



Sonoma County Continuum of Care Board

Continuum of Care Board Meeting Minutes

DRAFT Wednesday, October 25, 2023

1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time – Meeting held by Zoom

Zoom Recording:

https://sonomacounty.zoom.us/rec/share/1or9zyEXxiZ7f8pb1EdnSFxjYev5d_AYx9y4yLPGFL7yzqyuNa1gxfkisA-hLuCj.HO3BTZuYtkB905OA

Passcode: ?0U5n9#Y

Welcome and Roll Call (00:05:46– 00:08:05)

Dennis Pocekay called meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. and went over the Zoom rules around public comment and Brown Act guidelines.

Present:

Dennis Pocekay, City of Petaluma | Jennielynn Holmes, Catholic Charities | Natalie Rogers, City of Santa Rosa | Benjamin Leroi, Santa Rosa Community Health Center | Chris Coursey, BOS County of Sonoma | Margaret Sluyk, Reach For Home | Kathleen Pozzi, Community Member | Martha Cheever, Community Development Commission | Una Glass, City of Sebastopol | Ron Wellander, City of Sonoma

Joined During Meeting: Chessy Etheridge, Community Member / LEAP | Don Schwartz, City of Rohnert Park | Jackie Elward, City of Rohnert Park

Absent:

Chris Keys, Redwood Gospel Mission | Cheyenne McConnell, TAY Representative | Mark Krug, Burbank Housing | Dannielle Danforth, West County Community Services

A quorum was present.

1.-3. Approval of Consent Calendar (00:08:06 – 00:10:12)

Motion: Una Glass moves to approve the consent calendar.

Natalie Rogers seconds.

Public Comment: None

Objections or Abstentions: None

Motion approved.

4. Reports from Lead Agency Staff (00:10:19 – 2:00:35)

- **Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) Timeframe**

Michael Gause reported that the first draft of the 2024-25 NOFA has been completed and the scoring tools were presented to the Funding and Evaluation (F&E) Committee for a first revision. A working group was convened and will meet on October 27th to finalize the scoring tools. They anticipate bringing it back to the F&E Committee on November 9th, and then to the CoC Board for review on November 15th. Any further revisions would be completed between November 15th and December 1st, with a targeted release date in December. Applications will be reviewed beginning in January 2024, with approvals finished February - April.

- **CoC Board Elections Timeline**

Araceli Rivera presented slides listing the four CoC Board members seats to be filled and the election timeline. Elections will be held virtually on December 13th, 1-3:30 pm.

- **Subregional Outreach Draft**

Thai Hilton presented slides and reported about a proposed subregional outreach approach that is being explored to improve coordination between providers. Currently, some areas of Sonoma County see duplication of outreach efforts, while full geographic coverage is lacking in others. The proposed approach would organize street outreach (SO) teams to be assigned within specific subregions of the county, with a caseload of 1 SO worker to 20-25 unsheltered individuals. The goal is to cover 50% of unsheltered individuals to ensure they would have a case worker. Thirteen new outreach positions would need to be created to meet this goal, at a cost of \$4.3 million, an increase of approximately \$300,000 over current costs. The specific details and rationale were outlined, and insight was provided into the pros and cons of the proposed approach. A variety of funding sources exist for outreach groups, so there is no obligation for teams to adhere to the standards that are being developed, but when presented to city managers in May there appeared to be openness to the idea.

The report recommends implementing the SO proposal, in a phased approach, to align the goals of SO across the CoC and to eliminate roving SO teams that do not serve a specific population. It is also recommended that the SO teams become more housing focused, in collaboration with subregional by-names lists, and should assist

with getting clients ready for housing. This would support the goal of reducing the time between housing referral and move-in. The proposal would also include keeping those on a SO caseload for two weeks after they are housed, to facilitate a “warm handoff” to the housing provider.

A “standards” document that addresses many anticipated questions and concerns is in development, and Thai Hilton will send a draft to CoC Board members

Dave Kiff identified that staff requests a motion to approve the subregional outreach method, either in concept or in approach, and to begin to incorporate it into the NOFA and planning. Next steps would also include incentivizing funding to cover regions that are not currently covered.

Motion: Kathleen Pozzi made a motion to accept the subregional outreach in concept Una seconded.

Dennis Pocekay would like to state for the record that he is as supportive as possible of this idea.

