

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

December 17, 2008, LLRC

1:30pm—3:00pm

Attendees: *(Please excuse any misspellings. These are interpretations of individuals' handwritten names)*

Mary Beth Lampe, CSTS

Andrea Plevek, Office of Community Development (Barrier Busters Staff Member)

Heather Mooney, Washtenaw County Treasurer's Office

Shannon Richards, Public Health

Kelly Stupple SB6/PH

Mel Batkins, DHS

Helena Prince, Friends in Deed

Wendi Smith, TSA

Patrice LaGrand, Neighborhood Senior Services

Christina Oliver, SOS

Dion Johnson, SOS

Artrella Cohn, MSU Extension

Victoria Smith, POWER, Inc.

Erika Graham, POWER, Inc.

Paul Sher, Legal Services of Southeast Michigan

Angela Moore, The Women's Center

Sarah Richards, MAP

Donna Fox, UMHS

John Miley, Red Cross

Measie James, WHP

Stephanie Rakes, UM Social Work

Marie Tillema Cope, Jewish Family Services

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Announcements:

a. Welcome New Member Organizations

III. Approval of Agenda/Minutes

Approval of minutes moved and seconded by multiple members. Minutes Approved.

IV. New Business

a. Speaker: Pam Kirsch, Fair Housing Center

Housing Advocates Training

What does the Fair Housing Center do/how can they help your clients?

- Takes housing related complaints from people harassed on the basis of:

i. Race

ii. Physical Disability

December 17, 2008

Notes taken by BB Intern, Chantal R. Cotton

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

iii. Sexual Harassment (Considered as sexual discrimination under the Fair Housing Act)

iv. Having Children

- FHC gets involved in these cases and seeks justice for the client through using trained "Testers" to collect empirical information that the FHC can use in the case against the landlord.
- Follows the FHA law
- Works to reduce the effects of "retaliation" (Landlord or Lawyer trying to hurt clients purposefully due to the client filing a case)
- Advocate for clients to receive just outcomes in housing
- Pushes for Landlords to make "Reasonable Accommodations" for clients with disabilities which allows the clients to have second chances and to have necessary accessories (such as a service animal).

Characteristics of Housing Discrimination in the 21st Century:

- Rejections usually come with a smile and a handshake from the Landlord.
- What counts as illegal?
 - Pushing someone to live in a different complex because they "won't like it here"
 - Having different terms and conditions for different kinds of tenants
 - Saying any of the following: "We only rent to working people;" "We don't take 3rd Party Payments [such as SSI, etc.];" "What's your disability?" "If I rent to you, others will move out;" "We don't allow secondary payment."
- "Losing" someone's application without much remorse or saying that the last Landlord did not get back to them.
- "We *just* rented out the last apartment."
- Racially motivated evictions
- Lack of accommodations with parking and ramps
- Having strict regulations about room sharing (to deter parents with young children away).
- "We only cater to students" (also a family deterrent)
- "This is a dangerous environment for children"

The Law says: "Treat [all tenants] exactly the same [regardless of race, children status, gender, or physical ability]."

Specifics on Fair Housing Laws, you can look further into:

- Federal, State Agencies, HUD, or Civil Rights organizations
- Federal Fair Housing Act

December 17, 2008

Notes taken by BB Intern, Chantal R. Cotton

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

- Local Ordinances

Discrimination cases can lead to rewards of \$1500 to \$200,000

Cases the FHC really wants to hear about:

- Cases where the Landlord tells clients not to come and live there for any particular reason.

What your agency can do to help the FHC?

- **Take notes from clients in discrimination cases then contact the FHC**
- Call the FHC and connect them to your client
- Refer clients the FHC
- Don't tell the Landlord
- **Plug for Testers (or be a Tester yourself!). Contact the FHC about being a tester**
- Put up fliers about the FHC at your agency

Q&A:

Q: How are other complex constituents affected by one person's accommodation change?

A: They are usually unaffected by the case (unless they were also discriminated against).

Q: Are undocumented people also included in your clientele?

A: Yes.

Q: Are the laws different for home owners than they are for rentals?

A: Yes

Q: Are there exemptions?

A: Yes, but race is never an exemption through the Civil Rights Act.

Q: Is threshold income to live in a complex ever an issue?

A: See Pam for specific facts on this.

Q: Is documentation of disability necessary for the reasonable accommodation of disabled peoples?

A: See Pam at FHC about this too.

December 17, 2008

Notes taken by BB Intern, Chantal R. Cotton

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

Speaker: Heather Mooney and Paul Sher:

Michigan Tenants Counseling Program (MTCP): [A handout about this program was dispersed]. For more information, contact Paul or Heather.

What does the MTCP do?

Pre-litigation and Pre-eviction

They have web-based counseling along with by phone and in person counseling

Handles issues in relation to tenants in buildings

Helpful MTCP materials (can also be found on the MTCP and Washtenaw County websites):

Mortgage Foreclosure Information

Mobile Home Area information

Home weatherization and furnace repair

The MTCP is staffed by **2 counselors** in the **Legal Services of S. Central Michigan Building**. They are all county.

V. Old Business

No old business.

VI. Case Consultation

1. Issue: A non-evicted family had a flood in a rental unit and is in need of housing for the weekend. What are other people doing about homelessness? Is there anywhere where we can send this family?
 - a. **SOS** is busing families to Jackson, MI and Toledo, OH.
 - b. **Friends-in-Deed** gives to people in such cases when it is proven and extremely documented that the family has a home to go to after very temporary housing
 - c. **Delonis Center** on the second floor is available for single people only.
 - d. **Thrift Shop** sometimes pays for quick stays at hotels.
2. What innovative things are agencies doing to help people as collective agencies?
 - a. Suggestion for the listserve and 211 to be used in this capacity. Andrea will follow up with this.
3. Who has food for the holidays/who is offering it?

The Salvation Army has increased requests for food and they do not think they will have enough for everyone.

The Ann Arbor News sends out the list of "who has food for the holiday" list around the time of Thanksgiving. This is usually not duplicated during the Chanukah/Christmas time of year.

The Delonis Center and Food Gathers might have food.

VII. Adjourn at 3PM (Thank You and Happy Holidays!!)

December 17, 2008

Notes taken by BB Intern, Chantal R. Cotton