

The Barrier Busters Network Action Group

The purpose of the Barrier Busters Network is to establish a method for the reduction of barriers that exist between public and private human services agencies in Washtenaw County. In the last year:

- The network formed a partnership with the State Department of Human Services to streamline the delivery of emergency funds to county residents.
- The network brought in DTE representatives to explain energy payment options for local citizens in need. As a result of that meeting, DTE granted Barrier Buster Agency's access to their online database to prevent utility shutoffs by placing a "hold" on a resident's account contingent on a commitment of partial or full payment within a certain time period.

The Barrier Buster Network meets the fourth Wednesday of every month from 1:30 to 3:00 PM at the Library Learning Resource Center (LLRC) located at 4135 Washtenaw Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48107 (entrance is off of Hogack Road). The group is chaired by Beth Manuel, Child Care Network and Mary Beth Lampe, Community Support and Treatment Services.

The Unmet Needs Fund:

Two years ago the Barrier Buster Network, in an effort to streamline the delivery of emergency assistance, created a centralized Emergency Unmet Needs Fund that agencies use for the resolution of crisis situations. The main purpose has been eviction prevention, which includes utility assistance.

Each participating human service agency designates an individual as the agency "barrier buster." That person is responsible for cutting through administrative red tape to resolve the crisis situation and a. In addition, the agency barrier buster can request cash assistance from the Emergency Unmet Needs Fund.

During the calendar year 2005, Barrier Buster funds were accessed by member agencies for the following needs:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Requests</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Per request</i>
Utilities	134	\$64,848.15	\$483.94
Eviction Prevention	64	\$40,127.08	\$626.99
Homelessness	35	\$14,481.75	\$413.76
Health	19	\$5,709.61	\$300.51
Transportation	12	\$4,607.90	\$383.99
Miscellaneous	10	\$2,469.00	\$246.90
Total	274	\$132,243.49	\$482.64

- 77 of the utility requests came after September 1.

Current Barrier Buster Network Member Agencies

Alpha House (Interfaith Hospitality Network)	MSU Extension
Catholic Social Services	Neighborhood Senior Services
Center for Independent Living	Ozone House
Child Care Network	POWER Inc.
Community Action Network	Washtenaw County Public Health
Community Support and Treatment Services (CSTS)	SAFE House
Continuum of Care	Shelter Association of Washtenaw County
Employment Training and Community Services (ETCS)	SOS Community Services
Department of Human Services (DHS)	Student Advocacy Center
First Steps Washtenaw	Turner Geriatric Clinic
Friends IN Deed	Veteran Services
Help Source	Washtenaw Community College
Housing Bureau for Seniors	Washtenaw County Trial Court
Judson Center	Washtenaw Health Plan
Legal Services of South Central Michigan	Washtenaw Housing Alliance
Michigan Ability Partners	Washtenaw Community Health Organization
	Women's Center of America