

Region V Systems
Promoting Comprehensive Partnerships in Behavioral Health

HOUSING STEERING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

June 16, 2006
1645 'N' Street, Suite A
Lincoln, NE
10:00 a.m.

Present: Carol Murphy, Crete Housing Authority; Julie Hippen, Lutheran Family Services; Jay White, CTP/Heather; Seanna Collins, Lincoln Housing Authority; Jim Lohmeyer, Lutheran Family Services/Bridge; Sam Ridge, CMHCLC Independent Living; Jean Chicoine, HHS/NHAP; Wendy Andorf, CMHC; John Turner and Marti Rabe, Region V Systems

1. Welcome / Introductions / Minutes

Turner welcomed everyone in attendance and introductions were made.

2. Specific Case Discussions

- Turner shared some challenges he has encountered getting and keeping clients housed. One client had been prepared to move, left the Region to gather personal belongings, and did not return. Another client vacated soon after moving in. In both cases, Turner was able to house other clients in those apartments.
- Discussion followed about the importance of having a contract and a lease signed and on file before payment is made.
- It was emphasized that it is important to read leases to ensure that specific criteria necessary is included and that no other elements are included that should not be (i.e. who is responsible for what utilities, etc.). It was also noted that it is not necessary to issue a new lease after 12 months.
- The importance of clients knowing what the lease says was emphasized. Clients also need to know that they have the right and the ability to negotiate elements of the lease.
- Clients need to know that they have the right to give notice (14-30) if a landlord violates terms of the lease.
- One landlord has been able to reduce damage to his property by videotaping each apartment at the time it is rented and having the tenant sign off on the condition of the apartment before moving in.

3. System Issues

LB40 A Status: Turner briefly discussed the history of these funds. After an initial proposal was questioned, focus groups were formed to determine priorities for housing. Those focus groups consistently showed that clients want transitional supportive housing and did not want large units. CenterPointe then brought to the table two proposals which fit the criteria: a HUD 811 grant and a Shelter Plus Care grant. The BHAC and RGB have approved these projects, contingent on CenterPointe getting the grants. In the event both of these proposals move forward, the remaining \$107,000 will be RFPd in an effort to provide housing options for rural areas.

06-07 Changes: Turner distributed copies of the new application and explained changes. The most significant change is under priority 2 where “at risk” behavior is clearly defined. The process of housing someone determined to be at risk will be simplified because a community support worker can indicate that criteria on the application and will no longer need to present a separate document.

Another change is that, starting in July, 75 percent of the vouchers will be available for priority 2. Turner commented that providers could begin using the new application. Turner noted that priority 1 will always take precedence over priority 2 clients, but this larger number of vouchers should allow clients to be housed sooner. Turner also indicated that it was his hope that it will be easier to bridge people over sooner and re-use the voucher.

Housing Flex Funds were approved for 2006-2007. Copies of the "Request for Regional Housing Flex Funds" were distributed. Turner explained that these funds can be used for a variety of one-time costs including security deposit, first month's rent, moving costs, household needs, utility deposits, etc.

The issue of back debt was discussed. The guidelines state that past-due debt may be paid, which, "if paid, allows the consumer to receive Section 8 and/or other local housing authority services." Before such funds could be issued, the client must show that other avenues had been explored, such as LAP, HHS, etc.

RentWise Update: Turner reported that over 75 people attended the Rally. There was representation from county extensions and from across the state. There were informative speakers on a number of topics. The need for and importance of this information being conveyed to consumers was presented. As this information is taught to consumers it will help community support workers assess the readiness of clients to seek permanent housing options.

The process will also be helpful for clients who are bridging, coming out of an institution, and haven't dealt with neighbors or landlords for a time. More mainstream clients would benefit from this information as well, as they may not know how to budget, etc.

The next step in the RentWise process is for trainers to begin teaching classes. The team approach to training will be used. Hippen suggested that a calendar be created so everyone would know when trainings are scheduled. Trainers will implement the trainings in a number of ways including a six-week class and one-on-one training with consumers.

The participant packets cost \$5, and scholarships are being sought. The web site can be updated to indicate whether or not a landlord would accept a Rent Wise training certificate when considering housing a client.

4. Utilization

Turner distributed his current database and discussed utilization. The program has received 52 applications to date, and 30 contracts have been signed with landlords.

Turner commented that a letter had been send to all counties indicating that this program is available and should be accessed before counties allocate GA funds.

5. Other Business

On August 1 LHA will begin to use their 20 vouchers for clients with a disability. They are considering hosting a housing fair August 1, where representatives from a number of agencies would be available to address the various housing barriers these clients face. Prior to this time, LHA is "cleaning up" their waiting list in an effort to verify disabilities.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held at Region V Systems on Friday, July 21, 10:00 a.m. The Steering Committee continues to meet on the third Friday of the month.