

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Meeting Minutes April 16th, 2009

<i>Bob Duranleau</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Department, Social Services Division
<i>John Shoos</i>	United Way of Greater Portland
<i>Dee Clarke</i>	Preble Street Homeless Voices for Justice
<i>Tom Allan</i>	Milestone Foundation
<i>Melissa Leeman</i>	Milestone Foundation
<i>Nancy Berg</i>	2-1-1 Maine
<i>Mary-Ellen Welch</i>	City of Portland, Midtown Community Policing, Portland Police Department
<i>Jeff Tardiff</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept, Social Services Division, Family Shelter
<i>Aaron Shapiro</i>	Cumberland County
<i>Donna Yellen</i>	Preble Street
<i>Aaron Geyer</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Department, Social Services Division
<i>Elizabeth Szatkowski</i>	Youth Alternatives Ingraham
<i>Chris Coppedge</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept, Social Services Div, Oxford Street Shelter for Men
<i>Kate Carter</i>	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept, Social Services Div, Oxford Street Shelter for Men
<i>Amanda Wells</i>	Preble Street Women's Shelter
<i>Jon Bradley</i>	Preble Street
<i>Ginny Dill</i>	Shalom House
<i>Kelly Berry</i>	Family Crisis Services
<i>Sarah Akeley</i>	Family Crisis Services
<i>Amy Regan</i>	Preble Street Homeless Voices for Justice
<i>Paige Eclov</i>	PROP Community Services
<i>Carmen DoLiber</i>	Department of Health & Human Services, Adult Mental Health
<i>Linda Janson</i>	MAPS Shelter Services
<i>Stacy Carpenter</i>	Youth Alternatives Ingraham, The Bridge
<i>Susannah Harden</i>	Youth Alternatives Ingraham, 22 Park
<i>Leah Bruns</i>	PROP – The Homeless Project
<i>Andrew Hayman</i>	Preble Street Homeless Voices for Justice

I. Introductions

Dee Clarke, ESAC Tri-Chair, welcomed everyone and asked if anyone had any additional agenda items. Brief introductions were made.

II. *March Bed Usage Statistics – Bob Duranleau*

Bob reviewed the monthly shelter statistics for February 2009:

	<u>March 2008</u>	<u>March 2009</u>
Adolescents	7 Individuals	9 Individuals
Adults	214 Individuals	232 Individuals
Families	<u>43 Individuals (17 Families)</u>	<u>59 Individuals (23 Families)</u>
Total	264 Individuals	300 Individuals

Adolescent Shelter

The total adolescent bed nights for March 2008 were 204 while the total bed nights for March 2009 were 287. These figures indicate an increase of 83 bed nights, or 29% between March 2008 and March 2009.

Jon added that the numbers are very unpredictable. He mentioned that the staff has been working very hard and collaborating more with the teen center, which aided in servicing a broader range of clients. Jon added that only time will tell whether these reported high numbers illustrate trends or random occurrences.

Adult Shelters

Adult Shelter bed nights usage increased by 8% in March 2009 compared to March 2008. Total bed night usage during March 2008 was 6633 while it was 7219 during March 2009, a difference of 586 bed nights.

During the month of March, there were 129 intakes at the Oxford Street Shelter for Men. An Intake or New Arrival is defined as an individual that has not stayed at the Shelter for a period of three (3) months or longer.

Oxford Street Shelter for Men Support Services team placed 40 individuals into permanent housing, with three (3) of those individuals returning to the shelter within 90 days of housing placement.

Bob added that the Oxford Street Shelter for Men had been significantly busier, with its dayroom hours extended on the weekend (opening at 10:00 am) due to the temporary closing of the Portland Public Library for renovations. Kate mentioned that the shelter now encounters over 100 individuals during the day on weekends, and stated that in addition to the increase in numbers people are also staying at the shelter longer during the day. Bob mentioned that due to the high volume of individuals utilizing the shelter's extended dayroom hours on the weekend, Oxford Street has had to open additional rooms to accommodate overflow. Jon mentioned that the day shelter has also been very high, averaging approximately 130 individuals, and that the closing of the library has added to this. Additionally, Jon added that the day shelter is seeing more women with the closing of the library. Elizabeth mentioned that other towns' library hours have been cut back, giving the example of Westbrook where one library recently closed and the other does not have Saturday hours.

