

Chittenden County Homeless Alliance (CCHA)  
Steering Committee Meeting  
Thursday, February 6, 2025;  
9:00am - 11:00am  
Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, Burlington

**MINUTES**

**1. Open Forum**

**10 minutes**

Adam Hall reported the CRC is open on weekends (9:00am-4:00pm) through February.

Travis Poulin announced CVOEO is starting its annual free tax preparation program for those in the state who make less than \$67,000 per year.

Stephanie Bixby from Burlington Housing Authority mentioned they are preparing for the annual waitlist purge in March.

Kerri Duquette-Hoffman mentioned Winooski Housing Authority is also in the middle of their waitlist purge.

Sarah Russell announced the emergency warming shelter was able to provide over 200 bednights over a span of four nights during the last month.

Emily Korkosz, from the Turning Point Center, mentioned they are starting a 16-week parenting education program.

Will Towne mentioned Spectrum Youth Services is working to open new shelter in St. Albans and are hiring for that new location.

Amy Carmola announced that Common Good Vermont is still looking for feedback from the public about how the federal administration transition is affecting the people we serve.

Thomas Renner, from Congresswoman Balint's office, said there is a lot of uncertainty in the U.S. House of Representatives. Congresswoman Balint's housing bill was gaining traction with the Harris campaign, but with the new administration the team is working to introduce parts of the bill into others this session. He is looking for us to share stories with their office to help them communicate the situation on the ground to the legislators in Washington D.C. Please email Rep Balint's office: [Thomas.Renner@mail.house.gov](mailto:Thomas.Renner@mail.house.gov).

James Paradisis, from Senator Sanders' office, said they have been dealing with a lot of inbound questions from the public regarding changes to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies and funding. They also need people to continue to reach out to them with stories to share at the federal level. The varying departments of the federal government are in different situations involving funding. They are concerned that Elon Musk is working cut federal programs and expanding that reach. They want to remain a point of contact through this administration transition. James mentioned he was last in a CCHA meeting 8 years ago when he worked for Vermont 211 and was excited to see such robust participation in CCHA Steering Committee meetings. Please email observations and concerns to: [James.Paradisis@sanders.senate.gov](mailto:James.Paradisis@sanders.senate.gov)

Corey (PLE) said he would like to see less people on the streets in Burlington, and he wants to know what is being done with the abandoned buildings downtown. Miles, from Senator Welch's office, mentioned they recently partnered with COTS to use their federal property to set up the new warming shelter on Pearl Street, and there are additional federal properties under consideration for homeless uses in Montpelier.

Andrew Frost, from Senator Sanders' office, mentioned the Republicans have a narrow margin lead in the U.S. House of Representatives, which will force some bipartisanship in the budget conversations ahead. Please email with feedback and advocacy: [Andrew\\_Frost@sanders.senate.gov](mailto:Andrew_Frost@sanders.senate.gov)

Miles McGuriman, from Senator Welch's office, said they want to hear stories of difficulties so they can communicate the information back to decision makers in Washington D.C. They hope the 2025 budget will remain "more or less" unchanged and a lot of the cuts will be seen in the next budget year. Please email with feedback and advocacy: [Miles\\_McGuriman@welch.senate.gov](mailto:Miles_McGuriman@welch.senate.gov)

**2. Approves Minutes and Agenda**

**5 minutes**

**a. Approval of the January Meeting Minutes**

Jane Helmstetter motioned to approve the January meeting minutes. Taylor Thibault seconded. 20 in favor. None opposed. None abstained. Motion passed.

**b. Approval of the February Meeting Agenda.**

Taylor Thibault made one Amendment to change the title of the Data Review presentation to be given by Stephanie Smith. The data will not address unsheltered data and will focus specifically on Coordinated Entry.

**2. Data Review**

**15 minutes**

**a. Unsheltered Data Review & Discussion – Stephanie Smith**

[CE Data Report](#)

Phase 1 of Coordinated Entry – Identification of Individual in Need of Housing; vital documents, assessment of needs, etc.

