

NORTHEAST MICHIGAN COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCY, INC.
CLIENT SERVICES
POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
February 2018

Members present were Carrie Badgero, Leo Marciniak, April Travis, and Kelcey Lilly,

Staff members present were Valerie Williams, Ashley Gagnon, Sam Madsen, Mark Whitscell, and Nikki Amrich

Meeting called to order at 10:01 am by Nikki Amrich.

Introductions

TEFAP and CSFP: Presenter Valerie Williams

- There was an increase in our caseload which means more money is available.
- The monitoring results were discussed and there will be some program updates needed that had not been completed this past year. Some items that need updating include:
 - Fair Hearing Policy
 - Civil Rights Statement
- Valerie and Tammy met with representatives from the Masonic Temple in Lincoln. They may be interested in assisting us with the Produce Giveaways as well as some TEFAP.
- Produce Giveaways will start back up again in May. Please notify Tammy Dean if anyone knows of a place that would like to host one
- They are currently in the process of interviewing and hiring a replacement for Tammy's previous position now that she has taken over since Debbie's retirement.

Weatherization: Presenter Mark Whitscell

- They have currently completed 37 houses, have 20 completed applications, and another 24 applications that have been sent out to clients
- We receive approximately the same number of referrals as we do completed houses, so the waitlist stays fairly consistent at around 396 and is organized by date and county.
- There tends to be about 30-40% return rate on applications due to clients moving or no longer needing services. We also follow-up with unreturned applications by sending letters and calling.
- We just received our LIHEAP funding which will increase our anticipated completed jobs from 68 to 80 or 90, which will hopefully reduce our waitlist
- Mark also shared a success story with the group

Housing: Presenter Valerie Williams

- The housing program has had a lot of staffing changes as well as process changes with the new coordinating entry requirement.
- With coordinating entry, all homeless individuals must come through the HARA, which is NEMCSA. This effort will include:
 - A more consistent service for the clients
 - There are weekly or bi-weekly meetings to discuss each individual's scenario in order to determine what can be done for them.
- Carrie asked about the after hour line: Val explained that we continue to have issues with 211 getting our information correct. So we are looking at other option, such as Listening Ear or possibly a stipend based worker to carry a cell phone.
- Our housing staff continue to receive additional training. Northwest was here recently and MSHDA will be here on Thursday, 3/1/18.
- PIT (Point in Time Count) was a huge success. We had volunteers in all our counties searching for homeless individuals.

Heat & Utility Assistance: Presenter Nikki Amrich

- We had received our initial Heat & Utility Assistance funding late October/early November and was out of funds by 12/4/17. We also used some unrestricted funds to aide client as well, which was also gone by that 12/4/17 date.
- We recently received our second round of funding but just last week there was clarification on the Assistance Caps. This will make it extremely difficult to spend out of the funds.
- Leo asked how St. Vincent's will know how much assistance was received- Val clarified that with a signed release we could communicate that information.
- Carrie brought up a past conversation regarding the need for an energy assistance meeting. April suggested a meeting in October or November. Carrie thought it should be as early as March. Val commented that it would be difficult to organize a meeting in March but thought April may be an option.
- Carrie asked NEMCSA to keep DHHS up to date on our funding status in order to help us spend out our funds.

Community Development: Presenter Ashley Gagnon

- There was printout in the packet but the current numbers are:
 - Foreclosure: Serviced 49 with 17 active clients
 - Financial Literacy: Served 43
 - Homebuyer Education: Served 12 last year and 4 this year
 - IDA: 4 people graduate in the last 15 months and 4 people currently have open accounts
 - FSS: Currently Serving about 31 people
 - This is a 5 year program to help clients on either the HCV or PBV through MSHDA become more self-sufficient. The difference from rent saved goes into an escrow account that the client gets upon successful graduation and is non-taxable.
 - Youth IDA: The youth IDA was to assist students save for laptops to be used for college. However, the income guidelines were too restrictive and there were only 3 students at Alcona Schools that qualified and only 2 graduated. They received the laptops in September.
- Ashley is currently working with the Elks and IRESA offering a 6 weeks course covering items such as budgeting, writing checks, and even added tax preparation. We just got additional funding to expand this opportunity and are trying to partner with ACES, Adult School in Onaway, as well as IRESA in West Branch.

NEMCSA updates: Val mentioned we were recently approved for a Furnace Replacement Program and are currently waiting on the contract before we can publish anything about the program. There will be income qualifications. Since this is not a loan based program we hope is to utilize the DTE rebate program on the furnaces, to help fund the program going forward.

Agency Updates:

St. Vincent DePaul: Leo and April

- Discussed the \$300 cap per family per year restriction on assistance. This forces some families to be responsible for some sort of co-pay.
- The Food Pantry runs Monday-Friday. It is on an emergency basis and gives food for a 2 week period but the family cannot come back for 1 month. The need runs in streaks, some weeks are really busy and others are slower.
- They also have some personal needs items available, however they are only given out when they are asked for.
- They have received grant funds and donations for a new metal roof to be put on this year. They are still inquiring about other funding to further assist the \$5,000-\$8,000 remaining cost. They also have volunteers that are willing to help complete the project.
- Ashley asked about property taxes, Leo explained that they do not have funding to assist with property taxes.

Alpena Department of Health & Human Services: Carrie B.

- Carrie mentioned that she currently has 125 Food Basket tickets for Easter. We are to contact her with the families' names as soon as possible to get the tickets. These baskets would need to be picked up on March 28th between 9am-11am and delivered to the families.

- Currently there are 4218 eligible families for Food Assistance. The breakdown includes:
 - 1300 in Alcona
 - 1300 in Presque Isle
 - 1100 in Montmorency
- The HSCC groups are currently collecting hygiene products that cannot be bought with food assistance. They will be distributing them out for client needs.
- Changes at DHHS-
 - The online application uses 211 for referrals
 - They are moving to a centralized call system and away from individual caseworkers. There will likely be frustration and confusion from the clients during the switch.
- The next MI Bridges Training is in Gaylord in April. Carrie recommends that we attend one of these trainings. Val explained that we plan on attending one shortly.

Hope Shores: Kelcey

- April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month
- If we know of any individual that needs assistance, have them contact Hope Shores at 356-2560

Final notes:

- Valerie gave Leo the Board Packet to review and let us know if he is interested in being a part of NEMCSA's board.

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 am

The next PAC meeting is scheduled for May 22, 2018 from 10-11am.

If you have questions you can contact Nikki at:

Email: amrichn@nemcsa.org

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