

NORTHEAST MICHIGAN COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCY, INC.  
CLIENT SERVICES  
POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES  
September 13, 2016

Members present were Carrie Badgero, Linda Zielinski, Debora Suszek, Kelcey Lilly, Carl Yoder, Fr. Tom Anderson, and Christina Skiba

Members excused were Greg Brock, Alice Stone, Leilani Kitler

Staff members present were Valerie Williams, Theresa Sanford, Beth Storms, Tammy Dean and Debbie Wilds

Meeting called to order at 10:00 am by Theresa S.

TEFAP: Presenter Tammy Dean

- A new trucking company will be delivering the food to the distribution sites.
- We're working to increase food distribution numbers.
- Signatures are now required, even from food distributed by local pantries, from those who receive food from the TEFAP distribution.
- Volunteers are needed for the Alpena distribution. We are also working to potentially find a new distribution site.

CSFP: Presenter Debbie Wilds

- The program no longer serves children under 6 and those that were on the program have aged out.
- The poverty income guideline is 130% of the federal poverty level. This is quite low however there is some flexibility when calculating income and we do what we can to get people on the program that need it.
- Attached is the distribution schedule for the next fiscal year. This will also be available on our website.
- Keep in mind that with the cold weather coming up, distributions may be canceled. If the schools are closed in the city where the distribution is scheduled that distribution will be canceled and rescheduled for the following week. Same time, same place.

Weatherization: Presenter Theresa Sanford

- This program year just got started on July 1<sup>st</sup>.
- We have a new requirement from the federal government that requires us to prioritize houses based on 5 different categories.
- The 5 categories are Elderly (60+), Disabled, Children, High Burden, and High Use and are shown across the top (Demographics by Unit).
- High Energy Burden is a comparison of a family's heating costs to their income. If their heating costs exceed 20% of their income they are considered high burden.
- High Energy Use is a total of their heating usage (fuel oil, propane & natural gas) compared to averages for our area. If they exceed the averages they are considered high use.
- We currently have several jobs in progress and in the near future will be sending out applications to everyone on the waitlist. Once approved they will be scored according to the priority categories (Elderly, disabled, children, high burden, and high use) and prioritized. Those with the highest scores will be weatherized first.
- With this new way of prioritizing applications, we're hoping we can coordinate with County Housing offices more often.
- We will begin accepting applications from the general public hopefully by February 2017.

Homeless Prevention: Presenter Theresa Sanford

- The Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) can provide financial assistance to those that are Literally Homeless (in a shelter, living on the streets, etc.) or those who we are trying to help prevent becoming homeless (they're being evicted or staying with a friend or relative who wants them out).
- Income requirements for ESG are less than 30% of poverty, Area Median Income. The AMI is the same throughout our service area except for Otsego County. A family of 4 cannot make more than \$15,800 (\$17,500 in Otsego).

- The Family Re-Housing Program is for those that are literally homeless and have children (or are pregnant). There is no income requirement.
- For potential assistance with either program, clients should call our central intake (866-484-7077, ext. 278) to be screened for eligibility.
- The Homeless Prevention Program report shows a breakdown of the 2 programs. The number and amount of payments made for each type of service and the number of payments made in each county.
- Some families receive more than one payment, so number of payments is not equal to number of families served. In FRP we are currently financially serving 41 families. In ESG we have financially served 89 families.
- We have a new program starting October 1<sup>st</sup> that is similar to FRP. It is called the Rapid Re-Housing Program and the requirements are that the person must be literally homeless. However, this program does not require children in the household. We can serve single individuals and couples w/o children.
- The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program (also known as Section 8), has reduced the number of vouchers available in each county. These cuts were made across the state due to budget cuts. To qualify to be put on the waitlist, an individual (or family), must be literally homeless.

#### Crisis Prevention Program: Presenter Beth Storms.

- The Energy Assistance program is used to assist with metered utilities. The Deliverable Fuel Assistance program is used to assist with deliverable fuels such as propane, fuel oil and wood.
- There was one payment made from the Energy Assistance Program to metered propane. Not many people are using fuel oil.
- The programs are broken down by number and amount of payments made for each type of assistance and the number of payments made in each county.
- Some families receive more than one payment, so number of payments is not equal to number of families served.
- We were able to spend out all of the available funding for both programs.
- We also had a third program, the Summer Fuel Pilot Program, which ran for 1 month. This program allowed us to pre-buy propane for those that qualified. We were able to spend out most of this funding.
- There were some companies that did not want to participate in this pre-buy program. These clients were told they could call us back in October for the regular fuel assistance program.

NEMCSA Housing & Client Services department will soon begin hosting "open enrollment" days at various service locations throughout our service area. This will hopefully help the clients access our services in a more convenient way. Thank you to those agencies that are working with us to provide space for these outreach activities.

#### Agency Updates:

Deb S. with Hope Shores Alliance: No real changes. They have Domestic Violence Awareness month coming up. They were very fortunate to be gifted a house in Alpena. They are currently working to fix it up and it will be used for transitional housing.

Carrie B. with Alpena Department of Health & Human Services: They are working to set up their 4<sup>th</sup> annual energy providers meeting. They have funding that can help clients with a mortgage, back property taxes, emergency medical transport, etc. Funding can also be used for household goods (beds, table, chairs, ect.) if the client has not already maxed out. This program requires an itemized receipt from the business before they can make payment.

Linda Z. with Alpena St. Vincent de Paul: They have money right now for utility shut-offs. Once October arrives, they will refer these requests to other agencies (NEMCSA, DHHS, etc) and focus on other needs. They are working to provide a Thanksgiving food basket to 120 families in the area. In May they will have full use of the building and look forward to being able to utilize that additional space.

Christina S. from Alpena County Home Improvement: There have been a lot of changes to the CDBG funding and money is no longer available for home improvement programs. Some county programs have already shut down. Luckily the housing market has picked up a bit in Alpena and previous clients are selling their homes

and paying off their loans which means that the program in Alpena still has some funding available. However, they are focused on emergency projects only.

Carl Y with Chemical Bank: They are offering financial education classes that include budgeting, balancing a checkbook, saving etc.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 am

The next PAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday January 17, 2016.

If you have questions you can contact Theresa at:

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