Preble Street Women's Shelter served a total of 106 women during the month of March, including 31 new intakes. Amanda mentioned that the intakes for March were fairly high in comparison to past years, which is consistent with intakes at the Oxford Street Shelter for Men. The Shelter placed seven (7) individuals into housing, with two (2) women returning.

Family Shelters

There was a total of 1836 bed nights used for all Family Shelters in March 2009 as compared to 1348 bed nights in March 2008. This represents an increase of 27% in Family Shelter bed usage between March 2008 and March 2009.

The Family Shelter received 22 new families (intakes) for a total of 61 individuals in March. Bob mentioned that the Preble Street PROP Project had aided in the decrease of intakes from towns in its scope. In addition, no Iraqi families arrived in March.

The Family Shelter placed 7 families for a total of 19 individuals into housing in March.

Donna asked whether or not any data had been recorded, regarding these increased intakes, as to whether or not they were experiencing homelessness for the first time. Amanda mentioned that it would be interesting to see the data regarding this. Chris mentioned that client “updates,” individuals who are previous shelter clients but have not stayed at the shelter for 90 days or longer, have dramatically increased at the Oxford Street Shelter for Men. Kate added that overall she has witnessed an increase of intakes during the first part of the month, as well as the expected “snow-birds” who relocate to Maine once spring arrives. Though, she noted that she has not seen a large increase of people who report they are experiencing homelessness for the first time. Elizabeth asked about the last known residency of the “snow-bird” intakes. Chris responded by stating that the last permanent address is usually located in Maine, these individuals then left the state and later returned when the weather improved.

Missy mentioned that Milestone has seen a lot of new clients who have never used the shelter before. Donna asked whether “new” meant out of town and/or out of state clients. Missy stated that most of the new clients are from Portland, and that most are coming in on their own, as opposed to via referrals. Donna states it is troubling that the number of local people utilizing Milestone’s services has increased so dramatically.

Bob commented that the number of homeless families in Windham has drastically increased, with 15 to 20 families on average having to be sheltered in hotels due to overflow. In addition, Windham General Assistance will lose their hotels in June and thus they are attempting to place these families, many of whom are experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Doug asked whether adding “Is this your first time experiencing homelessness?” or a similar question, could be added to the intake procedure? Bob mentioned that this is a change that could be made. Doug added that reporting on this information could be very telling due to the high numbers of updates at the Oxford Street Shelter for Men, as Chris mentioned.

Amanda stated they also have been seeing new faces, but that it may not be their first experience with homelessness. Reasons for homelessness could include foreclosure, job loss, and other economic circumstances; however, Amanda stated that this may also not be the case. She continued by stating that many individuals utilize other resources, such as staying with friends and/or family, making it hard for shelter staff to precisely locate the root of homelessness for many individuals. Bob stated that General Assistance is experiencing this trend as well. Jon stated that this trend may be interesting to look further into. Bob stated that the necessary information for this is in HMIS, and that Portland should be able to access the information. Jon reiterated that it’s important to capture the picture as best we can. Amanda asked whether or not MSHA can pull this data for review. Bob stated that he will connect with Cindy regarding this matter.

III. Continuum of Care Update– Bob Duranleau

Bob mentioned that there was little to update on regarding the Continuum of Care, as HUD’s focus has mainly been on the American Recovery and Reinvestment act of 2009. He added that HUD has yet to release any additional information regarding the 2009 CoC application and the changes to the

electronic Esnaps application process. The tentative timeframe for the process to begin is in early June, though this is still unconfirmed by HUD. Due to the electronic process HUD has stated that the 2009 application should be a much easier process, only having to update information that is already in the system. Doug mentioned that it's possible that the process could be slightly more difficult than originally predicted due to the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP). Bob is still waiting for HUD to release the scores for the 2008 application.

IV. *American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009 – Homelessness Prevention & rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) Update*

Doug stated, regarding the HPRP fund allocation, that the City of Portland is receiving \$876,000, Cumberland County \$605,000, and the State is receiving \$6.5 million, for a grand total of approximately \$8 million throughout Maine, making a great impact over the next two (2) years.

