

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

May 23, 2007, LLRC
1:30pm—3:00pm

BBN Attendees: Mary Beth Lampe, CSTS; Co-Chair
Beth Manuel, Child Care Network; Co-Chair
Cynthia Maritato, DHS; Co-Chair
Lisa Anderson, University of Michigan
Alex Bailey, Community Action Network
Harriet Bakalar, Housing Bureau for Seniors
Mel Batkins, DHS
Mike Bell, CIL
Barb Blom, SAWC
Karyn Boyce, Ozone House
Jennifer Brown, Salvation Army
Pamela Byrnes, Michigan Ability Partners
Angela Edmonds, Women's Center
Moonson Eninsche, County Treasurer
Kate Fox, Helpsource Teen Parent Center
Vickie Frederick-Toure, SafeHouse
Susan Gialanella, Public Health
Measie James, Washtenaw Health Plan
Rob Kesselring, CSTS
Michelle Leaphardt, SOS
Amanda Martinez, Power, Inc.
Heather Mooney, Washtenaw County Treasurer
Yvonne Murowski, Judson Center
Christina Oliver, SOS
Pat Parker-Self, Veteran Services
Andrea Plevak, MSU Extension
Helena Prince, Friends in Deed
Sandy Reeber, ETCS
Shannon Richards, Public Health
Ann Ripberger, Turner Health Systems
Efrion Smith, Power, Inc.
Shirley Tarvis, CSTS
Anna Tolis, St. Joseph Mercy Senior Health
Julie Young, Turner Health Systems

Staff Present: Mike Scholl, Staff Coordinator CCWC
Emily Arents, Graduate Student Intern CCWC

Guest: Chuck Keefer, Washtenaw Housing Alliance

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I. Welcome/Introductions

- Co-Chairs opened the meeting.
- The minutes were approved as written.

II. Public Comment

- Kate Fox of the Helpsource Teen Parent Center announced that the 4 May article in the Ann Arbor News about the closure of the Teen Parent Center program due to state funding cuts was incorrect. Although the state cut has resulted in a 52% loss in the program's budget, the Center will remain open while other possible sources of funding are explored. A correction to the erroneous article will be printed soon.
- Mike Scholl announced that he and others within Barrier Busters have been contacted by Livingston County, which is hoping to establish a similar program and which plans to use BB as a model.
- Helena Prince announced that Friend in Deed have a small grant available for single women who need a small amount (\$1-300/person) support for transportation for employment. She asked that anyone interested to please contact her.
- Jennifer Brown announced that the Salvation Army has funds available for prescription assistance for clients within Washtenaw County. The medication must be life-sustaining (such as insulin for diabetes), and cannot be mood-altering or pain medication. The fund must be used by 30 September, so Jennifer asked anyone interested to contact her.

III. New Business

A. New Member Introduction

- Members welcomed new member Vickie Frederick-Toure of SafeHouse Center. SafeHouse provides support to survivors of domestic and sexual violence/abuse. Vickie circulated informational materials about the Center.
- Members welcomed new member Rob Kesselring of the Corner Health Center. The Corner Health Center is a new program within CSTS that provides supportive services to children aged 12-18 who are aging out of foster care or other out-of-home placement (such as detention center, etc.). Rob circulated information about the Corner Health Center.
- Members welcomed Andrea Plevsek, the new representative of the MSU Extension Service. The MSU Extension provides education and support in a variety of areas, ranging from agriculture to parenting classes. The focus of the Extension in the near future will be housing, with planned collaboration with Power Inc. and community housing alliances, among other organizations.

B. Interagency Referrals Discussion

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- Mike Scholl introduced for discussion the issue of referral of a client from one Barrier Busters agency to another. In some cases, when a client is referred from one agency to another, s/he is not always provided with the support to know what the next step is, and s/he contacts Mike for a solution.
- There was discussion of this issue, which many attributed to clients' misunderstanding of or miscommunication about other agencies.
- Many members agreed that not all such problems can be avoided, but there was general agreement that communication is the best default: if you're unsure, just call the other agency and follow up. In addition, this communication could be helpful with non-BB agencies.
- There was consensus that a Barrier Busters request should be a last resort.
- There was discussion of whether clients should be aware of Barrier Busters funds by name. There was consensus that agencies should attempt to explain the nature of Barrier Busters funds as best as possible, so that clients understand protocol for requests.
- Anyone who is confused about this or other policies for Barrier Busters requests was encouraged to contact Mary Beth Lampe (lampem@ewashtenaw.org) or Mike Scholl (schollm@ewashtenaw.org).