Public Comment: Adrienne Lauby, Gregory Fearon, Michael Hilber, Ludmilla Bade

Amendment to Motion: Don Schwartz drafted a proposed amendment as follows:

CoC supports subregional approach to street outreach.

CoC requests staff to retain flexibility in implementation around issues such as particular populations (such as youth).

CoC recognizes approach needs to cover all geographic regions, including both incorporated and unincorporated areas.

CoC recognizes that the HEART team should serve all jurisdictions with role to be determined.

Directs staff to engage in funders of outreach before inclusion in NOFA.

CoC Board requests updates and discussion if/as needed at Board meetings.

Kathleen Pozzi makes her original motion with the addition of the six amendment statements. Una Glass seconds with the comment that this is a conceptual motion that is bringing us in line with our strategic plan so we can move forward.

Abstentions or Objections: None

Motion approved unanimously.

- **Racial Equity Work**

Karissa White and Chelli Rivera provided a report on their Racial Equity efforts.

Tribal Engagement:

The CoC has outreached to tribal nations to gauge interest in the newly designated tribal seat, which was previously approved by the CoC Board. Dry Creek Rancheria held a meeting with several tribal entities, which CoC staff and the CoC Board Chair attended.

Tribal partners are currently forming a committee committed to make a recommendation to the CoC Board for the tribal seat. CoC staff will then bring the recommendation to the CoC Board for approval to include in the CoC Governance Charter.

Two new applications have been received from tribal organizations for CoC Voting Membership.

Racial Equity Workgroup:

The workgroup meets monthly. The October meeting was the first occurrence without the Technical Assistance providers, Racial Equity Partners (REP) participating. REP had created a survey of needs after reviewing the Strategic Plan and obtaining feedback from workgroup members. The workgroup reviewed the survey. The full report, "Racial Equity Efforts: An Initial Assessment," completed by Racial Equity Partners can be accessed at this link: <https://share.sonoma-county.org/link/fb2aRRukD8Q/>, and will also be distributed to the CoC's Committees and CoC Listserv. The results will guide the framework for the group's initial work.

Slides were provided showing some aspects of the assessment, which included a definition of racial equity, general population vs. homeless population, and survey responses regarding barriers and challenges for clients and groups experiencing homelessness, and how the CoC might provide equitable services to each community of color. The full assessment makes many recommendations for reducing our CoC's disparities, and the workgroup is developing year-one priorities based on that information. Current efforts include outreach to involve BIPOC/LGBTQ+ serving organizations with our CoC entities and committees.

The Department of Health Services (DHS) Equity Circle, a cross-divisional cohort that participates in learning the fundamentals of Health Equity, holds collaborative sessions with DHS Leadership in shared decision-making regarding Equity work, and is working with a consultant to begin developing a Health Equity Plan for the department. Currently three Homelessness Division staff are participating. They

began training on Anti-Racist Results Based Accountability this month and will engage in Equity & Results Consulting for 7 sessions, with completion in February 2024.

- **Public Comment on all reports from Lead Agency Staff:** None.

5. CoC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Revisions (02:00:35 – 2:10:20)

- Karissa White reported on the status of the current MOU between the CoC and the County of Sonoma.

Due to changes in leadership, the MOU has not yet been approved or signed by the DHS Director, Tina Rivera, or the new County Administrator, Christina Rivera. After the CoC Board's decision today, staff will send a final version to be reviewed by the DHS Director and the CAO.

The CoC Board recommends revision of the CoC's Lead Agency and the CoC's Collaborative Applicant MOU. The revision would designate the CoC's Collaborative Applicant to approve the CoC Program annual Consolidated Application for funding to HUD on behalf of the CoC, including the revisions to the MOU to be adopted in the CoC's Governance Charter.

If the CoC Board develops future concerns over the Collaborative Applicant's performance or application submission, the MOU can be revised per the "Amendments and Notices" section of the agreements.

Motion: Una Glass moves to approve the MOU revisions with the amendment that there is an annual reauthorization of this privilege by the end of March every year. Don Schwartz seconds.

Public Comment: Gregory Fearon

Abstentions or Objections: None.

Motion approved unanimously.

10. 10-minute break: (2:11:03 – 2:20:57) Due to the length of the agenda items, the break was taken out of agenda order, from 3:05-3:15 pm.

6. Becoming a More Data-Informed System: Phase II – Data Visualization (2:20:57 – 2:28:59)

- Dave Kiff spoke about "Becoming a More Data-Informed System."

There are three phases to creating a better data-informed system.

