

**Philadelphia Continuum of Care (CoC) Board  
Meeting Minutes**

Date: Monday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Time: 3:30 – 5:30pm  
Location: Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Boulevard, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 1450

**Voting Members in Attendance:**

Persons with Lived Experience:

Sheila Armstrong  
Emmalee Smith

Community Stakeholders:

Susan Sherman Independence Foundation

Nonprofit Homeless Housing Providers:

Zachary Weiss Action Wellness  
John Ducoff Covenant House PA  
Brandon Fields Impact Services Corporation

Government Agencies:

Joyce Sacco, Michele Wexler Dept of Behavioral Health & Intellectual disAbility Serv  
Sharee Heaven, Gary Tumolo Division of Housing & Community Development  
Katrina Pratt-Roebuck Office of Community Empowerment & Opportunity  
Stephanie Pastula Philadelphia Housing Authority  
Casey McCollum US Department of Veterans Affairs

**Non-Voting Members in Attendance:**

Vanessa Tercero CoC Advisory Committee  
Elizabeth Hersh Office of Homeless Services  
Donald Jackson Young Adult Leadership Committee

**Office of Homeless Services (OHS) Staff in Attendance:**

Roberta Cancellier Leticia Devonish  
Tara Gaudin David Holloman  
Michele Mangan Sara Pagni  
Gina Ruggieri Jessica Sones  
Leah Staub Lauren Whitleigh

**Voting Members Absent:**

Persons with Lived Experience:

Katherine Champlin  
Broderick Green

Community Stakeholders:

Traci Nesmith Resources for Human Development

Nonprofit Homeless Housing Providers:

Rob Harrison Stenton Family Manor

**Background Materials:** The following background materials were sent to Committee members on Tuesday, November 7, 2017: the meeting agenda; September 11th Meeting Minutes; Philadelphia CoC *Standards for Providing Assistance under the Continuum of Care and Emergency Solutions Grant Programs*; Philadelphia CoC *Nondiscrimination Policy*; Summary of 2018 Point-in-Time Count Plans; *Philadelphia 2017 Point-in-Time Count Report*; a fact sheet about the Annual Homeless Assessment Report compiled by HUD from data submitted by Continuums of Care; a fact sheet on Philadelphia's Coordinated Entry & Assessment-Based Housing Referral System (CEA-BHRS); an update on the Strategic Planning Process; a compilation of system updates, including a brief report from the HMIS Subcommittee, a notice of application by the Office of Homeless Services for State Emergency Solutions Grant funds, notice of the City's RFP for public restroom and hygiene facilities programs, a brief bio of new Deputy for Policy, Planning, and Performance Beth Gonzales, and other items of potential interest. The two proposed policies had cover pages to orient Board Members to the context in which they were being proposed for approval. The materials were accompanied by a note that the meeting would use a consent agenda, meaning that the Board would have an approval vote *without discussion*, unless any Board member wished to discuss questions or concerns about any of the items up for a vote (Meeting Minutes, Written Standards, Nondiscrimination Policy, Point-in-Time Count Methodology as detailed in Background Materials).

**Materials Distributed at Meeting:** Revised meeting agenda; an update on the Strategic Planning Process, including the rosters of related committees; a possible discussion guide focused on the CEA-BHRS guiding principles; an overview of the draft Focus Group Framework, including framing and possible discussion questions; a fact sheet on the Annual Homeless Assessment Report and preliminary numbers from the draft submitted to HUD to illustrate data quality issues; a CEA-BHRS fact sheet.

**Welcome and Introductions:** Liz Hersh (Board co-Chair) began the meeting at 3:36 pm with a welcome and introductions.

**Approval of consent agenda—September 11 Meeting Minutes, Written Standards, Nondiscrimination Policy, Planned Point-in-Time Count Methodology (VOTE):** John Ducoff, CoC Board co-Chair, reiterated that he had suggested that in order to allow focus the meeting time on strategic planning efforts going forward rather than on reviewing the contents of materials sent in advance, we should use a consent agenda, expecting Board members to have read the relevant materials and to bring their questions and concerns, if any. Gary Tumolo, Division of Housing & Community Development, made a motion to accept the consent agenda, including:

- September 11 Meeting Minutes
- Philadelphia CoC Standards for Providing Assistance under the Continuum of Care and Emergency Solutions Grant Programs (“Written Standards”)
- Philadelphia CoC Nondiscrimination Policy
- Point-in-Time Count Methodology

John Ducoff seconded the motion.

After opening the floor for requests for discussion, OHS Staff was asked to review the [PIT Count](#) methodology plans. Lauren Whitleigh, Director of CoC Planning, highlighted the timing of the general count being returned to midnight to 4am, after a later Count in 2017. Additionally, she shared the team's plans to increase survey response rates by getting more tablets for volunteers to use and potentially administering surveys the following day in Kensington, West Philly, and at Project HOME.

