

**Barrier Busters Network Action Group  
Meeting Minutes**

September 28, 2011 at Ypsilanti District Library

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

**II. Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes:** Approval of minutes postponed for next meeting.

**III. Member Agency Announcements:** Requested via email to listserv.

**IV. New Business**

**a. Department of Human Services: Alice Seipelt** (734-481-2039, [Seipelta@michigan.gov](mailto:Seipelta@michigan.gov))

Alice Seipelt, JET Coordinator for DHS presented on program changes to DHS assistance programs, specifically the cash assistance program (see condensed flier of PowerPoint presentation below). In Washtenaw, 73 cases were identified as federally time-limited as of October. Other program changes include the following: child support collection stopping as of October 1<sup>st</sup>; 16 and 17 high school dropouts no longer referred to JET; no longer able to defer those with child welfare crisis; food assistance asset limits instated; \$7 FAP reduction across the board; SER burial support increasing; a lifetime ban when there are two convictions of substance abuse; and MI Bridges can now be used to review benefits and apply for food assistance, with other programs like FIP and daycare coming.

**b. Questions:**

- i. Are notices going to include calculation determination.
  1. No, but listing of months is available. Contact Alice
- ii. When using MiBridges for SER and FAP, how do documents get to worker?
  1. If DTE, DHS staff looks up; otherwise, can be scanned in. DHS staff do a written request if more info needed. It will not extend 10-day period.
- iii. For seniors who received assistance for healthcare, what's the rationale for funding cut? No longer getting medicare payment supplemented through state. With SLIMBY case closed, senior now pays medicare premiums.
  1. There is not mass change for medicare premium. This might be a specific case. Asset issue is not in effect until later, so that wouldn't have affected it.
- iv. Are computers available at DHS? Where are computers available?
  1. Not yet. Customers can access library or Michigan Works.
  2. Michigan works: staff can assist. ETCS also offers "Computers Don't Byte" course that might help them. 74 computers accessible.
  3. Library: You don't need library card to work with it, but picture ID is needed. Staff can also assist. Scanners are free and available at AADL downtown and Traverwood location.
- v. How can precariously-housed or homeless get calls back from worker?
  1. For time limit cases, contact Alice at [Seipelta@michigan.gov](mailto:Seipelta@michigan.gov) or 734-481-2039
- vi. Any programs for soft-landing?
  1. DHS already discussing with housing authorities for adjusted section 8.

- 2. Making sure clients are aware that resources such as WIC, FAP, SER, etc. are still available.
  - vii. Bus tokens?
    - 1. AATA application for agencies. Free and half-fare.
    - 2. SOS bus tokens on Tuesdays (ask Kristin Klevering @ SOS).
- c. **Housing Access for Washtenaw County (HAWC) – 734-961-1999: Julie Steiner, Washtenaw Housing Alliance; Faye Askew-King, SOS Community Services; Andrea Plevak, Office of Community Development**

As of October 3<sup>rd</sup>, all requests for housing resources will be funneled through HAWC. This is a push to a centralize responses to housing needs in the community.

  - i. Why HAWC:
    - 1. Funder-driven: on the federally level, positive changes include definition of homelessness and chronic homelessness so that more are eligible. Funders are focusing funds on homeless prevention and rapid re-housing. While this philosophy has been advocated for years, funders chose the most economically difficult situation to being discussing it. MSHDA actually began implementing it last year in advance of HUD by changing the State's Emergency Shelter Grant to the Emergency Solutions Grants, requiring no less than 40% of historically operational funds to prevention/rapid re-housing work.
    - 2. Limited Resources: The community has never had enough money to begin with, and now there is less. Current reality is that we're plugging folks in whatever hole is available, not matching resources that would be more effective for certain situations. With HAWC, all housing resources would be made known to HAWC, and HAWC would work to make appropriate linkages.
    - 3. Better Data: The current reality is that we never really know if a household is stably housed or stay stably housed when resources aren't available and they're referred to a different agency. With HAWC, when there are no dollars, we now know that we didn't serve the need. At the end of the year, the community can report that we got a certain number of calls but was only able to help an actual percentage of them, effectively documenting the unmet need. HAWC is modeled after GR. They were able to report 49% were supported; this tells a different, more compelling story.
  - ii. This is a huge change, and it will be painful for all of us, but the community must begin to empower the poor of the community. Community is being asked to be as accommodating as much as they can, to give both HAWC and people the benefit of the doubt, and to assume positive intent on the side of SOS. It is a work in progress, and is a standing agenda item on OC and Barrier Busters.
  - iii. The logistics:
    - 1. 211 has agreed to be helpful, and they will handle calls evening and weekends.
    - 2. Intake and screening done for all callers. If screening calls for additional supports, case mgmt support will be given. If screening shows literally homeless, HAWC will work directly with shelter staff for a bed or case

