

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

July 25, 2007, LLRC
1:30pm—3:00pm

BBN Attendees: Mary Beth Lampe, CSTS; Co-Chair
Beth Manuel, Child Care Network; Co-Chair
Paul Sher, Legal Services of South East Mi; Co-Chair
Harriet Bakalar, Housing Bureau for Seniors
Mel Batkins, DHS
Barbara Blom, SAWC
Karyn Boyce, Ozone House
Shannon Duffany, Child Care Network
Moonson Eninsche, Washtenaw County Treasurer
Vickie Frederick-Toure, SafeHouse
Marcie Kerr, Child Care Network
Lisa Keefauver, Jewish Family Services
Susan Lee, Washtenaw County Public Health
Lauren Luebbers, Housing Bureau for Seniors
Heather Mooney, Washtenaw County Treasurer
Yvonne Murowski, Judson Center
Christina Oliver, SOS
Andrea Plevak, MSU Extension
Helena Prince, Friends in Deed
Sandy Reeber, ETCS
Mira Sussman, Jewish Family Services
Shirley Tarvis, CSTS
Anna Tolis, St. Joseph Mercy Senior Health
Annette Wilde, DHS
Julie Young, Turner Geriatric Clinic Social Work

Staff Present: Mike Scholl, CCWC
Emily Arents, CCWC (recorder)

Guest: Linda Coon, Kids' Club
Hilda Halabu, Kids' Club

I. Welcome/Introductions

Co-Chair Beth Manuel opened the meeting.

II. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The minutes were unanimously approved with one correction.
The agenda was unanimously approved with a few additions.

III. Public Comment

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- Helena Prince announced that Friends in Deed still has funding available for employed, single women who need assistance with car repairs. Please contact her (office@friendsindeed.info) for more information.
- Friends in Deed will be hosting a Car Care Clinic on August 4 in the parking lot of St. Francis of Assisi in Ann Arbor. The purpose of the Clinic is to help people with how to maintain their vehicle, so they won't need as many repairs. Because this is the first event of its kind, there are spaces for only 15 people, so please call Friends in Deed (484-4357) to keep a space.
- Moonson Enische and Heather Mooney announced that a "Home Ownership Mobile" will be coming to town during the last part of August.
 - The Mobile has 16 computer terminals where people can look at their credit report, go over it with advisors, and have the report and score sent to them.
 - There will be a display of local services (if you're interested in having your literature there, let Moon or Heather know).
 - Locations/Times
 - First United Methodist Church on Adams and Washtenaw on 8/26 from 1-5pm
 - Washtenaw Community College on 8/27 from 2-7pm
 - Flyers are being developed now, and will be emailed to the listserver as soon as possible.

IV. Approve Subcommittee Recommendations

Review of Recommendations

- The Network Group reviewed the recommendations submitted by the Utilization Subcommittee.
 1. Recommendation 1: Institution of Cap. *It is the recommendation of the Utilization Subcommittee that Barrier Busters not implement a cap system for fund requests. Institution of a cap would reduce agencies' flexibility, and could further complicate the request process. It is the conclusion of the Subcommittee that improving other aspects of the request process would be more effective in ensuring proper fund usage. Barrier Busters should continue to assess each client's situation on an individual basis.*
- Discussion
 - Co-Chair Mary Beth Lampe explained that the Subcommittee was originally charged with the question of whether a cap should be instituted.

