**VT Youth Homelessness Prevention Plan Committee**

July 10th, 2017: Meeting Notes

***Present:*** *Mike Nelson (NCSS), Laurel Chen (VSHA), Amanda Churchill (DCF), Ari Kisler (VCRHYP), George Seiffert (OEO), Will Towne (SYFS), Tara Chase (WCYS), Christina Brown (WCYSB), Christine Linn (YS), Bethany Pombar (VCRHYP, Co-Chair), Judy Rex (DCF, Co-Chair)*

***Guests:*** *Sarah Grandchamp (HPC), Sarah Phillips (OEO)*

**Review of Other Plans**

*Judy collected responses from Committee members as they reviewed plans from other communities and shared them with the group. Committee members discussed their findings.*

* Some themes appeared through all plans: the importance of data; youth engagement; addressing employment/education as part of the solution
* Wisconsin: vision, principles, and outcomes; their grounding in the Youth Thrive framework
* Connecticut: focus on youth leaving the JJ/CW system not having the necessary skills to live independently; strategy of reallocating funding; use of a universal screening tool
* Calgary: use of a pre-assessment checklist; creation of a Zero Discharge into Homelessness workgroup; goal of identifying a baseline number of housing units needed specifically for youth; utilizing shelter was last choice for surveyed youth; community focuses efforts on outreach
* King County: rare, brief, and one-time occurrence goal for youth homelessness; quarterly dashboard to track their progress; review of each level/interval or prevention and intervention; built in process for self-reflection, plan always adapting;

**Youth Engagement Workgroup**

*Bethany and Christine reported back to the Committee about the Youth Engagement Workgroup.*

The workgroup met once since last Committee meeting and created a Youth Engagement Action Plan (*handout provided*). A great discussion happened at the full table and then workgroup then worked on refining that into a plan. Four areas have been selected for focus groups. We’ll need to do some broader outreach, but as we are looking to engage youth with lived experiences, we want to use the connections we already have in place in these geographic areas. The workgroup created a focus group agenda and drafted questions to ask, as well as a priorities rating activity. Feedback on questions would be appreciated. A budget was also drafter, which VCRHYP has the funds to cover.

*Discussion:*

* Is there any way to survey youth online? Outside of focus groups, this would provide a way for youth who want more time/privacy to reflect on the questions.
  + Absolutely! We want to approach this from all sides, but we are also thinking about capacity and data analysis. Surveys can make data a little more difficult to analyze, but we’re definitely open to exploring how to do this.
* Would youth have the opportunity to engage with each other during the focus groups?
  + The hope is to facilitate the conversations in a way that creates generative discussions among youth. Perhaps we could train peer outreach workers (POW) to facilitate. Youth Services and Spectrum both have POWs. Anna has connections with youth in other areas, so she could help identify a potential peer facilitator in St. Johnsbury. The original hope was to complete all 4 groups in September and October and report back in November; this timeline may have to shift if we want to train peer facilitators.
* Rural/disconnected youth still seem to be missing.
  + It is more difficult to reach youth in those areas. Perhaps the survey model would capture their voice. We could make a recommendation as part of our plan that we need to find a way to engage youth in rural areas.

*Next steps for workgroup:* explore survey, begin outreach, identify peer facilitators

**Coordinated Entry**

*Sarah Phillips from OEO presented on Coordinated Entry in Vermont.*

Coordinated Entry (CE) is about access, assessment, prioritization, and referral (*CE Core Elements handout from the* [*HUD’s Guidebook*](https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Coordinated-Entry-Core-Elements.pdf) *provided*). Four years ago HUD mandated CoCs to implement CE, but have only recently begun to provide guidance. The CE process must be used by all CoCs, must be a known process, and must use a standardized assessment process. Both CoCs in Vermont (Balance of State and Chittenden County) have a planning committee that has been looking at how to implement CE in their community.

CE brings with it a lot of big changes. The overall philosophy of CE is to prevent people from needing to enter into our system of care by finding alternative options for them. The CE process involves different levels of assessment and is intended to be a housing tool that connects people to the right housing resource. The process also takes into account the need to triage people’s immediate needs before completing a full assessment. CE is a systems intake, not a program intake. Programs will still need to complete their own intakes and make their own eligibility determinations.

VCEH (Balance of State CoC) is looking at what they have to accomplish, what they’re already doing, and what changes need to be made. VCEH has developed 3 roles in each of the local CoCs: lead agency, assessment partner, and referral partner. Local Partnership Agreements outline each role and agencies sign on to their local agreement. Youth-serving agencies will likely be assessment agencies, rather than lead agencies (lead agencies generally serve a broader population). Referral partners tend to be community resources that aren’t doing direct housing service (e.g. soup kitchen, ESD). Referral partners make a direct referral to a lead agency, which then assesses a family/person and helps them connect to the right resources. Assessment partners complete the assessment in-house and help families/people connect to the right resources.

VCEH has a screening tool for referral partners to use. The Housing Assessment is still in process and is being worked on by a variety of workgroups. Right now VCEH only has prioritization in place for Permanent Supportive Housing resources. People/families are prioritized based on VCEH’s policy that first looks at those who are chronically homeless, then at how long they have been homeless and how many severe service needs they have. People/families who are not chronically homeless, but have a disability, are prioritized next, taking into account their length of time being homeless and their severe service needs. Lastly, those who are not chronically homeless and do not have a disability are prioritized based on the length of time they have been homeless and the number of severe service needs they have.