A question was raised about how the survey data is used. Its primary use is to provide information to HUD about certain characteristics of the people being counted. The questions include information about chronicity and various subpopulations of need (serious mental illness, addiction, domestic violence). Last year, with the later time, we had a 31% response rate, up from 24% the year before. Regarding the question of incentives, OHS staff shared that we give each person who completes the survey a \$5 gift card and teams have some hygiene kits to distribute in their zones.

In response to a question about whether we ask what would get them to come inside, Liz Hersh, Director of Office of Homeless Services, referenced the [October 2016 Outreach Surveys](#) of 159 people on the street and the consistent finding that people want housing, not shelter.

Following this discussion, the Board unanimously approved the four items on the consent agenda.

**Strategic Planning:** Liz Hersh began a review of the Strategic Planning work to date. The last 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness was written in 2005; the Office of Homeless Services has a draft report on the progress during the time since that plan was put in place. One of the most dramatic findings is that the plan set a goal of increasing the supply of Permanent Supportive Housing and Philadelphia's supply has increased 98% since that goal was set.

Since it has been over 10 years since the 10-Year Plan was initiated, Homeless Services convened a Steering Committee, including CoC Board members, for a new strategic planning process. The Steering Committee interviewed the two consultants selected by an internal panel of reviewers and awarded the contract to CSH (Corporation for Supportive Housing). Some reasons were: their inclusive process, which offers multiple opportunities for people to have a say, and their focus on quantifying units needed and the funding strategy to fill that gap.

Lauren Whitleigh explained that we currently have a stakeholder subcommittee working on those unit projections and another for Charrette Planning. The Charrette will be a full-day event for a small group. The subcommittee is working on selecting the appropriate people to invite to that event, but there will be other ways to participate, including a broad range of focus groups. Charrette participants will help establish the framework for the plan, with the input gathered from focus groups with the Young Adult Leadership Committee, leaders in the immigrant and refugee community, homeless service providers, people with lived experience, etc. The goal is that all of this input will be boiled down into a brief, concise product that clearly identifies priorities and in which stakeholders can see their role.

John Ducoff asked about the data analysis and whether that only considers data in our community HMIS or whether it will incorporate data from those with separate systems. Lauren Whitleigh invited John to share Covenant House data with the subcommittee to improve the estimates. Basically, the analysis is using specific assumptions to come up with projections of the number of households in need who would best be served by Permanent Supportive Housing, Prevention assistance, or Rapid Rehousing assistance. Then we will sit down with stakeholders to discuss what our inventory includes and what is missing.

The Charrette will involve both quantitative and qualitative data. The subcommittees are working on determining how to present information to stakeholders, who will all be prepared in advance. The numbers are currently based on annualized PIT data, augmented by HMIS to estimate turnover, location prior to enrollment. The next phase will be to talk to people about whether the numbers make sense.

Liz noted that this is the essence of the process – it's our plan, so it has to make sense to us.

Katrina Roebuck, Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment & Opportunity, asked why the plan would be for five years, which is because it is enough time to accomplish things but not too much to have a sense of urgency.

The plan will support the framework for ending youth homelessness already established by Philly Homes 4 Youth. It will not increase our supply of temporary housing.

As additional context, Liz Hersh noted that the Division of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) is developing a Housing Plan for the City, into which our plan will fit. Gary Tumolo explained the DHCD plan is required by the charter change that reorganized the agencies that make up the City Department of Planning and Development. DHCD coordinates affordable housing and homeless housing. We need to be clear that Homeless Services does not control the supply of affordable housing and also need to incorporate information available in the Assessment of Fair Housing and other plans and reports. This is part of fostering cross-systems engagement.

Susan Sherman, Independence Foundation, expressed serious concerns about who would be leading focus groups, whether they would be recorded and transcribed, etc. Without these types of formality, she did not think that they would be effective for data collection, as we would just confirm our own biases if we decided to do it in-house. We will call them input sessions instead of focus groups. Susan warned about the value of quantity vs. quality and her belief that it was unrealistic to gather all of this information by December 19th. The group discussed the need to prioritize input sessions.

Lauren Whitleigh explained that the main themes on which the Charrette would focus would come out of the input sessions and other discussions in preparation for the event. Susan reiterated that an outsider needs to identify the themes to avoid bias. Sheila Armstrong asked if CSH was not that outsider.

The group discussed the framework for focus groups included in their printed materials. A question was raised about whether we need to ask about driving forces when we know what they are (e.g., shift to coordinated entry) and what the value of these questions is. Leah Staub noted that though we know that, the biggest theme that came out of the Advisory Committee was that providers need training and support for making the shifts that we are asking for.