management until a bed is available. Special populations have a different process.

3. Barrier Busters fund and HAWC partnership: Almost all housing requests will be going through HAWC. Staff will be mobile. Rental arrears should go through HAWC. Moving truck can be submitted directly to BB. Process is still the same for all other resources. Main BB contact for SOS is Kristin Klevering. Email is best ([kristink@soscs.org](mailto:kristink@soscs.org)). Grievance process will be created. DHS staff person will be available for HAWC.

**iv. Questions:**

- a. United Way campaign designation?
  - i. Good question, but unsure.
- b. HAWC call hours?
  - i. Phone will ring 830-500, 211 will pick up after-hours.
- c. Waitlist system?
  - i. Providing case mgmt for the literally homeless, with SAWC holding a few shelter beds for extremely vulnerable and/or for various health reasons.
- d. Other funds?
  - i. Thrift stores are still accessible for clients as they are not under the BB purview. HAWC will not ask if you contacted other funding sources.
  - ii. Assessment to determine ongoing assistance or one-time assistance. Modeled after HPRP, but not exactly.
- e. Intake?
  - i. Call center is best approach. SAWC will have phone for HAWC also.
- f. Eviction notice needed?
  - i. Eviction notice not necessarily needed. With new funding, more trouble-shooting available.
- g. Capacity?
  - i. SOS Housing Crisis has change to HAWC. SOS is also moving from 6 to 3 shelter units. Increased personnel at call center.
- h. Utilities?
  - i. HAWC will triage those at risk of rent due to utility shut-off.
  - ii. Teaser: With federal LIHEAP cuts expected, SER will be impacted and reduced from \$850 to possibly \$150-\$250 per commodity. MPSC LIEEF ended by Michigan Supreme Court will result in cuts ETCS. In Washtenaw County, there are discussions with the Salvation Army to create a similar system to HAWC for utilities.
- i. Accessibility?
  - i. HAWC staff is now mobile with laptops.
- j. Interpreter services?
  - i. Yes, but will follow-up with specifics.

**V. BB Emergency Unmet Needs Fund Update**

- a. \$75K of DHS was cut, but there are discussions to reinstate. Even if reinstated, there will be a delay in receiving actual funds. WCGF is recommending an increase from \$90K to \$120K for BB. This budget as well as other funding for human services agencies will be discussed at the County Board of Commissioner on October 19<sup>th</sup>.

**VI. Public Comment**

**VII. Adjourn**

Barrier Busters  
Meeting Attachments  
September 28, 2011

## FAP Asset Test effective 10/1/11

**Asset maximum:** \$5,000 for all FAP households.

**Exception:** Per the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, FAP households are categorically eligible if the entire household receives FIP and/or SDA and/or SSI programs. Categorical eligibility means clients do not have to meet the FAP asset limit (\$5,000) because they meet the FIP and/or SDA and/or SSI asset test(s).

### Countable Liquid Assets Include (not an all-inclusive list):

- Money/currency.
- Un-cashed checks, drafts and warrants.
- Checking and draft accounts.
- Savings and share accounts.
- Money market accounts.
- Certificate of Deposit
- LTC patient trust fund.
- Gaming/lottery winnings. **Note:** If taken in installments, this will be budgeted as unearned income on a monthly basis for as long as the payments continue.
- Money held by others (For example - Sally does **not** have a bank account. She puts money in her mother's checking account, but it is **not** a joint account).
- Stocks and bonds.
- Lump Sum and Accumulated Benefits: These are assets starting the month they are received. However, a person might receive a single payment that includes both accumulated benefits (such as RSDI/SSI lump sums) and benefits intended as a payment for the current month. Only the portion intended for the current month is considered income and the remaining amount will be considered an asset in the month received.

