

Allegheny County Homeless Advisory Board

CoC Bi-Monthly Meeting

November 26, 2019; 10:00AM to 12:00PM

Lower Level, Human Services Building

1 Smithfield St., Pittsburgh PA, 15222

Purpose: The Homeless Advisory Board (HAB) is a public/private partnership formed to assist and recommend to Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh, the City of McKeesport and the Municipality of Penn Hills on public policy, programs, activities, data and all other efforts that will eliminate homelessness and improve the wellbeing of persons and families who are homeless.

HAB Members¹

Frank Aggazio

Meg Balsamico

Caster Binion

Jerry Cafardi (P)

Cassa Collinge

Tom Cummings (P)

Jane Downing (P)

Laura Drogowski (P)

Pete Giacalone (P)

Abigail Horn (P)

Joe Lagana (P)

John Lovelace (P)

Michael Murray (P)

Christy Pietryga (P)

Lenny Prewitt (P)

Gale Schwartz (P)

Richard Rapp

Lea Etta Rhodes

Kellie Wild

Bethany Wingerson (P)

Guest Attendees

Carla Adams, WCS

Alena Anderson, United Way SWPA

Evan Burns, Light of Life

Andrea Bustos, DHS

Rob Eamigh, DHS

Melissa Ferraro, Sisters Place

Garletta Germany, DHS

Andy Halfhill, DHS

Kate Holko, DHS

Diane Johnson, DHS

Chuck Kennan, DHS

Gabe Krivosh, DHS

Terri Laver, DHS

Debbi Linhart, Bethlehem Haven

Lloyd Massie, Light of Life

Ian Maverro, DHS

Jess McKown, DHS

Dan Palka, OSN

Dean Robinson, Light of Life

Trish Romano, CHS

Kelly Russell, City of Pgh

Laura Saulle, DHS

Hilary Scherer, DHS

Cynthia Shields, DHS

Jenna Szuchy, DHS

Lisa Trunick, Familylinks

Stephanie Villella, Chartiers

Brent Weinert, DHS

Kyona White, Sojourner MOMS

Minutes

- 1. Welcome & Review of Meeting Minutes—John Lovelace**
September 2019 meeting minutes were approved.

- 2. CoC/HAB Annual Processes Reminder—John Lovelace**

HAB Membership: Caster Binion and Lenny Prewitt will be concluding their second terms with the HAB at the January 2020 meeting. Cassa Collinge, Pete Giacalone, Christy Pietryga, Richard Rapp, and Bethany Wingerson will all be completing their first terms at the January meeting. They, and others from the CoC are invited to apply to serve on the HAB. The nomination period was open throughout November, with nominations due November 26th, and a slate will be recommended from the Executive Committee for vote by the full HAB at the January 2020 meeting.

¹ (P) indicates HAB members who were present for the meeting.

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In addition, Sean DeYoung needed to step down from the HAB. The Executive Committee will be appointing someone else to fulfill the remaining two years of his term, as well as identify a new HAB Co-Chair for the Communication and Education Committee.

Governance Charter Review: The annual Charter Review began in November. No public comment has been received as of the November meeting, but considerations continue to be welcome—the HAB will vote on the Governance Charter at the January 2020 meeting.

3. Committee Updates

CoC Analysis and Planning Committee—Pete Giacalone

Pete Giacalone updated meeting attendees on the CoC Analysis and Planning Committee, noting that the group has grown over the past 3 years and is an important engagement point as they discuss issues and planning, including the annual ranking tool and performance management. In addition, the group has and continues to work on: HMIS data collection practices, trends in homelessness both nationally and locally (e.g., aging population, racial disparities), winter shelter needs and processes, and the annual point-in-time count. Upcoming focus areas for the Committee include ongoing performance management review, the 2020 ranking tool, and the consumer satisfaction survey.

Regarding performance management, Jessica McKown reported the Performance Management Plan is complete and can be accessed on the [CoC webpage](#), along with the quarterly reports. The Performance Management Plan details how performance of homeless housing programs is measured and outlines project and system performance goals for the CoC. This plan will be re-evaluated at the beginning of each year and modifications will be posted

Communication and Education Committee—Peter Harvey

Peter Harvey referenced the various efforts and events occurring:

- Thriving Respite: Friday afternoons—Community living room and drop-in center, resulting from a collaboration between Ministerium and Point Park University. Contact [Peter Harvey](#) for details on the list of upcoming events.
- *Drawn to Home* Comic Book: Connected 8 artists and 8 stories from people who have experienced or are experiencing homelessness. Hoped to have published this year.
- Continued collaboration with Storyburgh to explore opportunities for outreach and communication concerning homelessness. Storyburgh will be holding a community event on January, 29th from 7-9pm at EECM around low income and homeless issues in an effort to build a list of story tellers.
- Developing a short animated video to speak to the various experiences of becoming homeless, in and effort to show the varying pathways and open the conversation and considerations around homelessness.

