

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

June 28th, 2006

LLRC

1:30-3:00pm

BBN Attendees: Patricia Parker-Self, Vet. Services
Shirley Tarvis, CSTS
Alisa Anderson, HVA/211
Shannon Farmer, HVA/211
Beth Manuel, CCN
Cheri Nalepa, NSS
Paul Sher, Legal Services
Peri Stone-Palmquist, EPHY
Helena Prince, FID
Sandy Reeber, ETCS
Christina Oliver, SOS
Harriet Bakalar, HBS
Juel Marceau, HelpSource
Shelley Homolka, HelpSource
Measie James, WHP
Efrion Smith, Power, Inc.

Staff Present: Andrea Plevек, HSCC Intern

I. Welcome/Introductions

- Beth Manuel and Paul Sher opened the meeting
- Individual introductions were made

II. Approve Agenda and Minutes

- Beth Manuel: Amendment to the agenda--Due to Mike Scholl's absence, an update on the Barrier Buster Emergency Unmet Needs Fund will be sent to the list serve by Mike or Andrea.
- Agenda with amendment approved unanimously.
- Paul Sher: Motion to approve 5/24/06 minutes.
- Minutes approved unanimously.

III. Public Comment

- No public comment.

IV. New Business

- a. Emergency Services Contract Review Follow-Up (Andrea Plevек)**

- Note: Please review "*Recommendations for Barrier Busters Financial Request Verification and Documentation*" document that was handed out prior to presentation. Will be posted on the BB website as well.
- Most agencies' case files were in compliance with the criteria set forth in this contract.
- However, there were some problems:
 - i. Incomplete case files—missing documentation of interactions with client, other agencies, and third parties, as well as missing Barrier Busters Release of Information forms.
 - ii. Documentation/verification was erratic—for some agencies, there was no consistency from case file to case file.
 - iii. Exhaustion of other resources not documented—agencies often did not have supporting information for the Encompass checklist regarding other financial resources utilized/pursued.
- Based on the review, these are the following recommendations:
 - i. Keep complete and accessible records—make sure you are able to pull all necessary information in case of an audit.
 - ii. Document everything—make sure every interaction with the client/landlord/Agency XYZ is documented. This is not to say that you need to keep a file with paperwork per se—case notes may be electronic, but they must be complete.
 - iii. If your agency submits a BB request on behalf of another agency because the client is primarily working with the other agency, you are still responsible for having all necessary documentation for the request (even if it that means obtaining copy of the other agency's case notes, etc.)
 - iv. Be consistent—When documenting a request to Barrier Busters, make sure you follow the same procedure every time. A checklist may be useful for this since staff turnover can be a barrier to consistency.
 - v. Get a BB Release of information EVERYTIME—It is critical that we have this on file before any information is shared via the Encompass system,

the Barrier Buster list serve, or simply between agencies about the BB request. It is acceptable to obtain a verbal consent IF the entire BB Release of Information is read aloud to the client and they give verbal consent witnessed by TWO staff members who must both sign the release form. It is also important to document that the consent was obtained verbally via this process. If a verbal consent is obtained, it is also acceptable to document this electronically in your case notes or on the encompass form—but please be sure that the procedure for obtaining consent is documented along with the electronic signatures of the two staff persons witnessing consent.

- Most members present signified a growing concern that people (professionals) are going to Barrier Busters first without making an attempt to utilize other resources.
- Andrea: However, the Barrier Busters fund is for emergency unmet needs, so creating more barriers to its use is not appropriate. Agencies agree to hold each other accountable for its appropriate use when they become members.
- Harriet: A helpful tool for BB members may be to have a booklet/guide to resources available in the community that they should try first along with the requirements for accessing those funds.
- Andrea will look into creating that guide.
- Paul: A checklist may also be helpful for creating consistency amongst agencies' case files.
- Andrea will put a general checklist together.
- Andrea: The guide to resources in the community, a general checklist, and the list of recommendations will be made available via the BB list serve and website asap.

