

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Interagency Council on Homelessness**



**Notes from the Meeting of the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH)**

**Date and Time:** April 22, 2009; 2 pm to 3:30 pm

**Location:** Harriet Tubman Women's Center, 1900 Massachusetts Avenue, SE, Building 9, Campus of DC General

**Approximate Attendance:** 97

**An agenda was distributed.**

**Welcome and Introductions**

Dan Tangherlini, City Administrator (CA) called the meeting to order, stated that an agenda was available, and then opened the meeting for comments from the public.

**Public Comment Period**

- The first speaker inquired about the status of the Gales School building and its intended use, asked about the status of Central Union Mission at 14<sup>th</sup> and R streets, NW, and noted that more funding was needed for transportation for those who are homeless.
- A resident of Harriet Tubman Shelter said that Catholic Charities had not informed her about housing opportunities.
- The next speaker, a member of COHHO<sup>1</sup>, noted that the homeless have rights including the right to housing. The speaker asked about the status of the 801 East shelter and the status of St. Elizabeth's Hospital.
- A resident of the Harriet Tubman Shelter said that, due to a number of medical problems, she was absent from the shelter for a period of time during which her clothing and medications were discarded by shelter management. She said that she had no coat at present. Also, she stated that she was being placed in a permanent supportive housing (PSH) unit shortly.

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<sup>1</sup> The Coalition of Housing and Homeless Organizations (COHHO) is an organization made up of homeless individuals and service providers whose purpose is to advocate to decrease the incidence of homelessness, to improve homeless services, and to increase affordable housing in Washington, D.C. The primary functions of the organization include: research, public outreach and education, training, capacity building, and advocacy.

- A speaker said that training and job opportunities are needed for those who are homeless.
- The final speaker talked about health and safety concerns and about the phenomenon of sleep deprivation.

### **Summary of the Discussion from the Pre-Meeting Focus Groups–Laura Zeilinger, Department of Human Services (DHS)**

- A focus group (round table) was held prior to the ICH meeting so that key issues could be discussed in some detail by members of the homeless community with the findings or conclusions of the discussions presented to the subsequent ICH meeting. This input is sought in order to inform the planning process of the ICH and its committees.
- Participants were asked to reflect on specific questions or topics and to offer their input and perspectives through both small group conversations and in written comments. These questions were discussed today:
  1. What is the fairest way to distribute beds in emergency / low-barrier shelter?
  2. Should beds in emergency / low-barrier shelter be able to be “reserved” by overnight residents? If so, by whom and under what circumstances?
  3. What are fair rules regarding storage and property for emergency / low-barrier shelter?
  4. Should emergency / low-barrier shelter offer 24-hour services that can accommodate people in the daytime as well?
  5. Should a day program located at an emergency / low-barrier shelter only offer day services to people who are also using the overnight shelter beds?
- There were forty-three participants in three facilitated sub-groups. Each question was discussed for about ten minutes, and summaries of the conversations, input, and ideas generated were given at intervals by each group.
- Laura Zeilinger, Deputy Director for Program Operations at DHS, gave a summary of the results of the discussions to the assembled ICH. Also, the output from this pre-meeting session was summarized in a document that is available on the ICH website at <http://www.ich.dc.gov> or by contacting George Shepard (DHS) at (202) 576-9159 or [email](#).
- A few themes that emerged from the conversations were:
  - Some beds should be distributed on a “first come, first served” while others should be reserved with preference given to those who are working and to those with medical issues.
  - No property should be discarded, there should be flexibility in storage arrangements, and there should be expanded storage capacity.
  - Day programs should be expanded, and they should be convenient.

## ICH Committee Reports

### **Steering Committee – Scott McNeilly, Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless (WLCH)**

- New ICH appointees have been sworn in, and we will hold an orientation session for them on April 30<sup>th</sup> at N Street Village.
- There is concern about a capacity “crisis” or a shortage of beds in the shelter system. To address this issue, a task force will be convened as a subcommittee of the Operations and Logistics Committee to determine the nature and depth of the problem and to find out “what works” in terms of ensuring sufficient capacity for those requiring shelter. Laura Zeilinger (DHS) and Michael Ferrell (Coalition for the Homeless) will be co-conveners. The first meeting will be held in June.

