

CJCC Jail & Jail Alternatives Committee
Supportive Housing Workgroup
March 11, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.

Present: Crystal Hegge, Kalene Engel, Chris Meyer, Justin Green, Rebecca Lundeen, Sheryl Block, Maria Slawson, Audrey Rivenburg, Karin Sonneman

- I. **Zumbro Valley Scattered Sites Presentation:** Sheryl Block and Maria Slawson from Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center provided the following information on the Zumbro Valley Scattered Sites Program:
- a. History and Startup: The program began about 6 years ago. They received some seed money and encouragement from Hearth Connections. When they first heard about the program, they thought it was too good to be true so they were hesitant. The first step was meeting with Olmsted County and getting them on board with the funding piece. They started with a ½ person and seed money from Hearth Connections to cover costs of the staff person and pay deposits.
 - b. Funding:
 - Housing Support (formerly GRH; also referred to as Rate 1) is used to pay for the rent and utilities for qualified individuals. The current rate 1 amount is \$954 per month. After the rent and utilities are paid, 30% of the remaining amount is retained by the program and put into the flex account that is used for security deposits, damages to apartments, infestations of bugs and the purchase of a new bed and vacuum cleaner for every new tenant. ZVSS takes each tenant to Walmart with the money left over to purchase housing related items—such as food and household goods.
 - Because all of the tenants are long term homeless individuals, they also get Rate 2 funding, which pays for the services that are provided. That amount is \$483 per month. There is NO LIMIT on Rate 2 bed for long term homeless individuals. Rate 2 money is used to pay for a form of transportation (bus pass), laundry (coins for laundromat), cleaning supplies and personal hygiene products plus the services.
 - Each tenant also received the full general assistance and full food support each month.
 - c. Who Qualifies:
 - Persons who meet the Minnesota definition of long term homeless. The state definition of LTH is 1 year of continuous homelessness or four episodes of homelessness within the past 3 years. The State definition of homelessness is more flexible than the federal definition, so couch hopping counts. This includes being doubled up with family or staying with someone where it could jeopardize their lease. Under the MN definition, if a person goes into jail homeless, they are

coming out of jail homeless—so, basically, the jail time is excluded. Under the Federal definition, if a person is jailed 90 days or more, they are considered to be housed.

- The person must also have a qualifying disability, which means they have a mental health illness, chronic substance use disorder or a physical disability. The mental health illness does not need to be a SPMI (serious and persistent mental illness); SMI qualifies. The persons who can certify the disability are also flexible; ranging from a therapist to a licensed alcohol and drug counselor to a county designee (like Maria) who can certify disability for one year.

- d. Target Population: This program works the best for people who have zero income. If a person is on Social Security, all of the SS money goes toward housing and they receive \$111 of personal needs money. It's a really good program for clients and works for the population of people that are not quite to the level of certified disabled for SS but really cannot maintain employment. Once people are on the program, if they do become employed a portion of the earned income goes to rent. Some people who get on Social Security decide to stay on the program because they like the security.

For people who qualify but are actively using drugs or alcohol, the key question is whether the person can live independently. If a person cannot function in an apartment or will burn bridges with the landlord by inviting their using friends over who create problems, then it won't work.

- e. Services Provided: The services provided by the Housing Advocates are pretty intense. The HA spend a lot of time with their clients and provide hands on housing support, especially in the beginning. Once the client stabilizes, the service level decreases. HAs work hard on building rapport, which Maria describes as a partnership. Some of the things the HA assist with are setting up doctor's appointments, getting an ID card, setting up health insurance or an EBT card and similar activities. Building self esteem is very important so that the tenant can prove to themselves and the landlord that they can be a good tenant. The ideal caseload per HA is 20 persons, but as clients become more stable, the caseload can increase. Currently the four ZVSS clients have an average of 22-23 clients per person.

Some of the clients are also receiving ARMHS and case management as well as the Rate 2 services, which provides multiple layers of support. There are different funding streams and having multiple services is totally legitimate and not double dipping.

- f. Coordinated Entry: They must use coordinated entry, which means that they have to collect information from prospective tenants and put that information into the HMIS coordinated entry system. The coordinated entry system prioritizes the top 100 chronic homeless people from the entire southern region of the state and when ZVSS has an opening they previously had to ask for the top referrals from that list. Unfortunately, the

referrals that they receive are usually people that need a higher level of support than ZVSS can provide. The State has recognized that the coordinated entry system is not working and has somewhat relaxed the restrictions, allowing the County to set more of the parameters. However, Coordinated Entry continues to be an issue.

- g. Program Length/Graduation: Many people “graduate” off of their program and then come back to them later to report on their successes. A graduation from the program can include having a tenant get to the point where they can sign their own private lease with their existing landlord. There is no time limit for length of participation; a client could stay on the program indefinitely.
- h. Landlords: Landlord recruitment is important. It’s important to treat landlords well so they keep working with you. The security deposit provides a bit of a safety net for the landlords as they usually allow the landlord to keep the deposit.
- h. Ease of Administration: Olmsted County has had a great experience with this program. It’s self-sustaining and an easy program to run and provides great benefits to its clients.

II. Update on Minnesota Housing Partnership: Crystal and Kalene recently had a Zoom Meeting with Harlan Buckalew of MHP, who provided the following updates on the Housing Institute Grant:

- Our liaison will be assigned to use by the end of today.
- A site visit will be scheduled in late March, after our liaison is assigned. Members from this workgroup and SHOCC will be invited to that meeting. At that meeting, the liaison will help us identify who would be the best representatives to participate in the Institute.
- There is tentative schedule of on site workshops. The first workshop is scheduled for April 27th and 28th. The workshops will take place in Rochester and will be livestreamed for people who want to attend virtually.
- The other communities chosen for the institute are Wabasha and Winnebago.
- There may be some money available through MHP for a small grant for a project such as a website, but that money will not be immediately available.
- Harlan stated that we can complete more than one project during the course of our participation in the Institute.

Chris Meyer noted that the City of Winona was interested in exploring the use of some of their ARPA funds on mental health and homelessness. Nick Larson is the official liaison for the MHP grant and is on the list of people to be considered for the “travel team.” Chris asked Crystal to add Chad Ubl to the distribution list also. Crystal signed up to be part of the City of Winona housing initiative workgroup which was created as a result of the City’s work on its Comprehensive Plan.

III. ARPA Funding: Kalene and Crystal had a meeting with Maria and Sheryl of ZVSS in early March to discuss the startup costs for the program, with the idea that a funding request for some of Winona County’s ARPA allotment would be submitted by Advocacy Center (fiscal agent).

Based upon that discussion, tentative plans were developed to submit a request for a Housing Advocate, flex fund account, training and the building of a comprehensive housing website. A website is needed because there is otherwise no one-stop place where people can go to find information about housing. Landlord engagement would be a big piece of what the Housing Advocate would need to do initially.

Although some ideas had been thrown around about purchasing an existing building, that is not something that is currently being considered. Audrey noted that Olmsted County did purchase a hotel in Rochester which is housing 18 homeless persons with 24/7 staffing. Audrey feels that, based upon her experience in Rochester, those people in recovery would do better in a scattered site system. Karin also supported a funding request for a scattered sites program.

Next Steps:

- MHP Initial Meeting at end of March.
- Identify Housing Institute team members.
- Crystal and Kalene prepare and submit a funding request for ARPA funding for startup costs for a Scattered Sites Program and website.
- Reconvene on April 8, 2022 at 10 a.m.; meetings will be on the 2nd Friday of the month at 10 a.m.

Meeting adjourned: 11:05 a.m.

Minutes by Kalene Engel