V. Old Business

a. Eviction/Prevention Feedback—HVA/211 (Alisa Anderson and Shannon Farmer)

- In the month of June, 211 received 200 calls related to Eviction prevention and/or Housing issues.
- There was only 1 call during this time that was a Landlord-referred call ending in a Barrier Busters request—this request was approved yesterday.
- An example of the landlord-referred questions asked by Shannon were provided.

- Non-landlord referred calls are also being tracked differently at 211, with a similar series of questions specific to housing and eviction issues to help operators give better information and referrals.
- There is 100% follow up on all Eviction Prevention/Housing-related calls.
- HVA/211 is also working with Dale Fitch, a professor of Social Work at the UofM SSW, on evaluation of the 211 process.
- Most callers are finding help; no complaints so far.
- Harriet: expressed criticism of the 211 Eviction Prevention initiative saying that it lacks transparency. She also stated that she worked with a small group on the protocols for this initiative and has yet to see the final version of these protocols.
- Andrea: stated that the protocol meeting Harriet is referring to was used to gather information to inform the questions that the 211 Eviction Prevention person would utilize when assessing the level of risk for eviction and the level of complexity of the situation. The outcome of that meeting was used as a guide by 211 to create the questions used in the example handed out today.
- Harriet: stated that she would still like to see the protocols in their final form.
- Helena: asked what happens with callers when they call 211—do they get case management?
- Shannon: responded that most of the calls are referred (of the 200, only one was not) to human service agencies in Washtenaw County for case management.
- Helena: asked how income is verified by 211 without having any physical documentation.
- Andrea: responded that the Barrier Busters Application Manual does not require physical documentation of income. The manual states only that when a Barrier Busters request is made, the Barrier Buster must “have collected and retained the necessary documentation to support the request.”
- Paul: suggested that we may need to revisit the issue of income verification and documentation as a group, but also pointed out that many Barrier Buster agencies do not require income verification as it is not a part of their agency’s protocols. He cited Legal Services, Neighborhood Senior Services, and Housing Bureau for

Seniors as agencies that do not require documentation for income verification.

- Reminder to update your agency's information on the 211 website; instructions for doing this will be posted on the Barrier Busters website. If you have any problems with searching their database or concerns about the way your agency is coming up in their searches, feel free to contact 211 or set up a meeting with Alisa and Shannon. They will be happy to work with you to make sure your agency is represented appropriately.
- Beth: stated it is not that BB wants to put 211 in the hot seat, we want to make sure that everyone is following our guidelines.
- Helena: it is important to watch the list serve as well as to check Encompass to verify that requests are being made accurately; for example, a request was made recently for funding to buy a refrigerator and the form stated that Friends-In-Deed could not help. In fact, the requesting agency did not contact us because we had four refrigerators available at that time.
- Paul: people shouldn't be afraid to bring requests to the BB meetings for review; contact Mike or Andrea to get an item on the Agenda.

VI. Case Consultations

- None requested.

VII. Announcements

- Beth: Child Care Network has recently received a financial gift of \$100,000 to provide scholarships to 3 and 4 year olds to attend preschool in the CCN's five county area. Feel free to spread the word.
- Harriet: 1) AACH has Section 8 list open until Friday, June 30th. HBS and AAHC have applications. HBS will help seniors who need help filling out applications. Note: Being placed on the list does not guarantee anything; It simply moves you one step closer to obtaining a voucher. 2) Recently I had a bad situation with a landlord in the area, and Mike suggested I discuss it here at the BB meeting. The name is Sherrock Management and the situation involved the property manager bad-mouthing the resident; talking through the resident instead of directly to me; the property manager would not answer my calls; the resident was

evicted anyway, despite a BB check being delivered.
This is basically for your information.

- Paul: This situation is likely a vindictive response to a prior situation with a disabled tenant of Sherrock's who worked with Legal Services regarding a late rent payment due to a disability check being sent late.
- Paul: Do we want to have a July meeting? Regardless, at the next meeting we should leave time to discuss what we, as a group, would like to have on future agendas.
- Andrea: Since we'd like more time to plan for the content of the agenda, and due to Mike's impending time off with the baby, I would like to suggest that we cancel the July meeting and discuss what we would like to see on the August agenda via the list serve.
- July meeting cancelled unanimously.

VIII. Adjourn

- Adjourned at 3pm.