Homeless Outreach Coordination Committee (HOCC)—Laura Drogowski

Laura Drogowski reported on the HOCC's ongoing discussions and efforts to build knowledge around the other systems that people who are experiencing street homelessness are often engaged with, and in so doing seek to identify points of meaningful collaboration. She noted that the group is enthusiastic about the effort and believes in its importance, but it is a daunting task and takes significant bandwidth. In addition, the HOCC is seeking to explore advocacy to undertake with the HAB overall, to improve the system, while also more effectively collaborating with the other HAB Committees to enhance dual efforts. That said, Ms. Drogowski spoke to the success the HOCC has had in expanding engagement with law enforcement, building from the recognition that there has been a lot of problematic interactions between law enforcement personnel and people experiencing homelessness that comes from a lack of understanding. A significant success from this engagement was the implementation of a Homeless Academy, which was provided for a cohort of City of Pittsburgh Police Recruits ahead of their graduation. The presentation overviewing the Homeless Academy can be found in Appendix A.

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4. Infrastructure Organization Update

Ian Maverro, DHS Chief Information Officer, provided an update to the HAB regarding the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Mr. Maverro reminded attendees that the CoC has been using a custom HMIS system, which brought the benefit of building an application specific to the Continuums wants and needs but carries a higher cost. In recognition of the cost investment of the custom system, DHS sought opportunities to convert to an off-the-shelf HMIS and ultimately contracted with Eccovia. The original goal was to use Eccovia's applications for both the HMIS and the Coordinated Entry applications, but this plan was revised to only convert the HMIS system. As the DHS team continued to work with Eccovia and get deeper into the requirements, issues with the ability for Eccovia to meet the integration needs of DHS and the CoC developed, and by the testing phase in July 2019, 73% of test cases were not passing. As such, DHS is remaining with the current HMIS system, while exploring cost-effective build out options to enhance that effectiveness of the current system; DHS is also exploring the cancelation of the contract with Eccovia.

Following the update, Mr. Maverro and Michael Lindsay (Technical Specialist, ICF), answered questions from the HAB:

- Mr. Maverro reported the hope to save \$250,000-\$300,000 annually, if all had gone well, from switching to an off-the-shelf system. Such savings would have then been used for services.
- In response to a question about how the Allegheny County CoC is different than other CoC's that are successfully using off-the-shelf HMIS', Mr. Lindsay referenced the high-level integration here and reported that even in "simple" communities the transition to new HMIS systems takes 20 months and are not easy moves. He further noted that another community, more similar to Allegheny County's CoC, did make the transition and the effort took a year longer and cost more money than planned, in addition to having to adjust to the HMIS support no longer being local and as time-responsive.
- Finally, in response to a question about benefits to switching other than cost savings, the ability to include case management within HMIS and the streamlining of efforts when HUD updates HMIS requirements were noted. Regarding the case management capabilities of an off-the-shelf system, Mr. Lindsay did however note that other communities have not put that functionality to meaningful use yet.

Cynthia Shields then provided the IO update:

- The Winter Sheltered opened on time—the result of a tremendous amount of coordination of support between ACTION Housing, City, County and Program staff. The updates to Smithfield that were required for opening were completed, and the remaining, larger improvements will be completed over the course of the next year and include the sprinkler system and more permanent fire safety systems. At the time of the meeting, the Winter Shelter was averaging about 70 people per night, and actually opened early at Catholic Charities due to the extreme cold ahead of November 15th.
- Received a \$1 million PHARE grant that will used for the Home 2020 Spring, aimed at getting as many people as possible into housing from the street (or very long term shelter stayers). The effort includes a partnership with Western Psychiatric Hospital to provide case management and Community Human Services to provide master leasing.
- The Home4Good awards were announced, and PHFA and FHLBank of Pittsburgh selected 12 programs across the CoC, including an award to DHS for the Landlord Mitigation Fund.
- DHS staff is exploring how a progressive engagement model may be applied here, learning from successes seen across the country with the approach.
- Finally, Ms. Shields introduced Laura Saulle, who has joined DHS as the Program Manager for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program. Ms. Saulle introduced herself and provided a brief overview of YHDP:
 - A 2 year, \$3.5 million funding opportunity focused on reducing youth homelessness, which includes all unaccompanied and pregnant and parent youth under the age of 25 with housing instability.