Bob stated that the City of Portland plans to use the HPRP funds over a two (2) year period of time. The main focus is the mobile outreach project, similar to the project that the Oxford Street Shelter for Men initiated during this past winter, targeted to aid homeless persons and those at risk for becoming homeless. The outreach prevention project would include collaboration with Preble Street, follow up and prevention measures, expanding on the current program. The City of Portland HPRP funds will also be used to fund existing outreach staff who would have been laid off due to the current budget situation. Doug added that the submission timeline for the City of Portland is as follows: posting the city's substantial amendment on the Health & Human Services Department's website; presentation to the CDBG Allocation Committee, which occurred last Friday, April 10, 2009; publish the proposed initiative in Portland Press Herald, which occurred Monday, April 13, 2009; two (2) presentations of the Substantial Amendment to the City's Consolidated Plan to the City council, which are scheduled for April 27, 2009 and May 4, 2009 for approval; and submitting the complete application to HUD, scheduled to be sent before the May 18 deadline.

Aaron stated that the announcement for Cumberland County's proposal was published in the Portland Press Herald in early April, and that the first public hearing was on Monday, April 13, 2009, with a second hearing scheduled for April 28, 2009. He added that the plan will be posted on Cumberland County's website sometime today, Thursday, April 16, 2009. Aaron stated that Cumberland County plans to submit the complete application to HUD in early May, before the May 18, 2009 deadline.

Doug added that MaineHousing's four (4) initiatives are posted on its website. Doug briefly reviewed the initiatives: 1) Develop a similar program to Cumberland County's PROP Preble Street Project, to help people on the verge of being evicted receive assistance through outreach prevention. 2) A proposed model of a case management program which would work with homeless persons as well as households at high risk for homelessness, including people with mental health diagnoses, and link them with resources for stabilization. These resources include: General Assistance, rental vouchers, housing searches, moving costs and security deposits, and continued assistance until individuals and families are permanently housed. The aforementioned would act as a toolkit, which the Case Manager would utilize in order to equip people with available services before and after stabilization. 3) Expansion of the security deposit program. 4) Continuing and expanding aid to the advocacy project with Pine Tree Legal. Bob added that Cindy could not attend the meeting today, and if anyone should have any questions for her please email her directly.

Bob stated that he was surprised with the simplicity of the application criteria, for example only requiring 250 words or less. Along the same vein, Doug stated the only requirement regarding public comment is that there must be a public comment period, with no requirements regarding any

form of response to public feedback. In addition, Bob stated that HUD has yet to release the guidelines for HMIS reporting, and hopes this information will be made available very shortly.

In sum, Doug stated that with the significant increases in shelter statistics, as previously discussed, it appears as if the HPRP funds could not come at a better time.

V. *Other Business*

Vickey mentioned that the ESAC section on the Social Services website will now include handouts from meetings for everyone's convenience. If you wish to provide electronic copies of any handout materials prior to the meeting, please email Vickey at vls@portlandmaine.gov. The hope is for this to make communicating information, especially to members who are unable to attend meetings, more efficient. The ESAC section of the Social Services website can be found at: <http://www.portlandmaine.gov/hhs/ssesac.asp>

Amy mentioned that Preble Street Homeless Voices for Justice has been very busy working on initiatives at the State House. On Monday, April 13th there was a public hearing, and yesterday, Wednesday, April 15th there a work session was held regarding the homeless youth initiative. Jon was pleased to announce that the committee unanimously sent the initiative ahead without any additions. Amy added that Homeless Voices for Justice was very successful at incorporating youth involvement with a substantial amount of testimony from homeless youth.

In addition, Amy announced that she is very excited about Preble Street's book club. Yesterday, Wednesday, April 15th was the second of four book club meetings. She encouraged everyone to invite any client who enjoys reading. Preble Street's book club has been reading Jonathan Kozol's Savage Inequalities. Amy mentioned that Jonathan Kozol is scheduled to come to Portland April 29th to join the club for its final meeting, though this is not yet confirmed. The book club meets at Preble Street on Wednesdays, from 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm. Dee reiterated the invitation and added that the book club is a great opportunity for clients and providers to view each other differently and connect on a different level. She encouraged everyone to pass the word along and stated that copies of the book and selected passages are available at Preble Street for interested parties. Dee concluded by stating that Preble Street hopes to continue this project and expand participation.

Bob encouraged anyone with items for the next meeting's agenda to send them to him via email.

NEXT MEETING:
Thursday, May 21st, 2009
8:30 – 10am
Refugee Services Area
190 Lancaster Street

Please contact Robert Duranleau, Health & Human Services Department, Social Services Division at 775-6315, extension 224; John Shoos, United Way at 874-1000, or Dee Clark, Preble Street at 775-0026; if you should have any agenda items for the next meeting.