



Concord Coalition to End Homelessness

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To: Concord City Council Members
From: Ellen Groh
Date: February 6, 2017

Re: The Concord Coalition to End Homeless is the lead agency for Concord's Plan to End Homelessness, which was adopted by the City Council in April, 2014. This memo is an update to the City Council on several priority items in the Plan.

“Housing First” Permanent Supportive Housing:

The “Housing First” model was chosen as a priority under the Plan because it is a proven model that actually ends homelessness while lowering the overall costs to the community. The model “meets people where they are at,” without requiring sobriety or participation in mental health or other services.

CCEH initiated our *Housing First Concord* program in July 2015 with substantial funding from Lincoln Financial Foundation and State Grant in Aid funds. The program provides a caseworker to support chronically homeless individuals to become, and remain, stably housed. The program was initially able to place 2 individuals in Concord Housing + Redevelopment public housing, but turnover at the public housing complex was slow and some potential clients did not meet CH+R eligibility criteria. Through a partnership with Crossroads House in Portsmouth, in August 2016 CCEH obtained federal funding for 10 rental assistance vouchers, which allows the client to afford an apartment in the private market. This partnership has brought an additional \$98,000 per year to the Concord area. The biggest challenge has been finding vacant apartments in the range of \$820 rent. Eight clients have been successfully housed, (one couple and 6 individuals, and we are hopeful the final 3 individuals will be housed in February. CCEH is excited to have been able to launch this program in Concord, and we will continue to seek out funding to expand the program. Both the caseworker and rental assistance are vital to housing stability.

Expanded Concord Homeless Resource Center

The Resource Center is a daytime drop-in center where people struggling with homelessness can meet their immediate needs, including receipt of mail, use of telephone, fax, computer and internet, and support from a caseworker to access available services. In May 2015, the Resource Center relocated to a much larger facility at 238 N. Main Street. Since the expansion, the Resource Center added guest laundry and shower facilities, and has been able to offer a centralized location for other providers to connect with guests, including:

- Concord Hospital's monthly “Downtown Clinic”: a team of medical professionals who provide immediate care and connect guests to a primary care physician at the Family Health Center.
- Riverbend Community Mental Health: clinical caseworkers twice a week to engage guests, build trust, and connect them to full services at Riverbend
- Veterans Administration team to connect guests with veterans' services
- Homeless Outreach workers from the Community Action Program and Riverbend
- Other community service providers such as haircuts

Last year, the Resource Center assisted 578 unique individuals, and served an average of 41 guests per day. Some guests come only once, others make use of the Resource Center numerous times. It is difficult to get accurate statistics on how many guests have become housed, because often guests simply stop coming and we do not know for sure their outcome.

Steering Committee:

CCEH convenes the executive level Steering Committee for the Plan every two months, and they continue to provide extremely valuable guidance and connections. A list of the Steering Committee members has been sent separately, with a request to appoint 3 new members.

Cold Weather Shelters

In 2014, the two churches that had hosted a cold weather shelter for over a decade (First and South Congregational Churches) announced that they would discontinue after the winter of 2014/15. For each of the past two years, CCEH has invested substantial time and energy attempting to locate an alternative site and a management agency for a shelter. Through major efforts of Mayor Bouley in each of these two years, financial support has been identified and a shelter has been operated by the Friends Program at St. Peter's Church, though the solution has come at the last minute each year.

The lack of a reliable cold weather shelter is a critical, life-threatening gap in Concord's safety net. The permanent shelters in Concord (Salvation Army McKenna House for individuals; Friends Emergency Shelter for families) are both almost always full, and have policies, including random drug tests, that preclude people with active addictions and certain felony convictions from staying.

Therefore, CCEH made it a priority to establish a reliable cold weather shelter. After searching for suitable sites, CCEH determined that the current location of our Concord Homeless Resource Center is the most appropriate place for a cold weather shelter. It is on a bus route and in walking distance of the Friendly Kitchen, the Human Services Department, and other downtown services. It is not located directly next to residential property, and it is reasonably priced. Because the existing building would require extensive and expensive renovation and upgrade to accommodate a shelter, we determined that putting an accessory building in the back of the lot would be the most economical and expeditious approach. The shelter will not be able to accommodate families. This project is only feasible if CCEH does not incur any debt. We are pursuing State tax credit and grant funding, and have identified a potential high-capacity donor for this building project.

Our original intent was that another qualified agency would operate the shelter, but recently, the Friends Program announced that it will be unable to continue managing beyond the current winter season. Discussions with other agencies make it clear that no other organization has the capability/willingness to provide this safety net of last resort. Consequently, CCEH concluded that we would step into the breach to manage the shelter, if the current funding support from the City and other sources continues, so that no additional burden is placed on our operating budget. Over the past three years, CCEH has received significant funding from Granite United Way and New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for our role in implementing the Plan to End Homelessness, but this funding is not expected to continue indefinitely. Therefore, CCEH is undertaking a major donor campaign to fill this expected gap in our operating budget. Undertaking the management of the cold weather shelter is only feasible if it does not add to the anticipated gap in our operating budget.

This is a challenging issue, and we look forward to working with the Steering Committee, the City, and the many stakeholders in Concord to find a reliable solution so we can keep our main focus on permanent housing solutions that actually end homelessness.