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- The question was raised because of the lack of available funds in recent months: it was hoped that a cap might alleviate the situation, by allowing Barrier Busters to assist more people.
 - Since there are so many funding sources with such different requirements for distribution, it was believed that Barrier Busters simply lacks the authority to institute a hard cap.
2. Recommendation 2: Request Process. *It is the recommendation of the Utilization Subcommittee that changes be instituted in the request process, so that more consistency in requests is possible and so that funds are used most effectively. Firstly, specific changes to the Encompass form, to be approved by Barrier Busters, would contribute significantly to the clarity and usefulness of the request form. Secondly, regular audits by an impartial party should be implemented, so that long-term consistency is encouraged. Thirdly, Barrier Busters should designate two standing agenda items in order to better utilize meeting time and improve Barrier Buster request processes: 1. Regular Case Review and 2. Information Sharing and Community Resources Updates.*
- Discussion
 - The Subcommittee found that some changes to the Encompass form were needed, based on the information that was required for a successful request. Some language in the form is misleading or ambiguous, and alterations could make the process go more smoothly.
 - The specific changes proposed will be discussed later in the meeting.
 - The review/audit process was suggested to ensure long-term consistency in requests.
 - A continued case review would allow all members to discuss how individual decisions on cases are made.
 - Mike Scholl asked Subcommittee members to clarify the meaning of “regular case review”.
 - The Subcommittee found that reviewing cases during the Network Group meeting could provide valuable context for the request process.
 - This review could also allow Barrier Busters to develop a consistent culture about how, when, and who we’re working for.
 - It was suggested that those requests that would be presented be selected well in advance and that the individual who made the request be notified, so that they can be prepared to discuss it.

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3. Recommendation 3: Repeat Requests. *While it is the stated policy of Barrier Busters that "The consumer may receive funds from the Emergency Unmet Needs fund once every 12 months," the Utilization Subcommittee raised concerns regarding the waiver to this guideline ("This requirement may be waived at the request of the referring agency."). However, after a review of the history of all requests, the Subcommittee learned that repeat requests have remained roughly steady since 2004, at approximately 7% of all requests. With such a small number of cases concerned, it is clear that no additional oversight of repeat requests is necessary. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the Utilization Subcommittee that Barrier Busters not impose any additional limitations for repeat requests to the Barrier Busters fund.*
- Discussion
 - After a review of all repeat requests, it was found that the number of requesters (2+ requests for one individual) is low.
 - For now, the Subcommittee does not see any need to regulate repeat requesters any more than is already the case.
 - Mike Scholl added that the true number of repeat requests is probably even lower than was found, since nearly all repeat requests are returned or deleted from the system once it is known to be a repeat.

Approval of Recommendations

- Moonson Enische moved that all three recommendations be approved by the Network Group. Karyn Boyce seconded the motion.
- All three recommendations were unanimously approved as written.

Review Proposed Encompass Changes

- Emily Arents presented the changes to the Encompass form that were suggested by the Utilization Subcommittee. There are two "phases" of changes to the Encompass system: the first are wording and fields changes, the second are systems changes. The changes described here are in the first phase (which are estimated to take approximately 3-4 months to complete). A timeline for the second phase has yet to be estimated by Encompass support.
- The proposed changes of the first phase are as follows:
 - Replacement of "Annual Income" to "Annual Household Income," so that "income" can be more broadly defined.
 - There was consensus that changing this field to monthly income might be more effective, since employment might be short-term, and since the housing cost is listed as monthly.

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- Andrea Plevak noted that the Subcommittee discussed an automatic calculation of an affordability ratio of costs to income. This change has been suggested, but remains a more systems change (and will thus be more time-consuming to implement). This affordability calculation could allow for a context in budget planning with clients.
- Separation of narrative section into multiple labeled sections:
 - What caused or led up to the financial need? (be sure to include account number, amounts, brief history, etc.)
 - Is this an emergency? If so, explain the urgency of the request.
 - How is the situation sustainable if funds are allocated?
 - Is the monthly rent or mortgage affordable? If not, what will change?
 - Discussion
 - Mira Sussman suggested that the second box be changed to read “How is this an emergency? Please explain the urgency of the request.” There was consensus that the revised question is more reflective of the Barrier Busters objectives.
 - Harriet Bakalar suggested that the fourth box be changed to read “What plans are in place to prevent future emergencies?” This question will ascertain the same information about the sustainability of the situation, but will not be limited to housing plans. There was consensus that this change be accepted.
- Addition of a field for “Agency/Company Phone,” for better tracking of information for follow-up, and to simplify the work of the Payee in check delivery.
- Replacement of the “NA” column in the **Other Funding Sources** section with the column “Not Utilized.” A “Comments” field will be available next to each “Not Utilized” radio button. Because they are public funding sources, if “Not Utilized” is selected for DHS or ETCS, an explanation will be necessary before submission.
- The Network Group also suggested the following changes:
 - Addition of a “Total Need” box above the **Other Funding Sources** section.
 - Changing “Consumer Payment” to “Consumer/Client Contribution”.
 - Automatic refreshing of the “Other” option, so that clients can access more than one source not already listed.
**Please note: this will be a systems change, and thus may not be included in the first phase of changes.*