C. Barrier Busters Website

- Graduate student intern Emily Arents announced that Barrier Busters has a new external URL for the homepage: www.ewashtenaw.org/barrierbusters. The website will be restructured to be more user-friendly and interactive during the coming months, and any feedback or suggestions from members are very much encouraged. Emily's email address is: arentse@ewashtenaw.org.

D. Changing Income Requirements for Housing

- There was discussion of the issue of McKinley's purchase of many local properties. This change results in significant changes in income and credit requirements for housing, which is likely to effect low income clients negatively especially when the increase may result in rent that is higher than HUD's payment standards. Depending on the property manager, flexibility in housing requirements varies greatly by property, including between properties owned by McKinley. Mike Scholl reported that he is working with the Barrier Busters payee in establishing varies greatly by property, even between properties owned by McKinley. Mike Scholl reported that he is working with the Barrier Busters payee in establishing a relationship with executive staff of McKinley, with the goal of setting up a universal policy.

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IV. Old Business

- There was discussion of the need for the institution of a cap on individuals' requests from Barrier Busters. The idea had been introduced in the past because of the little funding that is available, and difficulty in having funds always available throughout the year.
- Members asked Mike Scholl about the trends in number of requests, as well as average/median amounts of requests in recent periods.
- Mike provided a rough approximation that the average has increased from about \$350 in 2004 to \$600 in 2006. He reported that the number of requests vary greatly according to unforeseeable factors, such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The current number of requests is relatively high because of the state economy and subsequent cuts in other supportive funding.
- It was suggested that Barrier Busters set a cap as a percentage, either as percentage of total available funds or of requested amount.
- Many members suggested that there should be a defined set of criteria of a cap (for instance, less immediate needs would be assigned a cap).
- Helena Prince noted that Friends in Deed process many requests, and have a system of prioritization that assists with these kinds of issues. For instance, a request for support for gas (heating) would not be immediate in the summer months, and transportation needs not affecting employment or health would be considered less of a priority. Helena also reported that housing assistance is granted only when it is clear that the need will not be ongoing, and that some sustainable solution is foreseeable.
- Many members raised concerns that a cap would be another barrier for clients in need, and a cap would be counter to the idea of the support as an "emergency fund."
- It was suggested that a cap only be instituted for users who have used the funds in the past.
- Many members argued for the need for some cap, soft or hard, as a safeguard for the funds' too-quick exhaustion; most agencies providing emergency funds have a cap.
- There was consensus that some analysis of past years' information about trends would be very valuable to the discussion. Items of interest included trends in numbers of requests, averages/medians of amounts, and maximums. Mike Scholl reported that he estimates the fund to be exhausted by the end of July 2007, but that extended forecasting of need is impossible due to the magnitude of factors influencing individuals' need to request support.
- Co-Chair Mary Beth Lampe suggested that the formation of a subcommittee might be appropriate in conducting this analysis and

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coming to a decision. There was consensus that this would be helpful.

Volunteers for the subcommittee were:

- Mary Beth Lampe, CSTS; Co-Chair
 - Harriet Bakalar, Housing Bureau for Seniors
 - Mel Batkins, DHS
 - Jennifer Brown, Salvation Army
 - Angela Edmonds, Women's Center
 - Moonson Eninsche, County Treasurer
 - Rob Kesselring, CSTS
 - Amanda Martinez, Power, Inc.
 - Christina Oliver, SOS
 - Pat Parker-Self, Veteran Services
 - Andrea Plevak, MSU Extension
 - Helena Prince, Friends in Deed
 - Efrion Smith, Power, Inc.
- The subcommittee will be charged with coming to some decision about the question of a cap as policy for Barrier Busters, regardless of current funding questions.
 - The subcommittee will meet on 7 June at 1:00 PM.
 - Mike Scholl asked that on all requests for funding, members set the date of expiration for 2 years from the date of request. He will update the release of information form online, which is currently defaulted to expire 1 year from date of request.

V. Case Consultation

- There was no case consultation for this meeting of Barrier Busters.

VI. BB Emergency Unmet Needs Fund Update / Budget Update

- Mike Scholl reported that there is currently a backlog of approximately 30 requests because of funding issues, although requests for clients who are 60 years and older will not be restricted due to requirements of one of the funding sources. Mike asked that any non-senior-specific agency with a request by an older client please contact him so that their request can be processed more quickly.
- The County has allocated \$20,000 until December.
- \$11,000 is currently anticipated from the state in September, although cuts are probable (there is currently a suspension on all contracts).

Adjourned 3:00 pm

***The Next Meeting is scheduled for
Wednesday, July 25, 2007 –
1:30 pm – 3:00 pm @ LLRC***