

COLLABORATIVE MEETING
August 27, 2015 – 8:00-9:30 a.m.
MIWORKS! Conference Room
1209 S. Garfield Ave., Traverse City

Meeting called to order at 8:01 a.m. by Mary Marois

Welcome and Introductions – Present:

Cathy Anthofer-Fialon, 13th Circuit Family Court
Joe Bagby, DHHS
Bailee Brandt, Habitat for Humanity
Trina Egeler, Networks Northwest Prisoner Reentry Program
Karen Emerson, NMCAA
Rebecca Garland, Conflict Resolution Services
Deb Haase, Father Fred Foundation
Jennifer Hamilton, Salvation Army
Jen Hutchinson, GT Pavilions
Linda Hutchinson, Northern Michigan Health Svcs. Inc.
Karl Kovacs, Northern Lakes CMH

Melodie Linebaugh, NMCAA
Mary Marois, Community
Ranae McCauley, United Way of NW Michigan
Cecil McNally, Goodwill
Lance Morgan, TCAPS
Christi Nowak, Munson Community Health
Cindy Ooley, DHHS
Heather Prevo, 13th Circuit Family Court
Jim Rowlett, Poverty Reduction Initiative
Gwen Taylor, Traverse Bay Children's Advocacy Ctr.
Sharon Vreeland, GTCC Coordinator
Diane Wemlinger, TrueNorth emPower

Financials: Pretty much on track, only \$400 behind budgeted revenues.

Eviction Diversion Program – Cindy Ooley, DHHS; Melodie Linebaugh, NMCAA; Deb Haase, Father Fred Foundation:

- Based on successful Kalamazoo model; brought to local attention by Judge Phillips
- Attempt to keep families in their homes, benefitting tenants and landlords by keeping lower-income families from moving frequently
- Housing Hour concept instituted 2 years ago, placing agency representatives at the court during eviction court hearings to assist families and landlords. Initially not as successful as hoped.
- Housing Hour re-instituted 3 weeks ago at Father Fred Foundation, weekly on Wednesdays from 3-4 p.m. People can meet with DHHS and NMCAA representatives. Assistance can come in the form of funding, and it can be other resources to help families resolve the situation with their landlords.
- Avg. rents in this area for a 1 bedroom apartment are roughly \$750-\$1000/month, not including utilities. Average pay for service sector employee is \$1472.20 gross (40 hrs. x \$8.50/hr) \$900 avg. monthly Social Security benefit locally. Housing is considered affordable if it costs no more than 30% of income.
- Program addresses potential financial problems caused by lack of income due to family illness, unexpected car repairs, and other unexpected life events that cause a blip in finances.
- Must be solvable/sustainable situation for cash assistance (housing must be “affordable at 30% of income or less)
- Landlords can be too kind, allowing past due rent to build up over many months. When the arrearage reaches many thousands of dollars the program can't assist due to scarcity of funds.
- Tenant must have 7 day notice or court summons.
- Stats:
 - Most local housing funds are designated for those who are literally homeless
 - Available for assistance such as eviction diversion, across all counties served by each agency (Eviction Diversion program is only in GT County):
 - NMCAA - \$12,000, 10 counties