Phase 2 of Coordinated Entry – Referral to Housing navigation and referral/support for household needs, as necessary

Phase 3 of Coordinated Entry – Housing ready; awaiting referral to CE (or otherwise) housing resource.

Marcella Gange pointed out that there are an increasing number of people enrolled in the Coordinated Entry system and less people leaving the system into permanent housing. The number of unhoused people is growing, without adequate exits to permanent housing.

Corey (PLE) asked if there is a way to help people buy bus passes to travel to the resources outside Chittenden County. Travis mentioned that typically non-profits are unable to provide that type of service, but CVOEO does have some programs to help people with bus vouchers out of state and to housing destinations.

Taylor Thibault mentioned that a large portion of the unhoused population is not represented in the Coordinated Entry Data. Adam Hall from the Community Resource Center said they estimate roughly 1/3 of the population exists outside of Coordinated Entry.

Deanna Hartog from Legal Aid asked if Coordinated Entry tracks the rate of people leaving subsidized housing programs back to homelessness. HMIS does collect this information, and this can be presented at future CCHA meeting, by ICA.

Taylor mentioned there had been previous requests for a subset of data for an older population group. Stephanie mentioned HUD already uses a 62 or older population subset. Meghan Morrow-Raferty mentioned ICA can run the reports that are being asked for and will add a subset of data for those 62 or older. Sarah mentioned it would also be helpful to see other breakdowns of the population based on substance use, citizen status, etc. Jane would like to see trends in the data over time highlighted in the Coordinated Entry data presentations.

CCHA Co-Chairs will follow-up with CE/HMIS to report this data at future CCHA meetings, as part of the CE data presentation.

### **3. Shelter Capacity Discussion**

**15 minutes**

#### **a. Facilitation by Sarah Russell**

Corey (PLE) would like to see more assistance in the community to help those who are unhoused gain employment. Kerri Duquette-Hoffman mentioned the Vermont Department of Labor hosts job fairs locally and may be able to host a job fair at the Community Resource Center. She also mentioned HireAbility regularly meets with people locally to help with gaining employment. The King Street Center also offers employment assistance services.

Sarah mentioned the Emergency Shelter hosted up to 85 people on the coldest nights, which is not a sustainable number to care for with existing resources. Sarah called on other organizations to offer overflow spots in their shelters on the nights the City of Burlington's Emergency Shelter is opened; this would help to disburse the increasing number of people who need housing on our coldest nights. There is overtime payment available for organizations who have employees willing to work shifts at the extreme cold weather shelter operated by the City of Burlington. Jane Helmstetter asked if there is any contact with United Way to gain volunteers for the emergency shelter. Amy Carmola (United Way) said it would be nice to have a volunteer orientation beforehand, so that the United Way volunteers can be ready when a shelter is opened at the last minute. Amy and Sarah are discussing this volunteer opportunity.

Craig Johnston, from the Howard Center, mentioned he had seen people living outside the Roxy Theatre.

Jonathan Farrell mentioned COTS is serving 70-100 people per day at the Daystation. The COTS warming shelter remains full at 36 people, but they could expand to 42 beds in a pinch. They had about 106 people in total in all their shelters.

Will Towne asked Sarah Russell what the minimum and ideal staffing numbers are for the emergency shelter. Sarah mentioned it is best to maintain a ration of 1:10 volunteers. The shelter also employs two contracted security guards during two shifts and works with VDH to secure medical reserve corps volunteer members for coverage.

Adam Hall expressed that we knew we needed additional winter beds this past summer, and wants to start planning for the 500 shelter beds we need for next winter. Ari Kisler mentioned the state has a \$2.1 million in funding earmarked for housing, but that would serve only 36 beds. The local community needs to plan to advocate for additional funding to meet current needs. The City of Burlington and the CCHA will host a convening of shelter and service providers in March to discuss this.

### **4. Medicaid Updates**

**15 minutes**

#### **a. Medicaid for Permanent Supportive Housing – Molly Shriver-Blake**

##### [Presentation](#)

Jane Helmstetter asked when this program will be up and running. Molly said they hope to have everything started within the month. Jane also asked if Molly and her team are in contact with different states to learn how they do it. Molly mentioned they receive technical assistance to collaborate with other states administering similar programs.

