

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

**April 25, 2007, LLRC
1:30pm—3:00pm**

BBN Attendees: Mary Beth Lampe, CSTS
Beth Manuel, Child Care Network
Paul Sher, Legal Services
Pat Parker-Self, Veteran Services
Measie James, Washtenaw Health Plan
Christina Oliver, SOS Community Services
L'Tanya Green
Laurence Simmons, HARC
Moonson Eninsche, County Treasurer
Heather Mooney, County Treasurer
Alex Bailey, Community Action Network
Annette Wilde, DHS
Mel Batkins, DHS
Sandy Reeber, ETCS
Laurie Wechter, JFS
Kat Fox, Helpsource
Shirley Tarvis, CSTS
Efrion Smith, Power Inc.
Julie Young, Turner Health Systems
Sun Lee, WHP
Yvonne Murowski, Judson Center
Mike Bell, CIL
Karyn Boyce
Cynthia Maritato, DHS
Anna Shankowski, Helpsource
Minsu Longiaru, Pediatric Advocacy
Jennifer Brown, Salvation Army
Michelle Leaphardt, SOS
Joanna Barnes, Friends in Deed
Leica Cardena, Housing Bureau for Seniors
Harriet Bakalar, Housing Bureau for Seniors
Floyd Patterson, Habitat for Humanity
Angela Edmonds, Women's Center
Leslie Barldes, Women's Center

Staff Present: Mike Scholl, Staff Coordinator HSCC

I. Welcome/Introductions

- Co-Chairs opened the meeting
- The Barrier Busters schedule was released by Mike Scholl.

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II. Public Comment

- None

III. New Business –

a. New Member Introduction – Postponed to next meeting

b. State Emergency Relief Update

- Mel Batkins indicated that the State has suspended State Emergency Relief payments for utility needs.
- Shelter and water payments are still available.
- If the person applies for SER, they will meet with their case worker and will still run the budget.
- They are still responsible for a co-pay based on their budget and income.
- The requests are then made to Barrier Busters Emergency Unmet Needs fund.
- Income needs standard is based on gross income.
- SER has suspended funds but it is unclear when or if they will be reinstated.
- In addition, Mike Scholl indicated that the DHS was no requiring that cases that are reimbursed by the State will need a TANF eligibility form filled out a signed.
- We will be working the DHS to see how we can do this to minimize the impact on the Barrier Busters.
- Kate Fox from Helpsource asked about the difficulty getting a signature for some clients.
- We are not sure how it will work out at this point and a copy was distributed to the Barrier Busters.
- Harriet Bakalar asked if this would impact the eligibility for BB funds.
- No, this does not affect the eligibility and our guidelines are still in effect.
- Harriet also asked about other organizations requirement to provide assistance to the clients.
- Mel Batkins from DHS indicated that when they receive a request for they go right to SER with a co-pay, if there are no funds, they will access Barrier Busters.
- DHS indicated that they have no other funds at the agency right now.
- Cindy Maritato indicated that the partnership with Washtenaw County and the Barrier Busters was intended to expand the

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capability of the Emergency Service money in the county. The 60K that is available will lapse if it isn't spent.

- There was a suggestion from the Chair that we consider spending caps to help budget funds through the year.
- Harriett Bakalar indicated that we should review our guidelines and see how they apply.
- Staff indicated that we have no maximum limit to our requests and this allows for greater flexibility.
- Helena Prince indicated that she favors a soft cap which allows for flexibility when the circumstances dictate.
- There was some concerns expressed that the guidelines were not clear with regard to the need to speak to other agencies.
- Indication that we need to go to other agencies first, but that we don't require clients to go to other agencies.
- Staff indicated that you need to make a good faith effort based on the circumstances. Applications that request more funds are reviewed more closely.
- There was a consensus that guidelines should be sent out for review.

c. Interagency Referrals

- There was a consensus that we need to discuss this issue in greater detail but we ran out of time.
- Issue was tabled until the next meeting.

