

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

November 26, 2008, LLRC

1:30pm—3:00pm

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

Mary Beth Lampe, CSTS
Heather Mooney, Washtenaw County Treasurer's Office
Sandy Reeber, ETCS
Shirley Tarvis, CSTS
Kelly Stupplesby, PH
Ann Hunter Greene, First Steps Ann Arbor
Ann Stalliandle, First Steps Ann Arbor
Susan Sifuna, The Salvation Army
Melissa Doletzky, Child Care Network
Shannon Duffany, Child Care Network
Dion Johnson, SOSCS
Chuck Sutberry, WHA
Measie James, WHP
Helena Prince, Friends in Deed
Mira Sussman, Jewish Family Services
Erika Graham, POWER, Inc.
Donna Fox, UMHS – Medical Management Center
Elizabeth MarComrach, WHP
Chantal R. Cotton, Barrier Busters
Mel Batkins, DHS
Ann Carrellas, ACA
Patrice LaGrand, Neighborhood Senior Services
Terry Jones, MSU Extension
Shannon Farmer, 211
Andrea Plevak, MSU Extension
Paul Sher, Legal Services of Southeast Michigan

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Announcements:

a. Shannon Farmer and 211 Packets:

Shannon has the 211 Packets to update their website. If your agency has not received this information or returned your packet back to Shannon, please follow up with her about it. The list of agencies that have reported not receiving their packet are as follows:

Older Youth Programs of MI Works
WHP
Child Care Network/Washtenaw Regional 4C

November 26, 2008

Notes taken by BB Intern, Chantal R. Cotton

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

The Women's Center of SE Michigan
Public Health of Washtenaw County
HARC
Shelter Association of Washtenaw County
POWER, Inc
Washtenaw Housing Alliance
Catholic Social Services
Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living
Turner Geriatric Clinic Social Work Programs

Shannon is now the full time database manager for 211 as of Monday. She is your major contact person and can be found at: 734-477-6453, sfarmer@hva.org.

- b. **SOS** has limited funding for utilities. They have money for 4 families (\$600) and limited utility funding (maybe \$200) to the middle of next month
- c. **ETCS** has restore funding now only \$7000 from \$27000. Lots of money is scheduled to come in January. They currently have \$6000 in housing funds. ETCS will not hold funding for unprepared clients (without all of their paperwork). They will give money to the clients that have everything they need right there with them when they visit ETCS.
- d. You can now access **Child Care Network's** application for child care assistance online through the www.childcarenetwork.org website. All the information you need to know can be found online. If clients are eligible for DHS, then they are also eligible for the Child Care Network application online.
- e. **Washtenaw Health Clinic** co-pays are increasing, effective Sunday, November 30, 2008. They are increasing from \$3 to \$5 and from \$5 to \$7. There has already been a mass mailing about it. Typically, co-pay funding is not allotted through BB, but the conversation was once on the table. As of now, the agencies that may be able to help with co-pay funding are: The Salvation Army, Friend in Deed, HOPE, and a few others. The co -pay question will be put on the next funder's meeting agenda.
- f. **Andrea Plevak** is no longer with MSU Extension, she got a new job! She is replacing Candace Cadena as the Human Services Coordinator in the Office of Community Development and the Barrier Busters staff member. She can be reached at Candace's old work number– 734-622-9007 – and her same email address: pleveka@ewashtenaw.org.
- g. **Encompass**: To become an official fund requesting Barrier Buster Action Group Member, you need to make an Encompass login name and get Encompass training from Mary Beth Lampe. Contact Mary Beth Lampe (lampem@ewashtenaw.org) or Chantal R. Cotton (chantalc@umich.edu) about it.
- h. **Friends in Deed** will be on Fox news tonight between 5 and 6pm!! Check out the news about them and their partnership with 2 Men and a Truck.

November 26, 2008

Notes taken by BB Intern, Chantal R. Cotton

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

- i. **PKSA Marshall Arts School** packs up stuff to feed families and other service projects and they are looking for more agency partnerships in the future. Please look them up and contact them.

III. Approval of Agenda/Minutes

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

IV. New Business

a. **Speaker: Terry Jones, Extension Educator**

Asset Building Coalition & Earned Income Tax Credit

What your agency can do in relation to your clients' taxes:

1. Educate people about who is eligible for that credit
2. The IRS has always had a VITA program where volunteers could come and help out with pre tax credit. But many people didn't know about it. They recruited from local colleges in particular. There is room for you to help or refer. **Training is beginning now online.** You can do the training online. Link and learn takes you through this process. Tax Wise is another online training program. **There is also training in January.** ETCS is the lead agency for this project because they help with marketing costs.