### Countable Vehicles:

- Vehicles will be defined by Secretary of State guidelines (including but not limited to cars, trucks, boats, motorcycles, snowmobiles, off-road vehicles, and recreational vehicles – not used as housing, etc.).
- The vehicle asset limit is \$15,000. If the cumulative fair market value of both licensed and unlicensed vehicle(s) is at or below \$15,000, all vehicles will be excluded from the asset test. If the cumulative value exceeds \$15,000, the excess is applied towards the \$5,000 asset limit.
- Equity value of unlicensed vehicles on Native American reservations unless they meet one of the exceptions listed below.

### **Exceptions to counting a vehicle (per the federal regulations):**

- Used as a household's home.
- Used for transporting someone with a disability (does not have to be used solely for that purpose).
- Used for self-employment such as a taxi, delivery business etc., but NOT excluded if used for going to and from work.
- Required by terms of employment such as a traveling salesperson or a migrant farmworker.
- Used for carrying fuel or heating or for water for the home when transporting water or fuel is anticipated to be the primary source of water or fuel for the household during the benefit period.
- Leased vehicles (unless they choose the option to buy at the end of the lease).
- Vehicles with an equity value of \$1,500 or less.

### **Real Property:**

- Primary residences/homesteads are excluded.
- Second homes.
- Additional property/land.
- Rental and vacation properties, but not limited to time share properties, owned by the applicant if they are not renting it to produce income.
- Commercial property owned by the resident unless used for household income.

### **Asset Exclusions (Not an all-inclusive list):**

- Native American Tribal Payments to individuals.
- Tuition and Education Savings Accounts.
- Life Insurance including those with cash value.
- Pensions.
- Annuities.
- IRA's and Keogh's.
- Retirement Accounts.
- 401K and 457 Accounts.
- Personal Property such as jewelry.
- All burial plots, and burial and/or funeral agreements will be excluded.
- Farmland and related equipment used for employment.
- Installment contracts for the sale of land or buildings if the contract or agreement is producing income consistent with its fair market value.
- Disaster payments.
- Assets which are not accessible such as irrevocable trusts, security deposits on rental properties or utilities, property and probate, and real estate if they are making a good faith effort to sell it.
  - **Note:** If the household member has the power to revoke the trust, it will be countable.
- Federal and State Earned Income Tax Credits.
- Energy Assistance payments or allowances.
- Anything excluded by Federal Statute.

## **Verifications Needed Before Determining FAP Eligibility:**

- **Liquid Asset Verification:**
  - Verification will be requested. For example:
    - Statements reflecting current status of accounts, funds, certificates, etc. dated within 30 days of application are required for all liquid assets.
      - **Note:** Per the federal regulations, reasonable effort must be made to verify assets and all other eligibility factors prior to approving FAP benefits for the expedited month(s). Subsequent months must have assets and other required verifications provided before additional benefits are authorized.
- **Vehicle Verification. Examples Include:**
  - Title and clearance from Secretary of State, proof of insurance, registration, or loan statement or payment book.
  - Workers will determine fair market value based on Kelly Blue Book/NADA
    - Do not allow for options such as low mileage, power windows or locks, automatic transmission etc.
    - Note: If the client disputes the value or the vehicle is not in the Kelly Blue Book/NADA etc., the client must provide a written verification from an expert.
- **Real Property Verification. Examples Include:**
  - Property tax assessment.
  - Certified statement of value.

## **Notes:**

- A popular question we have received is “Why is Bridges pending for assets for October when the policy is effective 10/1”? The reason is because Bridges correctly determines eligibility for a future month so an asset currently entered in Bridges or any new assets entered in Bridges must be verified for October and beyond.
- Bridges does not have the ability to approve prior months when the case is pending for verifications. For example, client applied in September and assets were entered, Bridges will send a VCL when EDBC is run.
  - Exception you will be able to certify the expedited month(s) without verification of assets.