IV. Fund Update

- The funds are very low at this time.
- We will be working on accessing more funds and working with DHS to clarify the SER issue.

Adjourned 3:00 pm

***The Next Meeting is scheduled for
Wednesday, May 23, 2007 - 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm @ LLRC***

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Washtenaw County Space Planning--Key Questions

Barrier Busters, 8/23/06

Jail

Should we expand the jail? If so, how large?

If we expand the current facility, should the existing building be brought up to the standards used in the expansion?

What alternative sanctions or diversion methods should be funded to support reduction of the jail population?

We need to focus on early education programs, fund alternative options such as community service as an alternative to incarceration. There should be more structured and perhaps more extensive work programs, even house arrest, as alternatives. There is a perception that some people will not do community service since they know they might be released early because of the over crowding problem at the jail; we need to be sure that those who can do community service, do it.

Farming people out to other jails is not an answer to the jail over crowding problem. It is more costly, cuts people off from local services and from their families.

How many people at the jail are there pre-trial? (perhaps thirty percent of those at the jail on average.) Are there ways to reduce that number, opening beds for those who have been adjudicated? Are there alternative ways to handle those that are returned to jail for probation or parole violations?

Can we distinguish between those who are incarcerated for violent offenses—who present a threat to themselves or to others—and handle them differently than others who might not need to be jailed?

We need to develop and fund (or perhaps revitalize) a street outreach program to support prevention efforts. We should develop an Options Center where people can be referred to local nonprofits for the help they need—mental health or substance abuse—rather than placing them in jail.

The state is developing a re-entry program to address the recidivism problem and we need to aggressively partner with them. We should be thinking about connecting any proposed jail expansion with efforts to support improved alternative diversion efforts.

Ultimately, we have to trust the recommendations of those who work in the jail and who provide services—the criminal justice officials have a better handle on the issues—and they need to provide recommendations on what needs to be done. And, they need to do a better job sharing information and making the case.

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Courts

What should the 14A1 District Court look like? Should the Juvenile Division of the Family Court be centrally located with other areas of Family Court? If not, where should it be located?

How might the existing Trial Court building downtown be improved?

There are real safety and security problems at the court at the Service Center; crime victims and families are abused a second time when they have to come face to face with accused or adjudicated felons.

The 14,1A court is a disaster—it needs to be at the top of the list in terms of funding priorities.

Parking is a problem at the downtown facilities; when we go down there to provide services there is no place to park, especially after 11am, or the alternatives are costly and come out of our pockets, cutting into the services we can provide.

We should avoid splitting up court responsibilities unless there is a strong recommendation for keeping family and juvenile responsibilities separate from other courts.

Towner

Should the 555 Towner facility be converted to Health campus and delivery center?

Would your clients or constituents benefit from satellite service delivery?

If converted to a health campus, where should the ETCS administrative offices be located?

The Towner facility is not currently client-friendly.

Providing a “one stop” service delivery center makes sense; we need to think holistically about client needs and provide access to services in an effective and efficient manner. This should include DHS and social services as well. At the same time, programs offered in cooperation with other organizations, e.g., faith-based and nonprofits, can also improve access and efficiency.

Some ETCS services are provided at the Towner facility—the “thaw” program, weatherization, and emergency cash assistance. It may make sense to link these services to the health services that are provided at Towner.

Does it make sense to consider co-locating some of the family support services at the jail site? Would this also be a way to improve service delivery?

Funding

How should we fund these proposed space initiatives?

What would be the impact of not funding these space initiatives?

A “big cookie sale”

There are no easy answers to the funding problem. A new millage would provide additional revenue to support infrastructure and facility needs, although there may not be sufficient support for it. Borrowing money using current funding streams could potentially mean a reduction in support for human and social service programs, which may limit our ability to provide the services that can really make a difference in people’s lives.

Whatever recommendation emerges, we need to do a much better job of communicating the need; the “story” in the earlier campaigns wasn’t being told effectively.