

Minutes
Homeless Taskforce
MEETING DATE: July 11, 2007
COMCARE Administration Building

Taskforce Members

Rev. Cheryl Jefferson Bell Sue Castile Gypsy Claar Connie Dietz
 Jack Focht Patrick Hanrahan Lou Heldman Bishop Michael Jackels
 Bishop Scott Jones Steve Martens Janet L. Miller Tim Norton
 Marsha Stanyer Mary K. Vaughn

Ex officio members: Winston Brooks Bill Buchanan George Kolb Ron Holt

Welcome

Jack Focht called the meeting to order at 7:05 a.m. Minutes of the June 27, 2007 meeting were approved.

New Business

SOAR Update

Next, Debbie Donaldson gave an update on the SOAR project. Questions were raised about whether or not Kansas had been selected for the program. It was stated that an answer might be available at the next Taskforce meeting.

Overflow Shelter RFP

After the SOAR update, Debbie Donaldson discussed the updated RFP for an emergency overflow shelter. More flexible requirements for when the shelter should be opened were included and additional changes to the RFP were to be brought back to the group.

Next, Janet Miller introduced the idea of putting together a one to two page document that explained the gaps in services. The document would highlight challenges facing the community while solutions would be introduced at a later date. The public would be asked to comment on the document and make suggestions about additional gaps in services that are not included on the list. To advertise the event, it was suggested that an article be written in the Wichita Eagle that highlights the progress of the Taskforce and invites citizens to take part in public comment.

This discussion continued with the suggestion that the Taskforce engage key stakeholders or those that are particularly close to the project so that all possible gaps in services would be uncovered. Another possible forum for public input was at a regularly scheduled meeting or at a separate meeting. Because the Taskforce meets early, concerns were expressed about how many people would attend. It was also suggested that a dialogue could be facilitated through the Sedgwick County webpage with the assistance of the County Communications Department. Citizens could post comments about Taskforce information and these ideas could be included in a public forum.

After the discussion on how to proceed with the gaps in services information, questions were raised about which needs set the "chronic homeless" focus. The needs in question include: low-income housing; homeless prevention services; transportation; employment; and employment services once housed. It was suggested that these needs may not be part of the charge of the Taskforce.

Identified Gaps

Concerns were expressed about the need for accurate data. A request was made for updated census information on shelters. This information will help with the number of beds needed in winter. Specifically, the need for detox beds was highlighted as a particularly challenging gap.

Once Housing First questions were addressed, dialogue moved toward gaps identified in HMIS. Gaps identified in the HMIS system include: untimely data entry; problems with data accuracy; bed availability feature is not used; case management capabilities are not used; and largest local provider does not use the system. It was expressed that it would be in the best interest of the community if all providers participated in HMIS to avoid future penalties that could be assessed if not enough providers are linked to the system. It was reaffirmed that forward progress is being made but identified threats to the system could prevent more progress.

The HMIS discussion continued with the difficulties of addressing HUD standards. If providers do not use the system, it becomes increasingly difficult to reach targets set by the federal government. While there have been difficulties in the past with confidentiality, United Way is working with providers to get as many providers to use the system as possible.

Next, questions were raised about the 119 permanent, supportive units. Questions were raised about what comprises a permanent unit. It was suggested that a permanent unit could be an apartment dwelling and does not have to be a totally self-contained unit.

Once permanent, supportive units were defined, conversation shifted to a discussion on residential treatment and detox beds. In our community, detoxification beds are considered "social detox" and are available for individuals to get sober in a safe place. They are considered social detox because medical treatment is not provided during their stay. On average, a stay in detox is usually 3 - 5 days, but a person can check themselves out at any time. Residential treatment beds are available for individuals seeking substance abuse treatment, for an extended period of time (up to 30 days). In residential treatment, individuals receive counseling and other treatment as necessary.

As May Arise

Next, Mary K. Vaughn made an announcement that the City of Wichita was opening its Section 8 application process. She stated that homeless citizens were eligible unless a crime had been committed which would prevent him or her from being eligible for the program. Also, the City of Wichita would be keeping its application process open until no more applications could be processed. This is different from prior years where there was a clear beginning and ending to the application process. This process will not preclude individuals who become homeless after the typical application period.

Next Meeting

The Taskforce will decide whether or not to adopt the Housing First Model. In addition, a discussion will be held about the mission of the Taskforce with regard to "chronic homeless" or "all" homeless. The next meeting will be held the American Red Cross located at 1900 E. Douglas.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 a.m.