Lauren Whitleigh reframed the planning process. We know the direction in which we are headed and what driving forces will be a part of this plan. We want to hear feedback and get buy in to a community-wide vision/mission. We want to hear about challenges people are encountering on the road on which we are already headed. We want to facilitate their being a part of what is happening.

We know that our system needs more permanent housing. We can be transparent about that while still generating conversation about how to develop resources to create opportunities. The timeline is aggressive so that we have time built in to analyze all of the input. We know our framework – we want input on how to do a better job at implementing that framework – what is getting in the way, what would be more helpful. December 19<sup>th</sup> is not a hard stop for gathering feedback.

Lauren asked if there were other constituencies that we should be including in the process. Sheila Armstrong suggested the faith-based community.

Stephanie Pastula, Philadelphia Housing Authority, noted that during the Choice Neighborhoods process, someone created a whole website on Squarespace with a calendar of meetings with different groups and their agendas, etc. and suggested that we have some kind of web presence to which people could go for information about what is going on.

Katrina Roebuck described the informational first session of the Eviction Task Force, which aimed to get members on the same page about what the status quo is and what the group is trying to do. She suggested that similarly, some focus groups will need to be educated about the big picture – so much so that we could spend all our time on that. We should share information about best practices across the country. This is an opportunity to get input on key indicators of success.

Susan Sherman suggested that we push the Charrette back, as she does not believe we need as much time on the back end to develop the plan.

Liz Hersh stated that the Blueprint Plan was a good plan, but what she learned from that experience is that the plan needs to have the seeds of implementation built in, or it will fail. We are using input to build a structure that can move us forward.

**Reports: HMIS Subcommittee:** Leah Staub, CoC Board Program Manager, gave a report on the November 1st HMIS Subcommittee meeting and encouraged Board members to join future meetings. The Subcommittee reviewed the draft Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) Data Summary, discussing the need to improve quality of data and increase the percentage of system beds participating in HMIS. In a nutshell, we are doing better than we were, but we need to continue to improve. The Homeless Services Performance Management and HMIS Units are working to support data quality improvement and the Subcommittee will continue discussing data quality for non-OHS-contracted programs. John Ducoff asked what efforts focused on making providers participate in HMIS and “punish” those who are not. Liz Hersh stated that we are working with providers to find win-win situations.

**Report: Eviction Task Force:** Katrina Roebuck reported on the 27-member Eviction Task Force appointed by Mayor Kenney in October, co-chaired by Liz Hersh of Homeless Services and Mitch Little of the Office of Community Empowerment & Opportunity (CEO). The Task Force appointees include City Administration, nonprofits, landlords, legal services, policy advocates, and people with lived experience, who will work together in monthly meetings over a nine-month period, all of which are open to stakeholders.

Philadelphia has a similar number of evictions as New York City, despite being only one-fifth of the size. The Task Force will address processes and outcomes for individuals who experience an eviction, whether formal or informal and will analyze the causes, scale, and impact of evictions in Philadelphia. They will review best practices and determine local resource gaps, and support the development and implementation of a comprehensive eviction prevention plan. A final report will detail actionable recommendations to the Mayor and Council for eviction prevention for legislative and administrative policy and programming, which may include making processes easier to navigate, and will include identification of funding to support the recommended efforts.

The first meeting, in October, aimed to [give everyone a baseline understanding](#) of the players and the landscape. The second meeting will address issues related to landlords, Licensing & Inspections, and Fair Housing, while the third will focus on community-based supports.

The Task Force will conduct focus groups with specific populations. Bruce Johnson, OHS Director of Prevention, Diversion, and Intake, is helping with groups for people with lived experience; CEO is gathering landlords; and the HHS office is working with municipal courts.

The group will be integrating journey mapping into their report to help identify nuanced, specific recommendations.

The Managing Directors Office had an RFP open for \$500,000 for eviction prevention services, in addition to continued resources.

**Report: Voices of Youth Count:** Jessica Sones, OHS Youth System Coordinator, and Donald Jackson, representing the Young Adult Leadership Committee (YALC), reported to the Board on the Voices of Youth Count Report (VOYC) study conducted by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago to provide a broad and deep understanding of youth who are homeless or unstably housed, in advance of the report's release on November 15<sup>th</sup>.

This was a National Prevalence Study, using Gallup polling methodology to determine national prevalence estimates of youth homelessness & housing instability (ages 13-25). Philadelphia was one of twenty-two cities selected in the Summer of 2016 to be further examined with a [Youth Count, Brief Youth Surveys, and Provider Surveys](#). The study introduced a new methodology for point-in-time counts of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness (which we have continued after the study): young adults with experience with homelessness survey other young people about their experiences with homelessness. This methodology has increased accuracy of our count and provided a more thorough picture of youth homelessness. In five cities (including Philadelphia), researchers conducted [in-depth interviews](#) with youth who had experienced homelessness or housing instability.