Phase I: is to decide which elements should be used to evaluate both the system and program performance to inform program and funding decisions. This was presented by Michael Gause at the September 27, 2023, meeting.

Phase II: is a “visualization” piece that will help determine how to use the data to educate and inform the public. This presentation is planned for the October CoC Board meeting.

Phase III: involves how the data will be used to inform system of care decisions in the next NOFA at the end of 2023 and early 2024.

Dave Kiff presented the elements of the “Do’s and Don’ts” approach of **Phase II: Data Visualization**. Staff is invited to review data presentations from other counties and provide feedback about what appealed to them. Links to presentations from other counties are shown below:

- Alameda County, CA – [Homelessness Solutions in Alameda County](#)
- Bakersfield and Kern County, CA – their [System Performance and Stakeholder Update](#) as well as their SPM [Fact Sheet](#).
- King County, WA – [King County Regional Homelessness Authority](#)
- Los Angeles City and County – [LA Homelessness Services Authority](#)
- Metropolitan Dallas, TX – the [Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance](#)
- Petaluma, CA – [Data Dashboard](#) for the Petaluma Homeless Action Plan
- Santa Clara County, CA ([Update to the Santa Clara County Community Plan to End Homelessness](#)) as well as [Destination Home](#)
- Sonoma County, CA ([Community Health Dashboard](#))
- [Washington](#) (State)

The recommended action is to approve the “Do and Don’ts” approach to Data Visualization.

Public Comment: Michael Hilber

Motion: Don Schwartz moves to approve the recommended action.
Kathleen Pozzi seconds.

Abstentions or Objections: None

Motion approved.

7. CoC Name Change Proposal (2:28:60 – 2:45:37)

- Thai Hilton presented about a potential name change for the Continuum of Care, which had been discussed at the August 23, 2023, CoC Board meeting in the interest of alleviating confusion and to improve public understanding of the Board’s purpose. Staff were asked to return to the Board with suggestions for a new name. Ideas included:

- Regional Taskforce on Homelessness
- Sonoma County Homeless Coordinating Board
- The Sonoma Alliance to Stop Homelessness (SASH)
- Sonoma County Homelessness Collaborative (or Cooperative, Collective, Alliance, Coalition, or Council)
- Homelessness Service Planning Council
- RISE Coalition: Resources, Integration, Support, and Empowerment for Homelessness
- Home Sonoma County (a 2018-2019 iteration of Sonoma County's Continuum of Care, including a Leadership Council)

The recommendation is to either approve one of the names listed above or continue to use the Continuum of Care name.

Motion: Una Glass moves to adopt "Sonoma County Homeless Coalition" as the new name. Jackie Elward seconds.

Public Comment: Michael Hilber, Ludmilla Bade, Gerry La Londe-berg

Abstentions or Objections: None

Motion approved unanimously.

8. Service Provider Roundtable (SPR) Update(with presentation) (2:45:45 – 3:02:31)

- Margaret Sluyk provided updates and suggested that perhaps the SPR Update agenda item could be listed at an earlier time on the agenda.
 - The Safety Workgroup, led by Tom Bieri of Community Support Network, is moving forward, focusing on the safety of both participants and employees that serve participants. The workgroup will gather feedback and develop suggestions for moving forward. Input will be solicited from the entire provider group. Subsequently, the findings will be presented to the Strategic Planning Committee for a vote, then to the Continuum of Care Board for approval.
 - Funding to Federally Qualified Health Centers for booster shots has been discontinued. There may be a gap in the system for providing booster shots to unsheltered individuals.

Matt Verscheure, CPO of Catholic Charities, presented slides entitled "Caritas Center Update FY 22-23," describing the design, intent, data, and impact of the center and detailing the services provided. The slide deck will be shared with the CoC Board.

- Caritas Center opened in September 2022, and includes a Family Center, Youth and Family Services, a robust food service program, a Head Start classroom, Nightingale Center, Drop-In Center for homeless services, a

medical clinic, Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST), and Housing Location, Navigation, and Stabilization offices.

- The Family Center served 303 people in the first 6 months of operation, the Nightingale Center served 55 and the Drop-In Center served 1,375 during that period.

- The Drop-In Center experienced an increase of 13 people who were housed directly from the center.

Great appreciation was expressed for Caritas Village and its system of comprehensive services. Board members are strongly encouraged to visit the center and experience this model of a facility designed specifically to serve its intended population.

