

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

March 25, 2009 American Red Cross
1:30pm—3:00pm

Attendees: *(Please excuse any misspellings or any missed names. These are interpretations of individuals' handwritten names actually recorded on the sign-in sheet.)*

Mary Beth Lampe, CSTS
Andrea Plevak, Office of Community Development (Barrier Busters Staff Member)
Tara Wiedbush, CSS
Chris Zemke, CSS
Kelly Stupple, WC Public Health
Brittany Hisenander, 15th District Court
Kimberly Graor, Shelter Association of Washtenaw County
Karen White, Light House
Julie Merriman, Light House
Mel Batkins, DHS
Chantal R. Cotton, Barrier Busters
Jennifer Brown, Salvation Army
Julie T. Young, Turner Geriatric Clinic, Social Work
Sam Gedman, ETCS
Shannon Duffany, Child Care Network
Quionda Green, CSS
Eric Hendershot, MAP
Rhonda Davis, Washtenaw County CCRT
Taylor Arbuckle Light House
Helena Prince, Friends in Deed
Harriet Bakalar, HBS
Ryan Cowmeadow, HBS
Krista Nordberg, WHP
Christina Oliver, SOS
Normea Banner, SOS
Vickie Frederick-Toure, SHC
John Loring, PORT
Merril Poliner, JFS
Patrice LaGrand, Neighborhood Senior Services
Patricia Parker-Self, WC Department of Veterans Affairs
Paul Sher, Legal Services of Southeast Michigan
Melissa Doletzy, Child Care Network
Erika Graham, POWER, Inc.
Marla Conkin, The Salvation Army
George Ridenour, AACIL

The documents passed out at this meeting have been scanned and are available through the “Meeting Materials” folder on the website with the March 25, 2009 meeting materials.

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Notes taken by BB Intern, Chantal R. Cotton
cottonc@ewashtenaw.org

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I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Announcements:

- a. Welcome New Members
- b. Encompass Trainings are coming soon. If you would like to take the course as a refresher course, or if you are a new member and are yet to take it, then contact Chantal R. Cotton at chantalc@umich.edu.
- c. The Wastenaw County Children's Dental Clinic is having a walk-in clinic this upcoming Saturday. Only \$5 for cleaning, screening and x-rays.
- d. Mel Batkins: Good news! Stimulus money is allowing food stamps to go up! Automatic increases of at least \$20 will occur in April.
Also, the normal \$1500 for furnace repair was raised to \$4000 with DHS
- e. HBS has informative pamphlets

III. Scheduled Announcement Presentations:

- a. **Krista Nordberg Announcement:** Adult Medical Program (Plan A)/AMP – Opened March 1st it will maybe end before May 31st. **So apply as soon as possible.**

Their phone number is working in case you called before and couldn't get through.

The AMP program tries to get as many people as possible to transition off of Plan B to Plan A because they need more room for new clients on Plan B.

To help clients, you can order the application forms for FREE from DHS at 517-373-7837

In a nut shell, the program characteristics are as follows:

- It is for childless adults from 19-64 ages.
- US Citizens or those living in the US for 5 years with a green card.
- They can have no other insurance.
- Income limit = 35% of federal poverty level. See the intro page of the application for these exact numbers. People with unemployment generally have too high income for this.
- People who have kids, but whose kids are not living with them

If someone is not working, they should be considered for the lower number of income limit. If they are working, they should be considered next to the higher income limit. Exclude home and car.

Fill out the form as complete as possible!! Fill out the coversheet to help DHS not have duplicate forms.

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For clients coming from the shelter, you do not need an ID if they can get some sort of letter from the shelter verifying who they are. They need a copy of their most recent banking statement if they have one. Make sure you have all the attachments!!

Specific Application Completing Information:

On Page 1: Check "medical assistance." Recommend that people see a person to check over the application during intake hours at DHS. These intake hours are on Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri 8am – 11am

Make sure they SIGN the application!!

The Health Plan is meeting with people about applications on Tuesday Mornings and Thursday Afternoons.

Mel Batkins (DHS) adds that if people applied in the last week of February, their February application cannot count for this program. They will have to come and re-submit the application at DHS in order for it to count for this.

IV. Approval of Agenda/Minutes

Agenda Approved. February minutes will be approved with the March minutes at April Meeting.

V. New Business

a. Sam Gedman: Weatherization: Stimulus Plan

The weatherization program has been in existence for a while. It is a home improvement program to help homeowners or renters save on their energy bill. They do a home energy audit to find out the needs of each home/apartment. They examine:

- Hot water heaters
- Furnaces
- Refrigerators
- They also have their own refrigerator replacement program. You must have a refrigerator to start with in order to get it replaced

The program supports about 100 homes/year (for a total of 200,000 overall thus far)

They usually serve clients up to 150% of the US poverty level. Due to the Stimulus Package, they can now serve up to 200% of the poverty level or 60% of the state median income level. President Obama's goal is to raise the 200,000 people served to 1 million.

Every repair that they do is done to get folks savings on their energy charges. Their paperwork process is pretty short. They are NOT emergency services, but they do have a short process that people can get through. They have a short page and a half application.

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They make sure the client has utilities. Next they need proof of ownership or a landlord agreement is required before they can begin work.

They do multiunit facilities if they can get at least half of the people in the unit qualified.

Citizenship is **not** necessary for assistance. If a home has a mix of citizens and aliens, there will not be a huge background check on them and there may be a little more paperwork.

What they need from you:

They need help with marketing. **All weatherization work done is absolutely free of charge.** They do not have a concentrated advertising campaign for this.

Q & A

Q: Can tenants access this service directly without going through their landlord?