Marcella asked how the new lack of housing vouchers from BHA will affect candidates for this program. Project-based housing where services are not already in place is the best option for the program. Prioritizations for the program will be taken from the top of the Coordinated Entry list.

Corey (PLE) asked if the abandoned buildings downtown Burlington could be opened to the public for a 24/7 shelter. Sarah Russell mentioned the Medicaid program doesn't apply to the situation of the abandoned buildings but is best paired with existing PSH that doesn't have additional support services onsite.

Kerri mentioned the state still needs to budget to cover the remaining 55% of the costs uncovered by the Medicaid program. More advocacy will be needed.

## **5. Legislative Updates**

**15 minutes**

### **a. Housing & Homelessness Alliance of Vermont - Frank Knaack**

The legislation coming out of the state government is more positive. The Budget Adjustment Act ([Bill H-91](#)) is being voted on next week. It includes an extension of cold weather protections for General Assistance Emergency Housing, also an additional \$8.6 million for Vermont Housing Conservation Board, and thirdly \$2.8 million for the ongoing disability housing initiative to create space for ten individuals within a semi-independent living situation. The hope is there is enough in this bill that the Governor will not apply his veto power. The hope is the bill will cap the number to reality and not an arbitrary number as it is now.

Frank and Sarah Russell shared that the General Assistance Emergency Housing (motel program) Taskforce recommendations were not included in the bill. They both hope the bill submitted is just a placeholder, and that the ongoing committee work will include the General Assistance Taskforce recommendations before finalizing the language.

Stephanie mentioned the current funding model forces her staff to commit free hours to support the Economic Services Division in CE assessment work. More funding is needed to support Coordinated Entry. Frank mentioned the recent education of legislators as to the purpose of Coordinated Entry has helped to create a more informed debate, but the budget situation is strained.

## **6. HOP Reports**

**20 minutes**

### **a. Steps to End Domestic Violence – Ciara Kilburn**

The HOP grant funds the 21-unit, pet friendly shelter, funds the overflow motel program, partial funding for four Housing Advocates, partial funded for a Shelter Coordinator, and labor to operate as a CE assessment hub.

### **b. Pathways – Lindsay Mesa**

The HOP funds support the services that are provided through the rapid-rehousing program. The funds also function as a match for HUD funding. They are supporting 25 individuals over 11 households. The average time from intake to housing in 2024 was 134 days, this is an ongoing challenge to shorten that timespan.

Molly Shriver-Blake also mentioned a story about someone who had received housing as part of the pathways program that has now been hired as an employee to continue helping others find housing.

### **c. Burlington Housing Authority – Derek Souza & Carlos Esquivel**

Derek is working with people who have received a notice to vacate. Housing retention is the goal. They have a cleaning grant for the next few months, available to those eligible for Medicaid, to help people relieve situations of squalor or hoarding. Carlos is also working on rapid rehousing, and they are now referrals are coming from Coordinated Entry.

**7. Standing Sub-Committee Updates**

**15 minutes**

- a. **Strategic Planning**
- b. **Coordinated Entry**
- c. **Housing Retention**
- d. **Outreach and Membership**
- e. **NOFO and Ranking**
- f. **Veterans**
- g. **Data, PIT, & HMIS**

Marcella Gange announced the PIT Count Form Verifications are due today.

Corey (PLE) asked if there are resources to help those who are unhoused buy groceries. Kerri Duquette-Hoffman offered to talk more about those resources after the meeting.

Cam Lauf, from the Turning Point Center, mentioned the meeting could be made more accessible to those with lived experience. A virtual option would help.

**8. Other Business**

**10 minutes**

Travis Poulin motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ciara Kilburn seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:59am.

*We encourage questions and participation in discussion and place great emphasis on hearing from people with lived experience of homelessness and/or housing insecurity. If you are a person who has lived experience, you will be provided with a stipend for attending; please let us know after the meeting concludes. Please reach out to us prior or let us know when you arrive at the meeting should you need any accommodation(s).*

*Thank you so much for joining us.*