Workshops where the trainers can work to help others do not start until the first week in February. That is when Terry goes around and helps people understand how everything works for people with their income taxes and tax credits and how to use the money when they get a check back.

If any agency wants Terry to come and talk about the tax credit, you can contact Terry about it and she will delightfully come.

The **MSU Extension Intern offers workshops in the community** as well. It helps agencies figure out if their clients are eligible for tax credits or not. She will update us on the dates. The locations are at the United Way and the other is at the A2 YMCA, (2 hour training).

People with lower than \$40,000/household people are eligible for free income tax processing through the coalition. Period. All calls should go to 211 (one centralized place). Both families and single people.

Earned income maximum is \$39,000/year.

More updates on the coalition are to come in January. The **Coalition's biggest challenge is getting people to go to "Pair Prepares" in January** and, consequentially, not get the best return available to them.

November 26, 2008

Notes taken by BB Intern, Chantal R. Cotton

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

Q&A:

Q: Are there any educational materials about the information presented above?

A: The materials are being updated now. There is a list of what people need to get their taxes done, but other forms explaining other simple processes are not available yet.

Q: Can we have a talking points cheat sheet with the dollar amounts of what people save and how long it takes for people to go through the coalition as opposed to trying to sift through all of the complicated info ourselves? Can it be a plain knowledge form that has information such as: "In a \$600 refund, \$100 could be lost for Person A, given Person A's characteristics."

A: Yes, is there anyone who will volunteer to help with this? Julie Steiner.

Q: How can we, as other agencies, help you overall?

A: **The major contribution that other agencies can give to us is the help of building a positive repore and creditability for the coalition and our services.** Your help with marketing the coalition name will be a really big help (along with the work that 211 is doing).

Q: Does every MSU Extension have one of these?

A: You have to look it up office by office. You can go online and look up "Michigan EIC." EIC has a list of the sites and a phone number. Michigan EIC lists all the coalitions and vita sites. Most Extension sites have people to educate the community even if they don't have all the services previously mentioned from Terry for this MSU Extension office site.

Extra Information: The Coalition can do an addendum for up to 3 years back in getting a client back some of their other money.

V. Old Business

a. **Barrier Busters Evaluation Update**—Andrea Plevak, MSU Extension

Evaluation Program: We are doing this to investigate the effectiveness of our program. Follow-up evaluation shall determine outcomes of past Barrier Buster Financial assistance requests, as asked for by the funding sources. We are going to start a pilot program with specific agencies in a small sample for January – April. We will get in touch with the pilot agencies between now and next meeting to let you know if you have been selected for the pilot program. It is going to show us what is feasible then we will move forward to all agency evaluation from there.

Q: Is this a client satisfaction piece?

A: No, we will go to the client, but we are particularly interested in knowing where clients are 6 months after their request.

November 26, 2008

Notes taken by BB Intern, Chantal R. Cotton

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

VI. BB Emergency Unmet Needs Fund Update

The county match has been released in anticipation for the landlord money that we are hopefully receiving now. We have \$4,000 in limited dollars from the Washtenaw County General Fund funds through the end of the year/month. The JHET/MPRI funds are good if you are eligible to receive those. Our Senior funds are solid as well.

VII. Case Consultation

1. Issue: A woman receives Blue Care Network; makes \$25,000/yr and is a family of 4. Her son has a \$30/month co-pay for medication. She looked on www.needymeds.org and couldn't find help. She already has coverage, but she cannot use a lot of the regular services. Her son's co-pay is too much for her to afford, what help can she get?
 - a. **Talk to Terry Jones, MSU Extension** for budget review assistance.
 - b. **Connect her with FID, Hope, and Salvation Army.** Since she has coverage, she cannot use a lot of the regular services, but they may still be able to help.
 - c. DHS advice: Still apply for coverage the kids.
 - d. Arrowwood Coop is a housing option available until Dec. 12th (for application).
 - e. Generics are unknown now. She can possibly get a pharmaceutical company card/voucher.
2. ETCS asked about Utilities: Can some agencies around the table put a hold on a client's account while the client goes and gets money from other sources?
 - a. Yes: SOS and DHS can. Dion Johnson, SOS, said that the working DTE number is: 1-800-545-8686 and the hold time is not very long there.
3. A family is staying in a hotel because their house is flooded. They need help paying for the hotel. Many agencies think that this story sounds kind of sketchy. If the family owns the home, their insurance should pay for the damages. If they do not own the home, the landlord is obligated to pay for it.
4. Helena and Sandy Reeber suggest that a good future BB topic would be: **How to respond to angry clients (one woman is even making a documentary about it).** Suggestions for who could do this: Kindra at MSU?

VIII. Adjourn at 3PM