A: Yes. It is not required that the landlords fill out the applications. Tenants can do it too. The purpose of the program is to *reduce energy usage*. This means that residents need to do something to make energy usage better after the repairs are done on the *existing* appliances of the home.

Q: How far back does the income check go for clients?

A: They are only going back 90 days for clients now instead of the 4 year requirement from before.

In a rental situation, the program can only replace refrigerators (not other appliances).

Q: How do you start this process?

A: The process usually looks as follows:

- a. The client calls. Fills out an app (mainly to document income)
- b. The landlord agreement form must be filled out (if it is a rental) (this form is available on our website on the March 25, 2009 meeting materials page)
- c. An energy audit is done
- d. Repairs can begin

The weatherization team can only do a home address once unless it was done by them before 1994.

Q: What about automatic referrals? (Mel asks)

A: They do not have these anymore. You can give the application to people if you'd like.

Q: If two guys are renting an upstairs property, can you weatherize only a portion of the home?

A: Maybe. If one person would not want to be weatherized, then they do not have to be. If there is not a clear distinction between the two separate living quarters, and they are using the same heating system and heating utilities, then both quarters will have to be replaced.

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Q: What is your department's goal for received applications this upcoming month?

A: They don't have monthly goals, but **they need to do up to 600 units soon** instead of their normal 120.

Q: Are you hiring housing inspectors soon?

A: Sam doesn't know. More information will come about this. They may be doing this through different departments soon.

They currently have no waiting list. The program is also good for mobile homes.

b. Speaker: John Loring, Project Outreach Team Service Coordinator

SOAR – "Social Security 101"

loringj@ewashtenaw.org

John Loring has provided the SOAR training in the county that helps prepare workers in becoming SOAR certified in order to make requests for SS.

John Loring distributed two handouts: "SSI and Social Security Disability Benefits"; "2009 Social Security Changes" (because SS does different amounts each year)

What are the barriers to the SSI process?

- a. The total amount of people applying for it.
- b. The degree of paperwork involved

What is SOAR – SSI/SSDI Outreach Assessment and Recovery: It started by Yvonne P. in Baltimore, MD. The feds got her idea, universalized it. There is now a headquarters for it in NY now. It started in 2006. Data has been collected throughout the HMIS system to show that the SOAR program is great. MI decided in 2007 to get the program in 7 regions in MI. We are region 7. The program is steadily growing overtime. Data shows that it takes an average of 55 days in the state of Michigan to normally complete a Social Security Application. But the SOAR program has changed the process to make it take less time. It can be done in only 10 days in Washtenaw County. The Delonis Center and others have gotten some done in 3-5 days.

It takes about 40 hours to really fill out the SOAR application on the front end. Even though this is hard, it is far more helpful to give us this local autonomy at the beginning.

Q & A:

Q: Can you get the SOAR consent forms off of the SS website?

A: No. But John has them and will get them to each of you.

Q: When will the next SOAR training take place?

A: They want to get another training done in the first week of May this year. The binder takes a lot of them to do. It is a very thick binder. The training is 2 days long. John likes to train you on how to build the engine of SS.

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Q: All medication parts of the application?

A: No, there are medical and non-medical portions of the application.

Q: Once someone gets SSI, can it raise and what's the criteria?

A: No, the amount is set by the feds every year.

Q: What is the bluebook?

A: The Bluebook can only be accessed online through the SS website. It has information about each kind of disability a person may have and qualify for. The bluebook defines client criterion/requirements. Clients have to meet the criterion of the bluebook. A sample bluebook definition is: Disability Marked impairment: Greater than moderate; less than clear. Learn more about this at the training.

Certain things are listed in the DSM4 that are not listed in the bluebook. But they are not the same. The bluebook is not as clinically driven as the DSM4.

Q: Do you work with children?

A: He doesn't do a lot with children's cases.

Q: What can cause a person's payments to decrease?

A: Overpayments, jail for a full calendar month, probation or parole, backpayments for stuff like parole or probation violations are just a few reasons why a person's payments may go down. Legal services helps with those cases of old warrants.

Q: What's the procedure for notifying SS about a death if there is no family?

A: You just call SS. There is not a death benefit for people on SSI. That all falls to SSDI (insurance). These people have generally paid some money into the SS system at some point. The money will not be taken out for the month of the death, but it will for the next month.

Q: Concurrent payment info

A: Ask Mary Beth

Q: If someone is waiting to get eligibility, can they do SOAR?

A: Not if they have a pending application in the pipeline. SOAR cannot interfere with that process. There is a process now where people can utilize SOAR through a legal service office for appeals. John encourages people to get lawyers for this process. Paul Sher with Legal Services says they will do intake of those cases if they get denied at the first level. Legal Services takes a fee out of this if the case is successful (only up to 25% or \$5600, whichever one is less). There is a huge difference between the legal service offices in the yellow pages and the ones like Paul's office.

Q: What is the process of case appeals? Time limit?

A: It is generally 2 years long. SOAR captures some of these people because the person's info is already in the pipeline.

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Q: What qualifies someone for SOAR?

A: SOAR qualified people are nothing more than regular SSI applicants. They are simply anyone who will be eligible for SS but needs to get through faster. These are usually the homeless; precariously housed; etc.. They will do SOAR cases on whoever they feel they can get through.

John will email MBL about the upcoming training and she will send it out.

VI. Old Business: None

VII. BB Emergency Unmet Needs Fund Update

- BB funds are good. The funds are coming in, so keep the request coming.

VIII. Case Consultation

- a. No time to do case consultation today.

Meeting Adjourned at 2.56PM

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