### **Operations and Logistics Committee – Chapman Todd, Catholic Charities**

- The committee continues to seek data on administrative reviews from the Office of Administrative Hearings. Scott McNeilly (WLCH) is the point person for this effort. A report will be prepared for presentation at a future ICH meeting. We would like to have comparative data about reviews (year to year or quarter to quarter) from OAH. Also, there was concern expressed about the timeliness of decisions so we will need data on this topic also.
- The committee held a hypothermia debriefing session for the 2008-2009 season on April 20 at the offices of the United Planning Organization (UPO). The session was well attended by twenty-two representatives of agencies and providers that participated in serving the needs of those who were homeless during the season that extended from November 1, 2008 through March 31, 2009. The purpose of the meeting was to review the efforts of those involved in carrying out the 2008–2009 Winter Plan in order to assess what worked and what needs improvement. George Shepard will publish the notes from the session when they are completed. From the discussion at the debriefing, we learned that capacity was a major concern last season and that the transportation system, especially the portion of it that was operated by UPO, worked well. This was the first season that a published schedule for transportation was used. There were two confirmed deaths attributable to hypothermia this season.

We will use the information from this session to begin development of the 2009–2010 Winter Plan. The first 2009–2010 winter season planning meeting is scheduled for June 24<sup>th</sup> from 1:30 to 3:30 pm at DHS Headquarters at 64 New York Avenue, NE, 6<sup>th</sup> floor.

- This committee continues to study discharge planning through two subcommittees. The intention is to focus on the health and safety issues involved by examining discharges from jails, prisons, and hospitals. One goal is to find ways and means to keep individuals from moving from one institution (e.g., corrections or a hospital) to another, such as the shelter system. This effort will take the cooperation of a number of important organizations, such as the ICH, the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), the Urban Institute (UI), the

Department of Corrections (DOC), other District Government agencies, the DC Hospital Association, and others.

- Other concerns and projects of this committee include:
  - Lack of a comprehensive resource guide;
  - Need to revive the youth task force;
  - Duty to schedule at least one public hearing per calendar year. This responsibility may be discharged when the strategic plan is ready so that the public has a chance to react to it and to express opinions about it during a public comment period.

### **Strategic Planning Committee – Clarence Carter, Director, DHS**

- Mr. Carter stated that the Strategic Planning Committee, a multi-disciplinary team seeking ways to end homelessness, continues its work by identifying policy objectives, constituencies that we are to serve, and service strategies across seven dimensions. The dimensions are: Available to All, Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, Employment, Discharge Planning, and Healthcare/HIV. The constituencies are individual men, women, and youth; families; seniors; veterans; and ex-offenders.
- Four broad policy objectives have been identified focusing on prevention of homelessness, exit from homelessness, redesign of the continuum of care, and evaluation of progress in preventing and reducing homelessness.
- The committee is meeting with organizations that serve the particular populations that will be included in the plan in order to get the benefit of their expertise and to ensure that we are proceeding in the right direction based on the unique needs of each population group. Also, plans from other agencies, such as the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and others, will be incorporated into the plan as appropriate and as those plans are found to enhance the overall efficacy and reach of the strategic plan.

### **Discussion of the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Fund–Leila Edmonds, Director, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)**

- Director Edmonds discussed the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) and its expected impact on the District. On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which includes a \$1.5 billion allocation for a Homelessness Prevention Fund. Funding for this program, called the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP), is being distributed based on the formula used for the Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) program. The District's ESG allocation is \$7.5 million.
- The HPRP is a three year temporary program designed to assist jurisdictions during this current economic crisis. All funds awarded under this program must be spent within three years with 60% of the total to be spent in the first two years of the program.
- Stakeholders include DHS, the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Office on Aging, the HIV/AIDS Administration, and

others. Two broad target groups are those who are housed but in danger of becoming homeless due to foreclosure or other reasons and those who are currently homeless.

- Grant funds must be used for eligible activities as described in the HPRP Notice. There are four categories of eligible activities for the HPRP program: financial assistance, housing relocation and stabilization services, data collection and evaluation, and administrative costs. These eligible activities are intentionally focused on housing—either financial assistance to help pay for housing, or services designed to keep people in housing or to find housing. Generally, the intent of HPRP assistance is to rapidly transition program participants to stability, either through their own means or through public assistance, as appropriate. HPRP assistance is not intended to provide long-term support for program participants, nor will it be able to address all of the financial and supportive services needs of households that affect housing stability. Rather, assistance should be focused on housing stabilization, linking program participants to community resources and mainstream benefits, and helping them develop a plan for preventing future housing instability. Grantee programs should therefore ensure that there is a clear process for determining the type, level, and duration of assistance for each program participant. For more information, please go to [www.hudhre.info](http://www.hudhre.info), the homelessness resource exchange of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on the internet.
- DHCD will publish a concept paper about this funding opportunity by April 24<sup>th</sup>. There will be a public meeting about this program on April 29<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm at 441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, and a public comment period that closes on May 6<sup>th</sup>. The plan must be submitted to HUD by May 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **Housing Locator Tool Demonstration—Leila Edmonds, DHCD**