**Note: This weekend, the heat/utility standards will occur on all FAP cases, and approximately 20,000 have assets in Bridges. Because of this, if the case has excess assets, it may close or a VCL may be sent to the client asking for verifications for the October budget.**

# DHS Policy Changes Effective 10/1/11

## **Family Independence Program (FIP) Changes:**

### *Implementation of the 48 month (60 Federal) lifetime limit*

- ▶ All employment and training sanction months are countable toward the client's 48 month (Michigan) lifetime limit
- ▶ Effective 10-1-11, months that do NOT count toward the 48 month lifetime limit include months that a client is coded as:
  - Incapacitated more than 90 days (IN)
  - Domestic Violence deferral (DV)
  - A recipient aged 65 or older (OL)
  - A child (CH)
  - A child age 16 to 18 who is attending elementary or secondary school full-time (SE)
- ▶ Clients that are coded DV, IN, OL, NC, and NS at 48 months can continue to the 60 Month federal timeline or until their status changes
- ▶ At the 60 Month Federal counter the only clients that can continue to receive FIP under the Hardship category are those that are disabled
- ▶ In Washtenaw County, 73 cases are affected 10/1/11 by federal lifetime limits
- ▶ Various programs are available to assist these customers with a "soft landing"

### *Employment and Training Changes*

- ▶ Penalties for noncompliance is as follows:
  - ▶ First instance – three months
  - ▶ Second instance – six months
  - ▶ Third instance – lifetime\*
- ▶ The first excuse offer on the first instance of noncompliance will no longer be offered
  - ▶ Domestic Violence (DV) deferral shall not exceed 90 days without a review by a caseworker
  - ▶ Post-partum deferral (CA) will be limited to 60 days
  - ▶ Caretaker of a disabled spouse or child shall not exceed 365 days without a review by a caseworker (updated medical/disability forms)

### *Eliminated deferrals:*

- ▶ Physical limitations (PL)
- ▶ Low intellectual capacity (LI)
- ▶ Chronic mental health (CM)
- ▶ Child Welfare Crisis (CW)
- ▶ Included in each Family Self Sufficiency Plan and on the DHS-1538 will be the statement prohibiting the use of FIP benefits to purchase lottery tickets, alcohol, or tobacco for gambling or for illegal activities or any other nonessential items.

### *FIP Policy Changes*

- ▶ Children aged 19 and attending high school are no longer eligible to receive FIP on their parent's case. FIP cases where eligibility is approved based on the 19 year old in the home will close. Families with other children in the home will have a reduction in benefit.
- ▶ Minor parents have the requirement of attending school full time or the case will close.
- ▶ If a 16-17 year old is not attending school, the child will be removed from the grant rather than being referred to JET.
- ▶ Earned Income Disregard:
  - ▶ At application, the disregard will be \$200 plus 20% of the group's earned income for FIP eligibility determination.
  - ▶ For approved/ongoing clients, the disregard will be \$200 plus 50% of the group's earned income.
- ▶ STFS (Short Term Family Support)
  - ▶ An individual is limited as an eligible adult to the receipt of STFS twice in a lifetime.
  - ▶ STFS payment does not affect an individual's FIP Time Limit count.
- ▶ EFIP (Extended FIP)
  - ▶ Each month an individual receives EFIP counts towards the individuals FIP Time Limit count.
- ▶ Child Support
  - ▶ Child support participation payments (\$50) have been discontinued.

## **Miscellaneous Cash Programs (FIP, RAP, SDA) Changes**

- ▶ Cash Assistance Application and Report My Changes will be online as of January 2012.
  - ▶ All cash applications that are received online will be screened by the SSPC first.
  - ▶ Any applications identified with barriers to employment (i.e. child care or transportation issues) or RAP and SDA applications will be referred to the local office if a client is requesting a deferral from JET, the SSPC will verify the deferral and process the application. Once applications are processed, the FIP case will be directed to the local office for ongoing maintenance. (For example, FSSP development triages etc.)
- ▶ Prohibit individuals with property assets assessed higher than \$500,000 from receiving FIP, RAP, and SDA. This is effective on 10/1/11 but will not have system support until approx. 1/1/12.
- ▶ If a client requires an EBT replacement card, the client will be charged a fee from their benefits in order to get a new EBT card starting October 1, 2011. It is still to be determined whether the client will receive one replacement card free.
- ▶ Residence must be verified unless homeless.
- ▶ If an individual presents identification issued by another state, we must verify that the person is not receiving benefits in that state.

