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**Homelessness Social Work Council Meeting**

**February 23, 2018**

**NOTES**

**Attendees:** Katie Allston (Marion House), Sarah Butts (UMSSW), Deborah Harburger (The Institute, UMSSW), Sam Little (UMSSW), Aubrie McCarthy (UMSSW Student), Yvonne Perret (SOAR), Thelma Rich (Morgan State University), Adam Schneider (UMSSW), Gene Severance (UMSSW)

**Guests:** Angela Jachelski (UMSSW), Caroline Fernandez (SAMHSA), James Coggins, (SAMHSA), Danielle Meister (Homeless Services Program, MOHS)

**Opening Remarks & Introductions**

Sam Little welcomed the Council members and distributed the following handouts:

* A Homelessness Social Work Council membership roster. If you have any corrections, please contact Donna Earling ([donna.earling@ssw.umaryland.edu](mailto:donna.earling@ssw.umaryland.edu), or 410-706-7746).
* Pending HB 1224 - Ending Youth Homelessness Act of 2018 and summary sheet that Ingrid Lofgren forwarded to share with the Council. This bill, sponsored by Council member Del. Mary Washington, would establish a grant program at the Department of Housing & Community Development and make Youth REACH a permanent program.
* National Center for Excellence in Homeless Services session notes from the SWRR Conference held January 11, 2018.

Sarah Butts presented a new book: *Grand Challenges for Social Work and Society*, which has over 60 contributing authors including our dean. Lead researchers across the country have contributed. The book will inspire the next generation of social workers to solve the critical problems facing our society. If Council members would like to purchase the book, here is the link and the discount code to purchase: [https://global.oup.com/academic/product/grand-challenges-for-social-work-and-society-9780190858988?cc=us&lang=en&#](https://global.oup.com/academic/product/grand-challenges-for-social-work-and-society-9780190858988?cc=us&lang=en&) (discount code: ASFLYQ6).

If you find the book helpful, please endorse it on Amazon.

**Subcommittee Updates**

Sam Little held conference calls with the three subcommittees in January. Notes were distributed to each committee and will be shared with the Council.

**Homelessness Social Work Program**

Danielle Meister, the Continuum of Care (CoC) Coordinator for the Homeless Services Program (MOHS) at the Mayor’s Office of Human Services gave an update on what has been happening this past year. There have been significant changes in the program structure and how the CoC operates. HUD is the mandated collaborative body in charge of ending homelessness and the legal arm of the CoC. The Journey Home is the name of Baltimore City’s program for ending homelessness, and is also the CoC. The primary responsibility of the CoC is to oversee the local progress on ending homelessness for veterans, chronic homelessness, families & children and unaccompanied youth. Membership is open to everyone.

The CoC Board oversees all the committees and workgroups. There is a new committee for resource development to grow funding sources. The housing committee is creating a plan to develop affordable housing. Right now there is a heavy focus on chronic homelessness and permanent housing. They are also working on a subsidy voucher program.

The MOHS serves HUD and the City. Among other things, they manage grant funds from HUD/State and are the support entity for the CoC Board. MOHS is responsible for the City’s shelter program. A new street outreach initiative has begun, which provides direct services. They are growing a permanent housing program, and coordinating access to Rapid Rehousing, which is clearly more effective. The Journey Home website has more information: <http://www.journeyhomebaltimore.org/>.

According to Danielle, there is a strong need to engage more faculty and academic researchers who can do evidence-based research and data analysis. If anyone is interested in joining, contact Danielle at [Danielle.meister@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Danielle.meister@baltimorecity.gov).

Questions & Comments

Does the City do anything for prevention? -- The CoC does eviction prevention. The Mayor introduced a bill to resolve red court. Prevention is a problem across the board.

Are they using a vulnerability assessment tool based on self-report, which typically is not good at assessing mental illness? -- The CoC is constantly updating the vulnerability assessment. Danielle did not have it with her to share at this time.