9. Word from the Street: This item was postponed due to time constraints.

(10. 10-minute break: Due to the length of the agenda items, the break was taken earlier in the proceedings, from 3:05-3:15 pm **(2:11:03 – 2:20:57)**

11. Long Term Funding Plan & Stella M Discussion: This item was postponed due to time constraints.

12. Response to HMIS Evaluation Issues Identified (03:02:41 – 03:16:35)

- Dave Kiff reviewed that the Board had previously requested commentary and a plan to address aspects that were marked as “Needs Improvement” in the Homeless Management Evaluation System (HMIS) evaluation. The staff report includes the previous evaluation and also includes comments on each of the areas that need improvement.

Dave Kiff focused his commentary on Evaluation Item H: *Has HMIS data been used to inform or set local homeless performance metrics and strategies?*

- Efforts have been in progress in becoming a more robust entity to increase the capacity to do this by identifying the metrics and also anticipating implementing Phase III of the Data-Informed System.

- The HMIS team hasn’t been tasked with taking on that role– they just administer the system. Dave Kiff suggests that the “ask” should be that the Homelessness team be competent and professional in taking the data that the two team staff that work in HMIS are generating, then applying that to inform the system and advise the Board of what works well and/or identify deficiencies. This is addressed in the staff report with a recommendation that the lead agency be evaluated in this capacity, rather than focusing on the HMIS evaluation and the HMIS team.

- A general satisfaction survey is in development. The results will be provided to the CoC Board, anticipated for December 2023.

Motion: Don Schwartz moves that staff will schedule any discussion of HMIS evaluation topics related to the Funding & Evaluation (F&E) Committee role at the F&E Committee meetings. Mayor Rogers seconds.

Public Comment: Gregory Fearon

Abstentions or Objections: None.

Motion approved unanimously.

13. Reports from Standing Committees (03:16:38 – 03:37:10)

- **Funding and Evaluation Committee**

Dennis Pocekay reported that the F&E Committee is working with the Homelessness Team on the scoring tool for the next local NOFA funding. They will be meeting on Friday, October 27, 2023, in anticipation of finalizing that work. The results will be presented to the CoC Board at a later date.

In November, the committee will review a draft of the upcoming NOFA, especially with respect to definitions such as “new” vs “existing” programs, “promising” vs “proven” programs, levels of permanent supportive housing, and geographic equity. The objectives are to meet the goals in the charter, to enhance training to promote decision-making that reflects awareness of the population served, and to better support the elements contained in the Strategic Plan.

- **HMIS Committee**

Relevant updates were included in the earlier report by Dave Kiff on HMIS Evaluation Issues (agenda item #12).

Heather Sweet from Social Action for Youth (SAY) reported that there has been a substantial HUD standard change, to the effect that the data “buckets” that live in HMIS got turned into other data “buckets,” creating confusion in reporting. However, staff has been diligent about reporting updates and fixes are coming in.

- **CEA Committee**

Matt Verscheure reported that the Coordinated Entry Committee (CEA) met on October 4, 2023. The workgroup that will be reviewing the assessment and prioritization process will hold their initial meeting on November 8, 2023. The CEA is continuing to work on the Coordinated Entry annual assessment that is required under current CEA policy.

Hunter Scott of HomeFirst presented slides about Dynamic Prioritization and a request for a policy change which has been approved by the CEA. The policy change is the

second step in a three-part process to move toward the dynamic prioritization process. The objective is to move away from what is currently in place, moving name-by-name down a list according to scores, toward a system that establishes priority groups each month which would allow for more flexibility in aspects such as client choice, whether a client can be located, and other factors. Coordinated Entry (CE) decisions would be organized closer to “real time” rather than managing lists and trying to locate people “when their name comes up,” then scrambling once a referral to permanent housing arises.

The goal is to develop the ability to know where people are, what their preferences are, and what specific housing criteria is required for the available housing, ahead of the referral. This would reduce workload and improve efficiency.

Stage 1, the Data Collection Stage, was approved previously and has been implemented with good results.

Stage 2, the Implementation Stage, proposes a policy change to send referrals within each priority group each month only to those with **verified contact information**, which is defined as:

- Contact with the participant within the last month through a phone # or email address or secondary contact (must actually speak with primary participant)
- Or physical location verified within the last week.

Those without verified contact information will be assigned to CE Outreach to locate. If the Minimum Contact Standard is exhausted, the participant would be made inactive.