## **SDA Changes**

- ▶ SDA grants for clients in independent living arrangements will change for new applicants from \$269 per month to \$200 per month.
  - ▶ This new rate would be phased in for new cases only, or if a client fails the redetermination process and is going through the intake process again.
- ▶ Participation with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) will no longer meet an eligibility requirement for SDA.
  - ▶ Individuals active in this category can remain eligible until the next case review.
- ▶ A caretaker for an individual with a disability will only be allowed if the disabled person is 18 or older.

## **Child Day Care Changes**

- ▶ Billing Changes
  - ▶ August 14th: Beginning this pay period, parents will no longer be required to report their biweekly child care hours.
  - ▶ January: IVR will no longer be available. All providers must bill using the internet billing system (I-Billing).
- ▶ The maximum number of hours DHS will authorize for a recipient will be reduced from 90 to 80 hours per pay period effective October 9, 2011.
- ▶ Effective October 9, 2011, DHS will no longer authorize child care for a parent's travel time. At the next case action, the specialist must check the number of authorized hours for accuracy.

## **Criminal Justice Disqualifications**

- ▶ Law enforcement officers are entitled to receive addresses for clients via DHS match or when a written statement is provided.
- ▶ A person convicted two or more times for the use, possession, or distribution of controlled substances occurring after 8/22/96 is disqualified from receiving FIP and FAP.

## **Food Assistance Changes**

- ▶ Assets will be an eligibility factor for FAP beginning October 1, 2011. This will include liquid assets and vehicles. The asset limit for FAP \$5000; however there is a \$15,000 limit on countable vehicles.
- ▶ For FAP and SER, any time a client tells DHS that the client or anyone else in their home is an illegal alien; the illegal alien has to be reported to homeland security.



# *Help Is Still Available!*

## **Have You Lost Cash Assistance? Put Your Mind At Ease!**

Attend an overview at the  
Washtenaw County Michigan Works! Career Transition Center

You'll have a chance to:

- Discuss your immediate concerns
- Learn about free job seeker services
- Learn about community resources
- Find out how to receive Temporary Housing Assistance through DHS for up to 3 months (eligibility required)
- Learn how you can receive one-on-one assistance
- Hear about other services that may be available to you

### **Overviews are held every Friday**

The Washtenaw County Michigan Works! Career Transition Center

Key Bank Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

301 W. Michigan Ave

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

**10am-12pm**

**Call Colleen Mallory at 734-544-6740 to reserve your seat**

## ***Barrier Busters and “Housing Access for Washtenaw County”***

**September 28, 2011**

1. As of October 3, 2011, utilization of Barrier Busters Emergency Unmet Needs funding for housing requests (security deposits, rental arrearages, etc.) will require an intake screening from the Housing Access for Washtenaw County by calling (734) 961-1999.
2. Almost all housing requests will be entered into Encompass by the SOS Community Services staff operating the Housing Access for Washtenaw County program. All Housing Access staff will be trained and available to enter BB requests.
3. Some requests may be entered into Encompass by other BB agencies, but this should be coordinated between Housing Access and the “home agency” of the household in need. All requests submitted by other BB agencies should reference the approval of Housing Access for direct financial assistance (BB staff will verify this before funds will be released).
4. Moving expenses (i.e. the moving truck, etc.) do not need to be accessed through Housing Access for Washtenaw County.
5. The Unmet Needs Fund will still be available for all other needs, as is currently the practice.
6. Kristin Klevering will remain the Barrier Buster and point of contact for all BB agencies.
  - a. Phone: (734)484-5416  
Email: [kristink@soscs.org](mailto:kristink@soscs.org)
7. Those agencies that use BB funds heavily (Legal Services, Housing Bureau for Seniors, CSTS, etc.) will be meeting with Housing Access staff individually to ensure clients needs are being met.
8. There will be a grievance process and oversight function in place to ensure appropriate distribution of funding according to fund guidelines.
9. Barrier Busters meetings and Washtenaw Housing Alliance Operations Committee meetings will include regular agenda items to identify any concerns or successes that will then be communicated to the Housing Access oversight committee.
10. REMEMBER: Change is hard. We’re all on the same team. Assume positive intent!