Website Updates and Electronic Application:

- The website for rental housing is www.housing.ne.gov. Turner demonstrated how to do a housing search on the website.
- He also noted that the application is being formatted as an electronic version and will be available on Region V's website soon. He demonstrated how that document can be completed electronically.

4. Utilization

- Turner distributed documentation regarding program utilization and reviewed the data of July 21, 2006. He noted that the total number of vouchers is 83 for the upcoming fiscal year.
- Turner commented that each voucher is valued at \$5,000, and any unused funds for an individual client are then available for flex funds. This allows dollars to be re-circulated. He also noted that agencies should tap into the rental assistance flex funds, when appropriate, before using their own

flex funds or other community resources. The criteria for flex fund eligibility are the same as the criteria for rental assistance.

- Turner commented that applications are “flooding in” with an increase in calls from BVMH. Turner clarified the priorities, and noted that priority 1 will always take precedence over priority 2. Johnson, Regional Administrator at Region V, has stipulated that he would like to see 30 percent of the vouchers used for rural applicants. To date 39 people have received rental assistance funds.
- Turner noted that some rural areas do not have Section 8 housing available, and in those cases it may be necessary to continue rental assistance for a longer period of time. The rural vouchers may tend to get tied up for this reason.
- Turner commented that it will be important to begin to bridge clients to Section 8 as soon as possible so that there will not be a long wait list. There are currently several clients in the process of bridging.
- When asked about funding available in coming fiscal years, Turner noted that his understanding is that the allocation will be annual.
- The fiscal department at Region V will be helping to monitor when a client is getting near the \$5,000 cap for rental assistance. Turner will ask the state what the options are if it is not possible to bridge a client, and they are near the \$5,000 cap.
- White commented that, with the changes at LRC, we will no doubt see a larger pool of clients being referred for rental assistance.

5. Other Business

The Housing and Homeless Conference will be held August 14 and 15 in Kearney. It is still possible to register.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held at Region V Systems on Friday, August 18, 10:00 a.m. The Steering Committee continues to meet on the third Friday of the month.