

Greater Richmond Continuum of Care Board
April 21, 2020, virtual meeting, Minutes

Participants: Brian Koziol, Annette Cousins, Janna Wiener, Hana Yun, Melissa Canaday, Brooke Pendleton, Brian Davis, Christine Elwell, Karen Stanley, Susan Hallett, Kimberly Tucker, Allison Bogdanovic, Eric Leabough, Fred Karnas, Katina Williams, Kiva Rogers, Kenyatta Green

Staff: Kelly King Horne, Michael Rogers

Brian Koziol opened the meeting by thanking all partners for their efforts to ensure the health and safety of our neighbors experiencing homelessness during the pandemic.

Review of Collaborative Pandemic Response:

Kelly King Horne provided an overview of the collaborative pandemic response and on federal guidance to Continuums of Care:

- Pandemic declared 3/12/2020. Risk for people experiencing homelessness identified by federal partners.
- Shelter preparation and changes to operations
- Unsheltered risk mitigation and offer of safe, indoor accommodations as part of life-saving effort to reduce exposure to and transmission of COVID-19.
- Expansion of emergency shelter operations to meet increased needs.
- Expansion of program resources including workforce program and securing additional case management support.
- Next phase of planning:
 - Strengthening of housing-focused resources and staffing capacity to address short- and medium-term impact of pandemic
 - Increase in targeted prevention resources
 - Continued public health response as rates of exposure and transmission increase
- HUD provides daily information and guidance for Continuums of Care to address the crisis.
- Emphasis of local responses should be based on the urgent public health needs of people experiencing homelessness. From the HUD Special Needs Assistance Program: “SNAPS understands your #1 priority right now is responding to COVID-19.” (www.hudexchange.info.)
- HUD will take into account the need for COVID response when considering performance metrics, subrecipient monitoring, governance, and future HUD monitoring and CoC Competitions.
- New federal and state funds are made available to address the coordinated efforts to reduce the threat of exposure to and transmission of COVID-19 with an emphasis on risk mitigation efforts.
- HUD has provided programmatic waivers to facilitate service provision and housing placements.

Emergency State and Federal Funding:

Brian Koziol gave an overview of federal and state funding to support local communities' pandemic response and shared the federal policy and funding discussions to increase support for rent relief.

Kelly presented the amendment to the 2020 Priorities for Action and Funding which were approved by the GRCoC board in February 2020. The proposed addendum is in line with the board-approved funding priorities and with recommendations from HUD and the National Alliance to End Homelessness. This addendum is based on provider input and a review by the Ranking Committee. The purpose of this addendum is to influence local government funding allocations to support the GRCoC's collaborative pandemic response and to provide clarity for all partners and potential new partners. This funding is not required to be reviewed by the Ranking Committee, but the board discussed the opportunity of using these funding priorities to continue to align the data-driven Housing First efforts of the GRCoC.

The board approved the addendum.

Disaster Response Policy: Emergency Policies and Procedures:

Kelly reviewed the draft amendments to the Coordinated Entry System Policies and Procedures to provide additional clarity for the collaborative pandemic response, to provide additional clarity to providers, and to lay out how hotels or non-congregate shelters are used as part of this collaborative pandemic response. In response to questions raised during the discussion, Kelly shared that the hotels contracted by Homeward for the non-congregate shelter program was chosen based on public health guidance from the CDC and that it was anticipated that the CARES Act ESG-CV funding would provide the financial support needed for this non-congregate hotel strategy.

The amendments were based on public health guidance, provider input in different meetings and updates, and surveys but the System Policy and Process Committee did not formally meet to review the document. Hana Yun shared that the amendments were in line with committee member input and other community conversations. Hana recommended an amendment to the document based on the context of the pandemic funding addendum. The emergency policies passed as amended with one abstention.

CoC operations and general updates:

Board members discussed the need to learn more about the PPP program and the impact on receiving stimulus funding through the CARES Act.

Homeward submitted the Virginia Homeless Solution Program application for \$1.7 million to support the Homeless Crisis Line and the Greater Richmond Regional Hotline, emergency shelter operations, rapid re-housing, and other programs. The board thanked Michael Rogers for his work on this coordinated funding application.

Kelly provided an update on the HUD 2020 funding competition and shared that it is unclear if a new competition will be held this year. She also discussed the HUD mega waivers available to providers to respond more flexibly to the pandemic.

Brian Koziol provided an update on correspondence from the Advocates for Richmond Youth and other partners highlighting their priorities and concerns for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness and housing instability. He shared that a small group would draft a response letter and would follow up. Kimberly Tucker offered to assist in this effort.

The board discussed the need for enhanced messaging about our coordinated efforts to address homelessness and the collaborative pandemic response programs, particularly to provide a historical perspective on the under-resourcing of our community response to homelessness. Christine Elwell and Fred Karnas offered to assist on this effort.

The meeting adjourned.