- DHHS \$10,000 through State Emergency Relief Fund (SER), 3 counties,
- Salvation Army
- Father Fred Foundation - \$20,000 through first 7 months of this fiscal year, 5 counties (43 families/129 people assisted this year)& Father Fred (\$20,000 first 7 months of this fiscal year, 52 families assisted)
- Clients:
 - DHHS
 - 2014 (Calendar): met with 65 people, cash assistance to 25. Of those not receiving cash assistance, 12 were in unaffordable housing, 3 did not complete necessary documentation/follow-through, and 6 had income in excess of funding source guidelines.
 - 2015 (Calendar to date): met with 24 people, cash assistance to 11. Of those not receiving cash assistance, 3 were in unaffordable housing, 2 did not complete necessary documentation/follow-through, and 4 had income in excess of funding source guidelines.
 - Salvation Army has assisted 43 families totaling 129 people in calendar 2015
 - Father Fred has assisted 52 families
- Having an eviction is on your record becomes a barrier to achieving future housing.
- Process:
- Landlord files paperwork with court to start eviction process. At this time landlord is advised about the program
- Paperwork mailed to tenant includes information about the program
- Non-financial lease violations are not appropriate to this program
- Both landlord and tenant must be willing to work through the program
- If both agree and family is eligible, court will extend time before eviction to allow agreed process to work.
- Even if we can't directly financially assist a tenant, perhaps we can mediate between the parties to as successful conclusion.
- One of the agencies with funding can help put together a package of partial funding from a variety of participating agencies to complete the entire need. Client family is always required to make a financial contribution, even if small, so they have an investment.
- NMCAA lauded Father Fred for re-designating some of their funds to fill the gap in the homeless response system for keeping families in existing housing.
- Biggest barrier to wider success is funding. Kalamazoo had close to \$350,000 in local foundation funding to start their program. Locally we have collaborated to start small and grow from there.
- Accessing assistance:
 - Housing Hour now at Father Fred on Wednesdays from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. Sarah at Father Fred, Katrina Roberts from NMCAA, and Erin Norton from DHHS, are there to meet with families and guide them in next steps. Families need a 7-day notice (Father Fred, DHHS) and/or a court summons (NMCAA). It is helpful if they bring a lease, and income and budget information, to help determine their housing affordability.
 - Call 844-900-0900 (NMCAA) homeless response hotline, or any of the presenters for assistance and guidance with housing situation questions.
- Group Questions
 - Best way to direct inquiries from other agencies? Through NMCAA, or can call Sarah at Father Fred. Do ask if they have a 7-day notice. If they are only about to have trouble making upcoming rent but eviction process has not started, we can provide some budget counseling but not financial assistance.
 - Father Fred – 5 counties, Salvation Army 2 counties, NMCAA 10 counties, DHHS 3 counties.
 - Can apply for DHS SER online.
 - Mary Marois was struck during visit to Kalamazoo program that they had nobody on their emergency housing waiting list because of their eviction diversion program. Having a lawyer present to assist with legal questions is another of their strengths. We expect to have a legal intern available at housing hour within a few months.

- How does the program connect with landlords? When they initiate eviction through the court they receive information about the program. We also disseminate publicity locally, and we have been housing an annual landlord breakfast about the program. The judges and court administrators come, as do local housing commissioners.

United Way ALICE Project – Ranae McCauley

- 40% of working families in Michigan don't have the \$50,000 annual income to meet all their basic necessities – the ALICE threshold.
- Michigan Association of United Ways partnered with Rutgers to learn more about these families.
- “ALICE” – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed.
- Who is ALICE? 40% of the homeless in our region are employed. Childcare workers, retail workers, new college graduates. Young families.
- The assistance safety net requires very low income. A catastrophe happens to the family and they have to make a case for not having enough funds if they make just more than assistance program standards but not enough to meet all family needs – “living in the gap.”, not making enough to get by but making too much to get assistance.
- Some have several part-time jobs with no benefits.
- Report describes the household survival budget; the ALICE threshold; the ALICE income assessment; and the Economic Viability Index.
 - Childcare cost assistance standards are still from when usually there was one parent at home. Currently, childcare costs for 2 children a month can be as much as \$1,100.
 - Usually families talk more about the cost than the quality of their childcare.
 - Housing includes utilities and is calculated at HUD rates, \$637/month for a single person and \$792/month for a family, which is not realistic in our region.
 - Everything in ALICE budget is least expensive option, and doesn't include things like the Internet service needed to access some forms of assistance in the modern age. Transportation costs do not include repairs or car loan payments.
 - Living below the survival threshold implies a need for help with all areas of life. Corners have to be cut, perhaps in childcare, food, transportation, health and health care, and certainly in savings. Looking for assistance can involve taking time away from work and run up transportation costs. When funds run short people might borrow money, perhaps from high interest payday loan businesses. When people need transportation they might purchase a car from a place charging over 17% interest.
 - Even after family income and public assistance, there can be a 13% gap between available resources and needs. It would take a total of \$8.5 billion statewide to fill this gap.
 - Full report link: www.unitedwaynwmi.org/?s=ALICE
 - 63% of Michigan jobs pay less than \$20/hour.
 - Stability budget: what you need to earn to make it without public assistance in Michigan: family of 4 (1 infant and one preschooler), \$92,409 or \$46.20/hour. Still assumes very low costs for household needs compared to what is realistic in our region. Example: housing for \$961/month might require moving far from work, which would raise transportation costs dramatically.

