

Ellen G. Groh,  
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## Concord Coalition to End Homelessness

<http://www.concordhomeless.org>

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William Gunn  
Michael Leuchtenberger  
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Angela Roberts  
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Joanne St.Hilaire  
Gerard Wallace

To: Concord Plan to End Homelessness Steering Committee members  
From: Ellen Groh, CCEH Director  
Date: August 20, 2015

Re: Update on Plan to End Homelessness

### **I. Expanded Resource Center (Goal 1 of Plan)**

Showers and laundry are fully operational and seeing lots of use. Comparing July 2014 to July 2015, the number of guests has increased from an average of 24 per day to 32 per day.

### **II. Housing First (Goal 1 of Plan)**

CCEH just received word that we have been awarded \$30,000 from Lincoln Financial Foundation to fund the Housing First caseworker position. We are still optimistic that we will receive an additional \$40,000 from State Grant in Aid (SGIA) funds and we should find out at the end of August. We will go forward either way; SGIA will allow us to pay benefits and some overhead. We've assisted 5 people in submitting applications to Concord Housing and Redevelopment (CH+R). Many on our list of long-term Concord homeless people are either sex offenders and ineligible, or have been hard to track down and get them to apply, or have mental health issues that would make living in a high rise very difficult or impossible.

Some people on our list do have incomes and CAP is putting great effort into helping them get housed. CCEH is adapting our Housing First program and will take some of these people as our first clients to provide caseworker support. (Our first potential client is a 20 year old man with history of trauma/mental health issues who has been homeless since age 18. CAP helped him move into an apartment last week. He had several friends stay over during the weekend.) Our Resource Center Case Manager will fill the role of interim part-time Housing First caseworker, and we will be advertising for the position very soon.

*CCEH would like input/assistance from the Steering Committee to connect with private landlords to inform them of this program and engage them as partners, and I'll bring this up for discussion at the Steering Committee meeting.*

### **III. Cold Weather Response Strategy**

As reported in a previous email, CCEH made a plea at the June 25<sup>th</sup> City budget hearing for the \$10,000 formerly given to the Cold Weather Shelters, to use for increased diversion capacity at the Resource Center this winter. The council voted unanimously to grant CCEH the funds. Of almost more significance, the level of knowledge, compassion, and commitment that was so

evident in the City Council's discussion and questions was tremendous. After that City Council meeting, the Mayor suggested we did not need to give another update in July as planned, and the Executive Committee agreed. I've told City Council we expect to report to them in about 6 months. We will use these funds to increase the hours at the Resource Center (either 8- 4pm or 9- 5 pm) probably beginning mid-October.

To help get the word out that there will be no Cold Weather Shelter this winter, Andy Labrie from Belknap-Merrimack Community Action Program (BM-CAP) created big posters: Plan Ahead! No Concord Cold Weather Shelter, with various agencies to call. Jackie Whatmough has distributed this to the local Welfare network, and the Bureau of Homeless and Housing Services (BHHS) has also distributed a notice to service providers statewide. Jackie will send another reminder in October. Some individuals in the camps still do not believe it is true, but when the first cold snap hits they will hopefully change their mind.

Our list of long-term homeless individuals in Concord has been combined with the BM-CAP agency's list, and has 31-33 people on it (at least 2 from CAP's list we think will not remain in Concord.) Of this list:

- 5 have submitted applications to CH+R
- 6 are currently housed (and will hopefully remain housed)
- 1 is at McKenna House, awaiting a spot with Families in Transition's Housing First program

This leaves 19-21 that we believe will need assistance getting through the winter if they are not permanently housed before then. We're working to get those that might qualify/be appropriate for CH+R to apply (4-5 more people), work with FIT to get more people into their program (total of 12 slots available statewide), and working with CAP to find individualized solutions for the rest for this winter.

(CAP also reported that on September 1<sup>st</sup> the Concord Police Dept. will be emptying out all the campsites on railroad and city land from the bridge near the Friendly Kitchen to the Water St. Bridge. At the same time they will be clear cutting the area so it will not allow for campers to return. Andy Labrie's best guess is it will be 30 to 40 campers, and that these are the areas with heaviest drug and alcohol abuse/use. It was also Andy's understanding that 4 portable meth labs were found recently.)

#### **IV. Coordinated Entry (formerly Coordinated Assessment)**

Our test pilot of a coordinated entry system was not very successful. It is proving very challenging for service providers to change their long-standing intake practices. The State is aware of the challenges, and other regions are also experiencing this. They have scheduled a training workshop in mid-September and will offer more explicit guidelines to the regions, so that will hopefully move the process along.

## **V. Other Aspects of Plan:**

### **Addressing the issue regionally:**

I've been working with Jackie Whatmough to quantify how much the City spends on assisting homeless people, and it presents some challenges. I've engage some volunteers to gather similar data from all the Merrimack towns. *I will present what we've gathered at the Steering Committee meeting, and ask for input on how we can best use this information to go forward.*

### **Funding for Plan Initiatives**

Besides the LLF funding for Housing First, CCEH received \$25,000 from Granite United Way for Plan Implementation, and we are applying to NH Charitable Foundation for a second year of funding at \$25,000.

### **Future priority to focus on those with criminal records/release from jail or prison:**

I attended a webinar on using the Housing First model with sex offenders and others with criminal records which was very useful. It stressed the correlation between recidivism and homelessness, each condition increasing the risk of the other. It also offered a way to move beyond the initial public reactions to sex offenders (fear, anger, disgust) and shift to a data-driven conversation about best practices to effectively prevent future offenses (and denying housing is not effective!)

Vermont has partnered with their Department of Corrections, and the DOC is helping to fund the Housing First strategy (I believe paying for all voucher costs) for inmates being released because the cost of providing vouchers and caseworker support is so much lower than the cost to incarcerate.

Vermont reported the following costs for one night:

in the hospital	\$1,500
in the correctional facility:	\$152
in a hotel:	\$62
in Housing First program:	\$42

Since 2010, they've served 112 households being released from incarceration: 14% were sex offenders, 92% had a history of trauma, 15% had children. Of the 112 participants, 91 (81%) have not returned to long-term incarceration.

CCEH is at full capacity right now, getting the Housing First program launched, but I'm hoping in the spring we could pursue discussions with our correctional facilities to see if this is a possibility in Concord.

Thank you all for all your time and energy!!

Ellen Groh