



**State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
Department of Administration
Rhode Island Housing Resources Commission Continuum of Care Board
(401) 222-7901**

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 19, 2016
9:00 a.m.

Harrington Hall
Pastore Complex
Cranston, RI

Attending: Michelle Brophy, Nancy Paradee, Eric Hirsch, Diana Burdett, Jim Ryczek, John McDonough, Michelle Wilcox,

Also Attending: Jessica Mowry, Michael Tondra, Mary Bray, Karen Flora, Russell Partridge, Jean Johnson, Jennifer Barrera, Carol Ventura, Maryrose Mensah, Pheamo Witcher

The meeting was called to order at 11:10 a.m. by Chairperson Michelle Brophy. Michelle Brophy opened the meeting with a welcome and introductions.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chairperson Michelle Brophy.

Michelle Brophy opened the meeting with a welcome and introduction.

The meeting commenced with a discussion of all rental assistance programs and challenges around access and utilization.

Jim Ryczek cited a few of those reasons as: an influx of people into the shelter system; the closing of tent cities in Providence; and, Harrington Hall occupancy restriction of 112 individuals. He stated there is a good deal of people entering the system and that many of these individuals should be diverted to other programs. He recommended evaluating the chronically homeless wait list and the options available to move them to housing.

There was a discussion of specific obstacles in obtaining housing there were 8 specific items:

- Policies – it is hard for people to comply with requirements for housing

- Lack of case management capacity to follow client s for a 6 moth to 1 year time period
- Hurdles in obtaining necessary documentation
- SOAR coordinators no longer funded/SSI applications being rejected
- Lack of clarity of eligibility for housing programs
- Lack of housing for registered sex offenders and those with criminal backgrounds
- Transportation
- Recovery from substance abuse

Diana Burdett stated that some subsidies are too specific and there is difficulty in finding a unit once a client was approved for a subsidy. Michelle Brophy spoke more on the specifics of vouchers and provided an example of an impediment being the SHP minimum \$50 rent and that individuals with \$0 income lack the resources to provide the tenant share of rent. She expressed concern that the state rental program seems to impose the same restrictions as federal rental programs which was not the intent of the program. She stated that the funding needed to be flexible and inquired about targeting of the state rental funds and the rules and regulations for the program.

Mike Tondra provided an overview of the state rental program explaining that it is a flexible pool of funds but that there are standards and accountability. The funds are generally modeled after federal programs but have been adjusted as the program evolved. There is no minimum tenant rent requirement. The program was designed to provide temporary assistance and to move households to permanent housing. Mike Tondra indicated that there is opportunity to make changes to the program but that regulations once established require a protracted period to modify.

Michelle Brophy asked what policies and/or priorities are in the state application. Mike Tondra will distribute the application to the group. She asked if agencies receiving the state rental program funding are required to pull from the chronically homeless waitlist. It was indicated that the chronically homeless waitlist was not being used for the program.

There was a discussion around a lack of universal application process and owners/properties managers lease from each site's waitlist instead of leasing to individuals on the universal list. It was recommended that a meeting be conducted with funders to discuss compliance development of a single application for all assisted housing. There is an eligibility module in HMIS that links units with clients and the Housing Locator managed by Rhode Island Housing is an additional resource which lists privately owned and subsidized units for rent.

Carol Ventura reported that Rhode Island Housing is reviewing changes to the Housing Locator and that a new module is available that provides more robust tracking. Rhode Island Housing has housing choice vouchers and a new award of 811 vouchers which will need to be utilized in conjunction with community services. In addition, Rhode Island Housing will be reviewing its RoadHome Program which is an opportunity for tailoring the program to meet gaps in the rental system. Carol Ventura further reported that the rental market in Rhode Island is tightening and that shortly market rents will exceed the voucher payment standard which will severely impede the utilization of any vouchers.

Jim Ryczek stated that there needed to be a summary of what rental resources are available. The group supported the creation of a working group of CoC established to develop a matrix of rental programs and services.

Barriers to utilizing the universal waitlist was discussed. Michelle Wilcox stated that the state rental assistance program was very successful and hundreds of individuals and families had been served.

Michelle Brophy raised the possibility of using students to help clients fill out housing applications. Jim Ryczek stated that RICH has students to provide this assistance and that the program could be expanded.

Mike Tondra reported that the HRC will shortly release the RFP for the state rental assistance program. Comments on how to improve or modify the program should be provided to Mike Tondra so that they can be considered for incorporation.

There was a discussion around case management and obtaining mandatory documents for housing. Also discussed, how agencies outside of the four participating in the state rental assistance program can secure funding for their clients.

There was a discussion around what services the 20% provider fee for the state rental program provided for. Michelle Wilcox and Michael Tondra explained the fee included the case management of individuals housed for 6-9 months after move in and doesn't cover the costs of the agencies to conduct these services. Limiting the number of agencies participating in the program makes it financially viable for agencies to participate.

Carol Ventura volunteered to begin framing the rental subsidy matrix and a working group will be created to assist. Michelle asked the group to send referrals for the work group to her by Friday, January 22, 2016.

Next steps:

Develop matrix. Review of rental subsidy programs. Clarify Housing First definition. Develop a system for deploying students to assist agencies and their clients in completing housing applications.

Motion was made by Jim Ryczek, seconded by Diana Burdett and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 10:15.

Respectfully submitted,

Maryrose Mensah
Rhode Island Housing