Recently the City destroyed an encampment. Has it been effective? How many are in the shelter? -- As of the last day it closed, 24 people chose to move to a bridge housing facility. They were provided rapid rehousing. Some were high on the list because they were already in the queue. Since the facility opened, Danielle does not think anyone has left. For some it is the right thing. The strategy is up for debate. There is not much data to guide. There are public health issues. A significant number refuse housing because they do not want to leave behind their community and friends. How do you address it without moving everyone at once? People are also holding out for permanent supportive housing. We need to educate them on the process. The street task force will have to address it in the right way. There are different views and right now there is no clear solution.

**SAMHSA**

Caroline Fernandez from the Homeless Programs Branch of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the director of PATH, talked about mental illness and substance abuse in the homeless population. About 1 in 5 people experiencing homelessness have a serious mental health or a substance abuse issue. She discussed the grants and funding SAMHSA provides.

Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) is a powerful program that focuses on funding providers who engage with the homeless and do outreach. PATH meets people where they are. They sponsor the SOAR Technical Assistance Center. Results from a recent evaluation survey indicate that their programs are successfully providing critical services.

PATH has State and provider contracts as well. They support evidence-based practices. They are currently developing a white paper on shared housing models and are funding an environmental scan and literature review. They also provide many publications and resources where you can find treatment sources in your community.

Sam Little asked if there are any data on the number of students doing internships with PATH-funded providers. He would like to increase placement opportunities and track the agencies that hire our students to develop work force development. There are students in PATH programs, but how many would need to be determined. It would be good to know. The Institute can collaborate with Caroline. Caroline can be reached at (240) 276-1625, or [caroline.fernandez@samsha.hhs.gov](mailto:caroline.fernandez@samsha.hhs.gov). Go to [www.samsha.gov](http://www.samsha.gov) to look at funding sources.

**SOAR**

Yvonne Perret, founder of SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery) provided information on SOAR, the important work they do, and the challenges they face. The first SOAR project began in Baltimore and, based on its success, it has since been implemented in 50 States. Social Security Disability Insurance is based on earnings deductions and Social Security Income is based on need, with a maximum benefit of $750. This income is critical for adults who are homeless or at risk, and those with mental illness.

SOAR strives to help people who are homeless with mental illness get access to SSI benefits as quickly as possible, which has its challenges. Outreach and the cooperation from other support centers is essential to reach the homeless. The long wait to receive the award is a huge problem. It is a labor-intensive effort. Maryland has done an amazing job at providing funding and has an 85% approval rate in 81 days.

SSA is moving to an online application process, which is problematic for the homeless. The system does not service those who need it the most. Many people have problems providing specific detailed information, resulting in applications that are declined. Some clients do not have a primary health care provider and have poor cognitive ability, which makes it difficult to complete the application. Medical records can be difficult to obtain.

Yvonne would love to train students in the SOAR assessment process. In-person training takes 2 days. There is also an online training. In Maryland you can do the online training with 1 day in-person training. Some communities have mentors and quality review teams that work to support model fidelity. There is no money for it. SSW schools can advocate for funding for SOAR. SOAR brings hope to the homeless and is a tool for recovery.

The Council can also consider working on pushing for social workers to be able to diagnose and do outreach. Maryland will be doing a pilot that SSA is going to roll out and social workers could help with the diagnosis.

Yvonne can be reached at 301-777-7987 (Work)/240-500-0786 (Cell), or [yvonne.perret@gmail.com](mailto:yvonne.perret@gmail.com).

**Funding & Resource Development**

Angela Jachelski, the macro field placement coordinator at UMSSW, informed the group of a CSWE grant application that was submitted this month. The grant, Policy Practice in Field Education, would support macro students to be a voice in homeless matters.

Yesterday was Advocacy Day and it was a great success. Our students talked to legislators who are interested in the prevention of homelessness.

Katie Allston mentioned that she was not aware of the Advocacy Day and she is a macro instructor. Sam Little will follow up on the notification process.

A HUD grant proposal is out. We are asking agencies that are applying to include field education in the application process.

**Open Discussion**

There were no additional items discussed.

**The next Homelessness Social Work Council meeting is scheduled April 13, 2018.**