

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

January 26, 2011

1:30-3:30, Red Cross

Welcome and Introductions:

- I. **Agenda:** Approved unanimously
Minutes: Approved unanimously

- II. **Member Agency Announcements:** Due to a full agenda, agencies were asked to make electronic announcements. Handouts were still available.

- III. **New Business**
 - a. **2011 Co-chair Nominations & Election:** For the open co-chair position, Tara Truax (CSTS) and Mary Beth Lampe (CSTS) submitted self-nominations. Staff will send out an online survey for elections.

 - b. **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) (Terry Jones, MSU Extension; Chris Ruland, ETCS):**
The Asset Building Coalition (734-544-3053) is offering free tax preparation assistance at Michigan Works (every Friday/Saturday) and AADL-Traverwood (Mondays by appt only). Currently they cannot provide Spanish-speaking assistance, but people can bring translators with them. The volunteers are trained by the IRS, and use the IRS-approved Turbo-Wise program. Volunteer opportunities are available during November of every year. Terry is available to speak to agencies about preparations. Fliers and cards are also available.

 - c. **New BB Dental Fund (Ruth Kraut, Washtenaw Health Plan):** The new fund is ready in Encompass. Eligible uses include the following:
 - once-a-year for acute needs
 - no funding for children due to existing funding throughout the County (washtenawchildrensdentalclinic.com)
 - those not covered by Medicaid
 - capped at \$500 due to limited funding
 - not limited to UM Dental
 - back-bills would be acceptable
 - other sources of funds, sustainability, other bills are needed in the narrative. Narrative should also show how support will cover full amount
 - generally, if Medicaid would have covered, then this would cover.

Ruth will send a detailed list over the list-serv. Paul Sher mentioned that there office can help with bankruptcy filing when outstanding the medical bills cause risks to housing, etc. BB fund does not cover dentures. But Medicaid covers dentures, so get clients in while you can! Case managers can keep a running list of dental fees and send them to Ruth to possibly build discussion with the Oral Health Taskforce.

- d. **Rapid HIV Testing (Leon Golson, HARC):** Leon is the Director of Prevention Programs. Feb 1st to March 12th is National AIDS Awareness Month and includes National Condom Week. HARC has been around for 20 years, is currently located at the Medical Arts Building, and serves multiple counties. There are two-tiers of HARC: Case management living with AIDS directed by Pat Love (case management director), and Prevention directed by Leon. Services include transportation to of medical appointment, support groups, extension sites (Jackson). Provider education includes information on communicable diseases, opiate awareness, sensitivity training and certification support. HARC offers free anonymous and confidential testing (swabbing with Oralshore that offers results in a week and finger-prick, blood-testing with Clearvue that offers results within 20-minutes, same-day). Mobile outreach van covers Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti Township, and people can access services, including hepatitis C testing, substance abuse treatment, HARM prevention outreach. Spanish-speaking support is available.
- e. **DTE Energy “Helping Programs” Presentation (Paul Ganz and Roosevelt Banks, DTE Energy):** Mr. Banks explained that down payment plans prior to shut-off programs (10%, 20%, 50%, 100%) get larger with each failure of payment per agreement in a 12-month period. When clients are not paying bills while under the Winter Protection Program (WPP), clients receive calls for payment and information to connect to other services. Clients can be disqualified from the WPP when they have missed two payments while under a DTE payment plan. Seniors can pay less for electricity up to a certain amount but not for gas. To be considered a senior with DTE and eligible for DTE’s senior program, a customer must be over 62 years old and have his/her name on the bill. Customers can receive up to three, consecutive 21-day medical relief bill payment postponements. 30-day shut-off holds can be made by a provider via ORA while the provider and customer work to gather financial support. Every commitment will generate a 30-day shut-off hold. BBs commented that ORA does not show how many days are left in a hold. Mr. Banks said commitment should show expiration date, but he will look into it to make sure. Agencies wanting/need ORA setup support: SJMHS, IHN, NHS, JFS.

THAW-eligibility: Have to be on shut-off notice, bill must exceed \$500 and under \$3250, SER response letter required, \$450 (\$225 on both gas/electricity) must have been paid by customer during the six months. Seniors do not need shut-off notice or SER.

Gas Choice: BB providers encouraged customers to switch from gas-choice to DTE. In order to do this, client must contact gas-choice provider.

IV. BB Emergency Unmet Needs Fund Update: No update

V. Public Comment: None

VI. Adjourn