The “Priority Group” can be updated at Case Conference at any time each month.

The timeframe is to gain approval of Stage II from the CoC in October 2023, for implementation in November 2023.

Stage 3 will be the “Improvement Stage,” which is envisioned for some time in the future.

The requested action is to approve the policy language in the Board packet:

- Only participants with “Verified Contact Information” will be referred to housing opportunities going forward.
- Defines Verified Contact Information and codifies existing process to collect this information.
- Directs HomeFirst CE Outreach to proactively search for participants up for referral who lack this information so that as few people are skipped as possible.

Motion: Ben Leroi moves to approve the requested changes to the CE policy.
Una Glass seconds.

Public Comment: Gregory Fearon

Abstentions or Objections: None.

Motion approved unanimously.

- **Strategic Planning Committee**

Tom Bieri of Community Support Network reported that the Strategic Planning Committee met on October 20, 2023. Meetings are on the third Friday of every other month, from 9-10 am.

The Safety Workgroup will meet at noon on November 2, 2023, and Tom Bieri thanks Dennis Pocekay, Margaret Sluyk, and four other providers who attended the initial meeting. The initial proposed strategies will be formulated after hearing from various subject-matter experts. There will also be a meeting with the Lived Experience Advisory and Planning (LEAP) Board for input on the first draft of proposed strategies.

A workgroup, spearheaded by Ludmilla Bade, is also being formed to discuss the recently released Benioff study. The workgroup will be established within the next few months.

Progress is being made on all Year-One priorities.

In line with the Strategic Plan, a new assessment tool is being developed in the Assessment and Prioritization Workgroup. The Strategic Planning goal related to adding 200 PSH beds has already been surpassed, and the addition of 87 of the 100 non-congregate beds that had been called for has been accomplished.

- **Lived Experience Advisory & Planning Board (LEAP)**

Andrew Akufo reported that the LEAP Board consists of 12 board members, with two open seats available. The Board recently met with Dave Kiff to discuss recent developments surrounding the emergency shelter site. The LEAP Board application is in the process of being revised, and members are still undergoing Board training and development.

Public Comment on Committee Reports: None.

14. Review Agenda for Next CoC Board Meeting (03:37:11 – 03:39:00)

- The deferred Stella M item will need to be added.
- Michael Gause would like to share the details of the Homeless Housing Assistance Provision Application that was released a few weeks ago. Work is beginning on this, due at the end of March 2024. This would count as one of several public meetings that will be needed.
- Michael Gause is hoping to bring the NOFA to the December meeting, as well.

- Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, the upcoming CoC Board meeting will occur a week early, on November 15, 2023.

Additional comments or requests: None. The agenda for the November 15, 2023, CoC Board meeting is accepted.

15. Board Member Questions & Comments (03:39:02 – 03:49:16)

- Ron Wellander inquired about the feasibility of shortening the length of the CoC meetings.
- Jennielynn Holmes highlights that Catholic Charities is seeing a substantial uptick of undocumented individuals experiencing precarious situations entering their services. Also noted is that a significant number of asylum seekers are coming to the community for support and safety. Other Catholic Charities CEOs at a meeting in Sacramento yesterday (10-24-23) also confirmed a catastrophic increase of individuals in desperate need of safety and services – a higher level of vulnerability than typically seen.
- Dennis Pocekay agrees - the North Bay Rapid Response Network is also experiencing an increase in families seeking help.
- Don Schwartz reports that the Rohnert Park City Council celebrated the 1-year anniversary of the opening of the Labath Landing interim housing program, and excellent success stories were shared. Appreciation was expressed to the CoC Board and the County of Sonoma for their support in making the project a reality.
- Don Schwartz also expressed thanks to the DHS Homelessness Team for following through on their commitment to establish greater engagement and communication between the County and cities in an effort to amplify messaging.
- Margaret Sluyk expressed appreciation and a public “thank you” to the cities of Windsor, Cloverdale, and Healdsburg for their efforts in support of “Journey to Zero.”
- Dennis Pocekay invited input about the reasoning behind the genesis of the 4-hour CoC Board meetings and acknowledged the disparity in devoting an abundance of time to the earlier-placed agenda items, then rushing through later agenda items as the end of meeting approaches.

Public Comment: Gregory Fearon

16. Public Comment on Items not on the Agenda: (03:49:20 – 03:54:00)

Michael Hilber, Ludmilla Bade

4:49 pm: Meeting Adjourned