In total, 569 Philadelphia homeless & unstably housed youth ages 13 to 25 were identified on the night of the August 2016 Youth Count, 300 from the street count (263 of whom participated in the brief survey) and 269 via HMIS data from their shelter/transitional housing provider. The Brief Surveys showed that LGBTQ youth, youth with prior system involvement (foster care, juvenile justice or criminal justice) and African American youth are over-represented within the population of youth experiencing homelessness. Latino and Asian youth were not identified as over-represented, but this likely reflects a gap in our outreach. There were many Latino or Asian-focused service providers involved in this count; they are becoming more involved with the upcoming January Youth Count.

Some of the most striking findings from the In-Depth Interviews about trajectories and experiences of homelessness with 39 young people from Philadelphia include:

- 75% of youth reported that their homelessness began between ages 13-18
- In Philadelphia, 97% of youth described some form of couch surfing while unstably housed.
- Youth often had to engage in risky behaviors while couch surfing in order to remain housed, including survival sex. John Ducoff mentioned that the [Covenant House PA survey with Penn](#) showed that 1 in 5 met the definition of having experienced human trafficking.

Other themes include:

- Youth homelessness is a hidden issue and couch surfing is very prevalent in our community.
- Schools play a crucial role in assessing and identifying youth age 13-18 at risk of and experiencing homelessness who might otherwise be overlooked.
- Youth with prior system involvement (child welfare, juvenile justice or criminal justice) are at increased risk for homelessness.
- There is a need for a youth-friendly continuum of housing & services for young people experiencing homelessness. Young people need both housing & services to be successful and exit homelessness.
- There is a need for family-based interventions for youth at risk of and experiencing homelessness. Many youth may have been able to stay at home, but needed support to make it work.

Locally, the YALC, Philly Homes 4 Youth, OHS, and others plan to use the release of VOYC to educate stakeholders and raise awareness about youth homelessness, and to work with other stakeholders to co-create solutions and expand resources with non-traditional approaches.

Board members were invited to the [Forum on Youth Homelessness](#) on November 28<sup>th</sup> and the November 16<sup>th</sup> Philadelphia Foundation [convening](#) on LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness.

OHS Director of External Affairs Dave Holloman noted challenges with validation of data about specific needs when data systems can't talk to each other. John Ducoff asserted that we know that for years, the PIT was a gross undercount. In 2014, we counted something like 3 youth on the street. Also, we can't expect reliable data from strangers asking invasive questions. Jessica Sones pointed to the VOYC methodology of having youth survey youth as an attempt to address this concern. Lauren Whiteleigh shared that we have built into this year's PIT Count budget money for stipends for 50 people with lived experience to assist with the process, expanding the application of VOYC methodology.

**Report: Young Adult Leadership Committee:** Donald Jackson reported that the committee is defining its direction for next action steps.

**Report: Winter Initiative:** Liz Hersh reported that the Office of Homeless Services has contracts in place for 423 Winter Initiative beds, which started coming online on November 1<sup>st</sup>. During our first Code Blue (November 10-12), 70 beds had already been made available.

**Report: CEA-BHRS:** Sara Pagni, OHS Senior Program Manager for Coordinated Entry & Special Projects, reminded the Board that HUD has required all communities to establish a Coordinated Entry process, which we call the Coordinated Entry & Assessment-Based Housing Referral System (CEA-BHRS) locally. The goal is to streamline and standardize:

- Access;
- Assessment;
- Prioritization; and
- Referral to housing.

Currently, there are many ways to access housing resources, including many side doors, which use varied assessments to determine eligibility. By unifying these processes, we hope to improve our system through simplification.

The deadline to meet 55 Coordinated Entry requirements is January 23, 2018. These are person-centered requirements, taking the burden off of the person experiencing onto the system, which may mean onto the providers. We want to provide fair and equitable access in a manner that is easier for participants.

Initial CEA-BHRS implementation will focus on meeting these HUD requirements. We are thinking of this as CEA-BHRS 1.0 and plan to implement continuous improvement strategies, asking for feedback about areas for improvement.

Sara has drafted CEA-BHRS Policies & Procedures, which aim to make the process maximally standardized and transparent. The draft was disseminated to stakeholders for comments twice during the week of November 6th, with responses due November 14<sup>th</sup>, though Sara will extend the deadline to the 16<sup>th</sup> for the Board. Once comments are collected, they will be brought to the internal Homeless Services group and the workgroup that includes providers and partners for review, revision, and updates.

The Board will be asked to vote to approve the Policies & Procedures in early-mid December, so that providers can be trained and our vendor can finalize configuration of the data management system within HMIS.

**Next Board meetings:** March 12, June 11

**Adjourn:** Sheila Armstrong moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Joyce Sacco and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 5:36 pm.