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- Replacement of "ES Funds" with "SOS Community Services"
- Emily Arents will make adjustments to the mockup Encompass form, and will distribute the new form via email for final approval so that the changes can be submitted for implementation as soon as possible.

V. New Business

- Linda Coon and Hilda Halabu of the Kids' Club Program at the University of Michigan introduced the program to the Network Group. They distributed flyers about the program.
 - The program is for children and mothers who have witnessed domestic violence, especially for children ages 4-6. Abuse could be physical, emotional, stalking, etc.
 - It is free for anyone interested, provides free childcare and free transportation.
 - There is an optional interview for the mothers involved. Should they choose to participate in the study, they will be paid \$25.
 - Groups will begin in September, but registration starts immediately, so please contact to sign up participants.
 - Program representatives would love to come to agencies to give more in-depth presentations.
 - The participating survivor does not need to be separated from the abuser to participate.
 - Groups alternate location between SAFEHouse and the University of Michigan campus
 - Groups are only offered in English (but other languages are welcomed).

VI. Old Business

There was no old business.

VII. Case Consultation

- Shirley Tarvis introduced a case for consideration of Network Group members.
 - The client is a single mother of a 5-month old child. The mother is 18 years old and developmentally disabled. The ideal setting would be a group home, as the client is able to parent the child with supports, such as cues, reminders, bottles, etc. The client is not limited to Washtenaw County: she's willing to go elsewhere.
 - Please call Shirley Tarvis with suggestions or ideas: 482-2248
- Moonson Enische updated the Network Group on the case he had emailed the listserv about late last week.

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- The client is a 28-year old mother of two children in need of assistance for her car payments. She does have a Section 8 voucher, and works as a door-to-door salesperson (so income is dependent on transportation). She needs about \$900 total: she is two months behind on payments, and license and plate renewal is coming up soon. She needs case management assistance in addition to financial help.
 - Helena Prince said that Friends in Deed might consider the case.
 - Vicki Frederick-Toure suggested that the client might be able to ask for assistance from a local church.

VIII. BB Emergency Unmet Needs Fund Update

Mike Scholl updated the Network Group on the status of funds.

- The annual allocation from the City of Ann Arbor has been received (\$20,000), so funds are available if the client is a resident of Ann Arbor.
- The fund for senior residents of Ann Arbor (Reimold Fund) is replete, but the general fund for all seniors is tapped.
- Mike Scholl reported that he expects no change: it seems that at this time there are funds for Ann Arbor residents, but not for others.
- The County will provide Barrier Busters with \$20,000 for the remainder of the year.
- DHS will contribute \$60,000 on October 1, when the fiscal year begins.
- Mike noted that DHS requires that TANF eligibility income verification form be completed with all requests. Although it adds to the bureaucracy, it is necessary for receipt of funds.
- Mike said that he would keep everyone updated by email. He has remained judicious with requests, so that Barrier Busters can retain funds for the remainder of the year.

IX. Adjournment

Co-Chair Paul Sher thanked Beth Manuel on behalf of the Network Group for her hard work as Co-Chair. Ms. Manuel will begin a position with the Ann Arbor District Library.

If you are interested in becoming a Co-Chair of the Network Group, please contact Paul Sher (psher@umich.edu) or Mary Beth Lampe (lampem@ewashtenaw.org).

Adjourned 3:00 pm

The Next Meeting is scheduled for

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

*Wednesday, September 26, 2007 –
1:30 pm – 3:00 pm Location TBA*