- Ms. Edmonds and a staff member gave a “live” demonstration of this web-based application that is a listing service that provides easy access to information about housing opportunities within the District of Columbia. It may be accessed at [dchousingsearch.org](http://dchousingsearch.org) on the internet.
- DHCD is committed to creating and preserving opportunities for affordable housing and economic development to revitalize underserved communities in the District. This online housing locator service facilitates that commitment. At this website, individuals can browse up-to-date, detailed listings to find available for rent and for sale properties that meet their housing needs. Property managers can use the service to list available units and showcase features.
- DHCD performs an annual compliance review of properties and every property is inspected every two years. There is also a mechanism to register complaints about properties and landlords. Use of this service is free of charge to both landlords and potential tenants.

## **Overview of the Women’s Program at the Harriet Tubman Women’s Center at Building 9 at DC General–Kenyatta Brunson, Senior Program Manager, Catholic Charities**

- Ms. Brunson welcomed the ICH members and guests to the Center, noting that this was a new location with two components, a residential program with 16 rooms and a day program. The residential component shelters 100 women each evening, and the day program, which started in January 2009, serves about 35 women per day. The day program is available on Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Breakfast and lunch are served each day during the week, and case management and a variety of programs are available. These include self esteem sessions, life skills, hygiene classes, and sessions on employment skills. Since the inception of the day program, seven women have gotten jobs as a result of the services offered. Anchor Mental Health also offers services here.
- Social workers are also available four nights per week to do service plans and to assist in other ways. Additionally, HIV testing, other health related services, and arts and crafts are offered at night. The Women’s Collective and Sister to Sister are two local social services organizations that serve the residents of this center.

## **Public Comment Period**

- A resident of the Harriet Tubman Center (HTC) spoke of having both physical and mental health issues. She commented unfavorably about the wait list for housing. She spoke favorably about the Harriet Tubman shelter.
- An advocate for those who are homeless and resident of HTC said that many residents of shelters are waiting for vouchers as their way out of homelessness. She asserted that those who are homeless are coming from other areas to the District because of our programs. She suggested that a job corps that included job training would be beneficial, and she said that college scholarships and grants would assist those who are homeless.
- Another resident of HTC voiced a number of complaints:
  - staff members need sensitivity training;
  - the rules change daily;
  - there is not enough food and that staff members appropriate it;
  - staff members do not do their jobs;
  - lockers are inadequate and possessions are discarded on occasion;
  - the day program is a “joke.”

She suggested that officials come to the site unannounced to see what is taking place.

- A number of residents offered counterpoints to the previous speaker by making positive comments about HTC. One urged others to “stop complaining.”
- Another speaker urged that residents in shelters be tested for drug usage and placed into treatment if necessary. Also, residents should have to show proof that

they are seeking employment. Volunteering for community service work for 20 hours per week would be acceptable if one could not find full time employment.

- A speaker from the Community for Creative Non-Violence (CCNV) expressed concern about the length of the wait list for vouchers from the D.C. Housing Authority (DCHA). He suggested that DCHA share with individuals where they were on the list.
- The final speaker was a representative from the [National Coalition for the Homeless](#) who said that they were planning an “urban plunge.”

**Adjournment:** After the public comment period, Mr. Tangherlini adjourned the meeting.

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**Next Meetings (Dates and times are subject to change.)**

- Thursday, June 18, 2009 at Thrive DC (formerly Dinner Program for Homeless Women or DPHW), 309 E Street, NE from 2 to 3: 30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.
- Thursday, August 20, 2009 at Church of the Epiphany, 1317 G Street, NW from 2 to 3: 30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.
- Thursday, October 22, 2009 at Miriam’s Kitchen, 2401 Virginia Avenue, NW, from 2 to 3: 30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 to 1:30 pm.
- Thursday, December 17, 2009 at a location to be determined from 2 to 3: 30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.