Local United Way Community Impact Strategies

- United Way focuses on education, income, and health.
- Past grant process has been about supporting agencies. There will be a shift in the upcoming grant cycle. They are looking for a 3-piece partnership between United Way, agencies, and the community.
- Looking for investment in education, income and health to target ALICE families. Impacts United Way believes are possible locally:
 - Education (prevention):
 - Kids need to finish high school and launch into a career. They might know a skill, but they don't know understand interview skills. They are seeing people in their 20's and 30's who have never had a full-time job. We need to help them learn these skills
 - Some local schools have a 50% drop-out rate.
 - Health (intervention):

- Reduce obesity rates
 - Reduce teen pregnancy rates
- Basic needs (intervention):
 - Food
 - Transportation
 - Housing
- Working with VISTA program. Currently placing 20 volunteers and seeking to focus on above areas.
- Community Impact Fund Grants
 - Applications on-line now for spots on Community Action Teams, CAT team members will be selected in September. Orientation will be October 26
 - Agency grant applications will be online October 22. An orientation for agencies will be held around November 2 Applications Due December 3. Interviews will be week of January 11. Awards will be made January 19, and checks will be out before the end of January
- Reactions/Questions
 - Surprised by \$92,000 income need for 4-person family stability, which is about twice the local median income.
 - What about looking at the skills requirements for the 1,500 local jobs listed at Michigan Works and informing our local students so they can better prepare?
 - How do we get to where employers can and will pay higher wages in respect of the value of their good and hard work?
 - TrueNorth has written a grant for funds to specifically assist ALICE populations. Results pending.
 - Many more employers are managing worker hours to keep individuals under 30 hours so they don't have to provide healthcare. Where healthcare is employer-provided, policy costs and service copays are rising. Changes that are coming might cause additional "Cadillac" taxes to be paid on the value of benefits offered to employees.
 - This is great fodder for a community conversation about where we can have a positive impact. What are the best roles for governments, businesses, non-profits, and individual?
 - We recognize that our calculation of the "poverty level" needs to change, as evidenced by the fact that most of our assistance programs are available to people at 150% or 200% of the official poverty level. This is a conversation nobody seems to want to have.
 - Karen Emerson asked that all of us send the ALICEs we know to NMCAA for counseling and possible matching with the wide array of programs available there.
 - We need to really understand the ALICE life to be able to assist effectively.
 - There will be updates in the future. Data sources are cited throughout the report, so end users could access base data and self-update to some degree.

BRIEF Special Announcements & Closing Thoughts:

- Cathy Anthofer-Fialon: Heather Prevo, the Circuit Court's new Therapeutic Court Coordinator, is a licensed counselor. This means the youth they work with can be assessed in-house, speeding up the court process and reducing costs for families.
- Cathy is also very interested in the ACEs study and is part of the local network on this issue. There is interest in having a Northern MI ACEs conference. We are looking at not only preventing and addressing current ACEs, but also addressing the adults with lasting impacts from their childhood ACEs. We have a connection to Dr. Felitti of the initial study and might perhaps be able to attract him to the conference. If anyone would like to help plan it, contact Sharon Vreeland (sevreeland.gtcc@gmail.com or Cathy (canthofer@grandtraverse.org).
- Linda Hutchinson provided info about NMHSI services. They have a sliding fee scale.
- TrueNorth has asked for \$20 million for energy assistance for the season starting October 1. They have added rural Kent County and would be serving 64 total counties this year. They have asked for a grant specifically for case management for ALICE families and in Kalkaska
- The Father Fred Garage Sale will be September 12. On Tuesday they started their back-to-school shoe program and have already supplied assistance to 300 children. Backpacks for Kids will be administered for 10 TCAPS schools through Father Fred going forward. Their first goal is to expand to all TCAPS schools. Their second goal is to add Kalkaska schools.

- Trina Egeler noted that the Prisoner Reentry Program contract with Networks Northwest was renewed through September 30, 2016.
- Karen Emerson: check out www.nmcaa.net. Their energy assistance program will expand in October, including weatherization and housing rehab.
- GT Pavilions is promoting the new PACE program. They have someone dancing to raise funds for it in the new session of Swingshift and the Stars. Please share the story of the program far and wide.
- DHHS is partnering with schools and Courts to bring Pathways to Prevention to the area. Workers will be stationed in schools to positively impact truancy.
- The Northern Lakes CMH annual report for fiscal year 2014 is available. Their board and leadership team are in the strategic planning process and would welcome all input about what they should be doing. It doesn't have to be wordy or fancy!
- September 10 is the United Way Day of Caring. 60 projects are set up so far, and the goal is 100. If your agency needs to have something done or would like to volunteer a team to work on someone else's project, contact Connor, connor@unitedway.nwmi.org or 231-947-3200 x 209.

Adjourned at 9:38 a.m.

UPCOMING 2015 COLLABORATIVE MEETING DATES

September 24 – Homeless Youth Initiative

October 22 – Annual meeting

November 19 – PACE program and winter utility assistance programs

NO MEETING IN DECEMBER

January 28 – Munson Community Health Needs Assessment focused discussions