

Vermont Council on Homelessness  
Wednesday, October 21, 2015, 2:00 – 4:00  
AHS Hartford District Office  
118 Prospect Street, White River Junction

## **Minutes**

**Present:** Connie Snow (W&WHT), Polly Nichol (VHCB), Richard Williams (VSHA), Beth Meyer (AOE), Sarah Phillips (OEO), Deborah Hall (HPC), Shaun Gilpin (DHCD), Rich McInerney, SSHP), Margaret Bozik (CHT), Erhard Mahnke (VT Affordable Housing Coalition), Renee Sarao (VAHC/VAHC), Elizabeth Whitmore (DOC), Sarah Carpenter (VFHA), Renee Weeks (Upper Valley Haven), Angus Chaney (AHS)

**Joining By Phone:** Jan Demers (CVOEO)

Angus called the meeting to order at 2:09. A quorum was present.

### **Introductions**

**Public comment:** No one present offered public comment.

### **Supportive Housing's Role in Ending Family Homelessness:**

Panel Discussion with developers, funders, service providers and others. Angus provided initial context and described discussions with CSH and local partners. Panelists summarized their connection to supportive housing; lessons learned; new opportunities they see to improve what we can offer homeless families; anticipated challenges and how to address them; and resources or expertise they can bring to a more systematized partnership model.

**Sarah Phillips (OEO) FSH Program Administrator** - Description of Family Supportive Housing Program (FSH). 91 Families are now enrolled across five districts. 60% of families participate in the Reach-Up program. One third of families entering the program with an open case with Family Services had their case favorably resolved within 12 months. Explanation of the Community of Practice. 86% still in housing. Lessons learned: 24 months is not always enough.

**Renee Weeks (Upper Valley Haven) FSH Services Provider** – The Haven has operated FSH for 15 months. The shelter has found that the program is key to *sustaining* housing. Some families served are chronically homeless. Example of advocating to access CRT supports. Addressing hoarding. Value of other community partners in addition to FSH workers. Stronger relationships with Twin Pines. Cited lack of affordable housing. Shelter Plus Care and VRS have been essential. Encountering barriers of credit and landlord history. UV Haven uses some FSH grant funding for a risk pool. FSH staff also offer to clean up

apartment if there's a problem – landlords very appreciative of that gesture. Working with South Royalton legal clinic. Focusing on partnerships with employers. Substance abuse providers are willing to communicate and collaborate but their funding mechanism does not seem to readily support strategic planning or work in the community. The Haven has children's services from 2-5 to help kids with homework.

**Sarah Carpenter (VHFA) Statewide Funder of Affordable and Supportive Housing Development** - Basis Boost for developers providing 10% of units for Supportive Housing. New Tier 1 criteria for developers setting aside 25% of units for supportive housing for the homeless. VHFA now working to determine what the required MOU should look like. VHFA supports creation of approximately 300 rental units per year. This is a combination of new construction and substantial rehabilitation. Because operational costs are between \$500 and \$600 / month, developers need rental subsidy assistance to make this work. Discussion on MOUs. Margaret suggested getting input from VA early given their experience vetting the VASH mou. Operating costs (with zero debt) are between \$500 - \$600 per month. Emphasized the difference between ongoing case management versus advocacy.

**Richard Williams (VSHA) Statewide Subsidy Provider and Owner** - VSHA administers multiple state and federal voucher programs. VASH and Family Self-Sufficiency have been successful. Described new voucher preference for Supportive Housing (110 slots). Emphasized: the need to stick with folks so we don't lose them and stressed the importance of being able to find people when a voucher becomes available; importance of timeliness of service providers; robust capacity; flexible thinking. Need to increase production; address municipal resistance to affordable housing. How do we bring the private sector back in? How do we keep private landlords who have been burned involved? Issues with new HUD-proposed FMRs. Increase funding to state rental subsidy programs. De-duplicate case management. Improve reporting. VSHA brings trust and transparency. All homeless populations need continued support; sees need to focus on families and kids.

**Connie Snow (Windsor and Windham Housing Trust) Developer and Operator of Affordable and Supportive Housing** - Windsor and Windham Housing Trust is a developer and manager of affordable rental housing in Southeastern Vermont as well as the local homeownership center. They develop housing through rehab and new construction. Emphasized the value of relationships, trust and great communication when it comes to supportive housing done in partnership with local service providers. Staff changes require constant work. Both partners need to have skin in the game. When it comes to tenant references, they need honesty not glowing recommendations. Need to know partner will stick it out. Importance of symbolic gesture of offering to help clean-up an apartment that has been damaged. Quality of case management varies – there isn't a degree. Housers can take more risk with prospective tenants if they have confidence in the quality of the case management. Need for training. Mutual goal should be that when the tenant ultimately leaves they do so with a good LL reference. Discussed Permanent Supportive Housing with case management provided on site. Challenges: timing, how does a houser commit if subsidy isn't certain? So many agencies doing case management. In Hartford, CT, one agency provides services. Knowing what case management means. Bringing in on-going training from CSH. Improving quantity of Supportive Housing in Vermont and quality of partnerships.

**Polly Nichol (VHCB) Statewide Funder of Affordable Supportive Housing** - Vermont Housing and Conservation Board was created in 1987. VHCB is a funder, and administers state and federal programs. VHCB has helped create 3,000 units of Supportive Housing of some sort with 350 of those units specifically for people who were homeless. Lessons learned: Success depends on local partnerships; Priorities can change and models can become obsolete so it is important to select and fund buildings that have opportunities for re-use; In some regions there are not consistently enough participants to fully utilize a building; We need to grow the pie. Opportunities: Affordable care Act; working with CSH on best practices; NHTF; issues with HOME funding; Massachusetts and Connecticut have issued bonds. Challenges: Budget environment; uneven capacity (both development and services); rural communities; NIMBY; overcoming legacy of failed partnerships; mental health issues, hoarding, substance abuse; need for rental assistance.

**Further Discussion - What else would people want to see addressed by an external contractor?**

- Erhard. – Interested to analyze where savings would be; what would household have cost if they remained homeless? Analysis of our system; what works and doesn't work?
- MOUS – agreement on definitions.
- Sarah Phillips – 24 months not always enough – interested in transitions and after-care components.
- Need for service coordination models that access mainstream case management resources
- Transitioning to long-term community-based services
- Deb offered documents around case management used in Rutland; housing support specialists have to pull back but are available to other service providers. MOUS are great but people have to be flexible.
- Elizabeth Whitmore – Interest in the FUSE model.

**Next Steps:** Angus will reach out to panelists to work on a common Supportive Housing MOU that would (among other things) guide expansion into new regions, define Supportive Housing, Case Management and aftercare. AHS is simultaneously identifying deliverables to be included in any contract to provide local training and technical assistance around Supportive Housing expansion and replication.

**Approval of June minutes:**

Approval of the June minutes was moved by Connie and seconded by Shaun.  
All voted in favor. The June minutes were approved.

**Meeting adjourned at 4:05 PM.**