

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

August 27 2008, LLRC
1:30pm—3:00pm

BBN Attendees:

Mary Beth Lampe, CSTS; Co-Chair (recorder)
Andrea Plevak, MSU Extension; Co-Chair
Lisa Anderson, University of Michigan Health Services
Harriet Bakalar, Housing Bureau for Seniors
Mel Batkins, Department of Human Services-DHS
Barbara Blom, Shelter Association of Washtenaw County
Karyn Boyce, Ozone House
Jennifer Brown, Salvation Army
Artrella Cohn, MSU Extension
Shannon Duffany, Child Care Network
Anne Harrell, WCHO/ACCESS
Measie James, Washtenaw Health Plan-WHP
Syreeta Jemison, Ozone House
Angela Killom, Michigan Ability Partners- MAP
Patrice LaGrand, Neighborhood Senior Services
Kelly Martin, Peace Neighborhood Center
Heather Mooney, Washtenaw County Treasurer's Office
Angela Moore, Women's Center
Al Neikirk, El Shaddai Counseling (presenter)
Lillie Pinder, MPRI
Merrill Poliner, Jewish Family Services
Allison Polleck, Jewish Family Services
Helena Prince, Friends in Deed
Sandy Reeber, ETCS
Joi Renchu, Ozone House
Shannon Richards, Public Health
Anne Schroth, Pediatric Advocacy Initiative
Kelly Stupple, Public Health
Manesha Sulati, University of Michigan Health Services
Anna Tolis, St Joe Senior Health
Naomi Williams, Hope Clinic
Julie Young, Turner Clinic

Staff Present: Candace Cadena, Office of Community Development

I. Welcome/Introductions

Meeting began at 1:30. Members and guests introduced themselves.

II. Announcements and Public Comment

*Senior Fit Free Exercise program flyer distributed. For ages 55+ and better – held at Senior Health building at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital on Monday, Tues, Thursday from 10:15-11 (Call 1-800-231-2211- registration required).

*Women's Center of Southeastern Michigan is hosting a Tea Party. 973-6779 Angela Moore for details.

*Chase Bank, MSU Extension, and the Treasurer's Office are holding training and discussion about foreclosure issues for professionals on 9/12– contact MSU Extension or Artrella Cohn for more info.

III. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Today's Agenda and June meeting minutes were moved by Shannon Richards, seconded by Helena Prince.

IV. New Business

Al Neikirk, office 734-240-0372 or email aniekirk@elshaddaicc.com, distributed materials explaining services and referral form for El Shaddai Counseling & Consultation Services. Primary office is in Monroe, secondary office in Ypsilanti. Website: www.elshaddaicc.com, email: general@elshaddaicc.com, or by contact Al Neikirk. Main programs are: 1) Proud Fathers: a 14 week program for dads 2) Proud Parents 10 week program for couples/parents. Funded by DHS, referrals are from DHS, Friend of Court, social service/child welfare agencies. Sequenced sessions occur on a regular schedule. Some intensive weekend programs are also offered – sometimes held at hotels so parents can be out of usual household situation. Meals, child care, transportation, family activity incentives offered.

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Personal counseling may sometimes be offered but fees are not known at this time. 3) New programs are in development: Particularly for Washtenaw County area – please contact office for details.

Artrella Cohn from MSU Extension introduced self to the group. She provides housing counseling before and after Mortgage Foreclosure and in the future will assist post foreclosure program development. Kathy Grant of MSU Extension provides 1:1 sessions with homeowners who would like to prevent mortgage foreclosure, and Kathy is also available to provide presentations at community sites (examples are: agencies, libraries, churches) about foreclosure prevention – please contact Kathy if you have ideas for a presentation spot. MSU Extension would like to share information with as many people as possible about how to begin foreclosure prevention, whether it is mortgage foreclosure, tax foreclosure, or both. More information about mortgage foreclosure and MSU Extension resources is under “Community Development” available at:

http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/extension/ex_extcomm.html, or on The Washtenaw County Treasurer’s website at <http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/treasurer/MFP>. (Go to ewashtenaw.org then choose the “Extension Services” or “Treasurer” under the drop down “Quick” list.)

V. Old Business

Mary Beth Lampe reported DTE Utility training occurred this month about the Online Resource for Agencies (ORA) with over 20 agencies participating. If your agency does not have a connection to this resource, please contact Sylvia Sartin at DTE sartins@dteenergy.com or (248) 223-2304 (email preferred) for the user agreement. The wait times, even on the case management phone line, have been over 30 minutes and sometimes it is not possible to get thru. Agency website (once you have access) is: <http://agency.dteenergy.com>.

Barrier Busters can assist by using the online system to get balances, view payment history, etc. and not call unless there is a negotiation needed. DTE is undergoing a reorganization but it is thought that Sylvia Sartin will continue to be the contact to set up new agencies. Ms. Sartin also reported at the training that if money is owed to a third party energy provider, DTE can’t reduce that amount. Some clients may be unaware that rates on “third party energy providers” can be switched with less notice, whereas DTE is regulated by the Service Commission. It was also reported at the training that DTE audits the use of the Online System, so if requests are being put in but money is not being received, holds are cancelled and the account is subject to shut-off again. DTE also has a public website which anyone can access, which also has some limited bill information or “open” accounts at: <http://dteenergy.com/>.

Intern Update: Trying to hire an intern to assist Community Development with the Barrier Buster Network. It was suggested to try the work study department at UM, if it hasn’t been accessed already.

VI. Case Consultation

Discussion regarding funeral costs:

Friends in Deed reported they get many burial requests but are not able to assist with too many due to the number of other emergency requests received. They prioritize unexpected deaths, and encourage people to work with funeral homes to meet the amount that DHS will assist with for basic burial. The initial amount requested by families or the funeral home can be quite high – often the amount can be reduced to something more manageable. DHS reported: any assets reduce whether DHS can assist or not; contributions from others can now be up to \$4000, it is recommended to always check to see if the deceased is a veteran or family member of a veteran – in that case Veteran’s Services may be able to assist or refer. Hope Clinic reported helping with 4 funeral situations last month. Also, if donating body to medical school then there is no cost. Going thru a funeral home for cremation will also increase cost.

VII. BB Emergency Unmet Needs Fund Update

Funds are low. Please do not submit requests to Encompass as most (except for those can be paid by senior funding) will be denied and returned to you for lack of funding. Please help clients access any other available funds. Salvation Army reports they will be restructuring how they take applications in to decrease “wait time” on a decision. Appointments will be required and an appointment can’t be set until all verifications are submitted. There may be some time when applications are not accepted so cases can be caught up. Contact Jennifer Brown with questions.

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VIII. Next Meeting is scheduled for September 24, 2008 at 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm at LLRC.