VCEH needs to look at how pieces of their process are adjusted when dealing with special populations (e.g. DV, youth). For the youth population, they need to figure out how to make sure youth are able to access all resources, not just youth-specific resources. HUD Exchange’s [FAQ for Youth in CE](https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Coordinated-Entry-and-Youth-FAQs.pdf) is a helpful resource that walks through what communities need to think about when youth enter the CE process (*handouts on Guiding Question/Four Key Elements and Question 8 provided*). Unaccompanied youth (under age 18) are not part of the process at this point; there is a clear process that communities take with unaccompanied youth. We don’t want them to be referred into a complicated, unnecessary process, but rather to be referred directly to RHY services.

VCEH is working on the timeline presented by HUD. This means written policies and procedures need to be in place by the end of January 2018. The CoC can revisit these, but HUD’s deadline must be met. Multiple workgroups are tackling all of the different pieces required. VCEH is experiencing two places of “tension:” trying to get a full understanding of what is already happening in each local community and figuring out how to resolve issues in community where information/data sharing is hindered by a lack of trust.

*Sarah Grandchamp from the Homeless Prevention Center (HPC) in Rutland shared what her experience with CE has been like so far.*

Her position at HPC is built around CE: she receives referrals, makes referrals, completes assessments, and so on. She also travels to train others in the community about the process, as they have been piloting it for two years. When completing an assessment, she is looking at what level of services the person needs: a quick fix, more referrals, higher-level of support, etc. As the lead agency in Rutland, HPC currently keeps everything in-house, but wants to move that process into the Housing Review Team to better involve other agencies, share the load of work, and create more transparency.

Sarah has been using VCEH’s assessment tool, which captures the person’s current housing status. Training on language, how to ask the questions, etc. is a vital part of the process. HPC makes a lot of referrals for youth to both RCPCC and VAC. She sees a lot of youth get frustrated when asked about housing history, as they don’t have much or don’t understand how to answer the questions. This brings up the fear that they don’t stand a chance with landlords. Income questions create frustrations as well, due to difficulties with youth finding employment in Rutland. HPC typically suggests youth take their renting 101 class, in order to increase their understanding of housing history, etc. HPC has been using prioritization internally to determine program access in-house: the score from the prioritization is part of their staff meeting conversations, but they are not only taking the score into consideration when connecting youth with resources.

*Will Towne from Spectrum Youth and Family Services shared what his experience with CE has been like so far.*

The Chittenden County CoC is also working towards the January 2018 deadline set by HUD. They will be hosting 2 half-day “retreats” to get things moving forward more. Right now the CE process is only being used for PSH. Will feels strongly that youth should be assessed by youth-serving agencies. When youth have been sent elsewhere to be assessed, they wouldn’t show up or wouldn’t feel comfortable telling the whole story. Spectrum began completing the assessment and were noticing that youth were still not self-reporting the full story. Occurrences of homelessness is a difficult question for youth to answer. The drop-in center staff will likely be completing most of the assessments. Right now all assessment data is sent to CVOEO and anyone scoring a 10 or higher is brought to the PSH subcommittee. Chittenden is using the VI-SPDAT, but there have been questions around whether they should use the TAY VI-SPDAT for youth. When a person goes to an assessment location in Chittenden County, they are usually given the option to complete the assessment there or go to an agency where they feel more comfortable (DV agency, youth agency, etc.).

*The Committee discussed what role they can play during the implantation of CE around the state.*

* VCEH’s assessment workgroup is looking to comb through their assessment and determine which questions have to be asked and which are not giving information they have to know as part of the assessment. The tool should be a decision-making tool: if questions don’t inform decisions, they shouldn’t be a part of the assessment. The Committee could provide feedback on how to rephrase questions so they are more strengths-based.
* The Committee could figure out when certain questions should or shouldn’t be asked, depending on the person/family being assessed. The assessment tool could be made into more of a process.
* The Committee could review the TAY VI-SPDAT and make a recommendation to the Chittenden County CoC about adopting it or not.

*A CE workgroup (Ari, Will, Laurel, Christine) was created to work on the following:*

* *Making suggestions on basic language/phrasing changes in the VCEH assessment tool*
* *Looking at how VCEH could prioritize for Rapid Re-Housing resources and the implications for youth*
* *Making suggestions on which questions need to be asked to effectively match youth with short, medium, and long-term housing resources*
* *Reviewing the TAY VI-SPDAT and drafting a letter of recommendation to the Chittenden County CoC regarding adoption of the tool for youth*
* *Discussing the tensions that exist for youth accessing the adult housing world and how CE will decrease or increase these tensions*

**Key Stakeholder Input**

*A Key Stakeholder workgroup (Judy, Bethany, Tara, Christina) was formed. This workgroup will focus on identifying who the key stakeholders are, deciding how the Committee will get input from them (survey, meetings, interviews, etc.), and creating a plan similar to the Youth Engagement Workgroup’s plan to present at the next Committee meeting.*

**Data Analysis**

*The Executive Planning Team (Judy, Bethany, Ari, and Laurel) will meet with Amanda Churchill to further discuss what data is available to the Committee and determine next steps.*

**Next meeting:** *September 25th, 1-3pm, at Hartford Town Hall*