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- There is an opportunity for renewing funds through the CoC annual NOFA, following the completion of the YHDP.
- In Allegheny County, the work is being supported and guided by a Youth Action Board and a Leadership Committee. A community plan is required in order to apply for project funds—the draft plan is due in December, and the final plan will be completed in April.

5. **Data Review: Emergency Shelter System Overview—Andy Halfhill**

Andy Halfhill provided an overview of the Emergency Shelter system. The presentation slides can be found in Appendix B.

6. **Provider Spotlight: Light of Life—Dean Robinson, Evan Burns**

Dean Robinson and Evan Burns provided an update from Light of Life on the upcoming expansions. The new building will be opening in the fall of 2020, with a transition period in which both the North Side and the new location will be open for shelter. The new location will include an increase of existing shelter beds, as well as the additional of space for women and families, as well as a day room.

7. **Street Outreach and Emergency Shelter CoP—Cynthia Shields**

A Community of Practice has been established for Street Outreach and Emergency Shelter. The intent of bringing the two areas together in a single Community of Practice is to enhance the CoC's ability and effectiveness of supporting people out of the streets. The initial group discussions centered around mapping what the system looks like for people, and moving forward the Community of Practice will meet regularly to identify process improvements to making the system easier for people trying to be served.

8. **Public Comment**

- The annual point-in-time count is scheduled for the last week of January. Building off the success of the team approach implemented last year, and the desire to continue improving our ability to cover the county effectively, team leaders and volunteers are being requested for teams designated to specific areas. Please contact [Terri Laver](#) for more information and to volunteer.

Next CoC Meeting

January 28, 2020 from 10:00am to 12:00pm
1 Smithfield Street, Lower Level

Appendix A Homeless Academy



Pittsburgh Bureau of Police: HOMELESS ACADEMY 2019-11-11



Background



- 9/24 HAB meeting - **Officer Mike Murray** shared an opportunity to educate **PBP Academy recruits** about homelessness.
- **HOCC** developed a list of key elements, questions, concerns, and collaborated with Pittsburgh Police to create a training plan and **curriculum**.
 - Police prioritized:
 - Officer **preparedness** and **safety**,
 - **Outreach relationships**,
 - Understanding **service access**,
 - Empathy for/understanding of the **needs of displaced people**.
- Training includes **practical component** (OSN and PBP) to safely include recruits in **outreach rounds** (what will they encounter in spaces, where people are staying, approaching conversations with "what do you need" instead of "you need")

HOCC-Developed Academy Goals

1. **Humanize** people who are experiencing homelessness
1. **Improve interactions** to work toward more **meaningful connections** with services while reducing harm
1. Understand how to **manage interactions** and community expectations
1. Establish ways to **use discretion** in complex situations
1. **Set expectations** for interactions that may occur

Homeless Academy Overview

37 recruits (4 days from graduation), 3 hour training

6 instructors -

- Gabe Krivosh (HOCC member, Allegheny Link)
- Dan Palka (HOCC co-chair, Operation Safety Net)
- Kelly Ferri (HOCC member, community expert)
- Officer Mike Murray (HOCC member, HAB member, PBP)
- Officer Eldridge Kimbrough (HOCC member, PBP)
- Laura Drogowski (HOCC co-chair, HAB member, City of Pittsburgh)

45-minute segments -

- Partners, resources, expectations, realities of homelessness (where, why, how)
- In-person experience + Q&A
- Aligning policies, discussing protocols, and commitment to safety, opportunities for discretion

Additional elements -

- Pre-survey (perceptions, experience, concerns)
- Post-survey (pre-survey + continued concerns, what to add)
- Street outreach opportunity
- Additional surveys over time

Homeless Academy Training



Impact: Feedback

"I know what resources I can provide."

"Great reminder that people who are homeless have a story. Treat every person with respect."

"[I feel] more empowered knowing there are people to help me and them in this situation."



"[The most helpful part of today's training was] learning about the camps and shelters."

Impact: Changes in Perception

“...After this training I will have more confidence in dealing with homeless persons.”

“I feel more comfortable and changed my perspective on the homeless.”

“If you show someone homeless respect it can go a long way.”



“I feel more empowered after learning what homeless people expect from police interactions.”

Assessment Results

- How familiar are you with the state of homelessness (1-6)?
 - 71% increase in familiarity with homelessness (avg. 2.8 v. 4.8)
- Have you ever had a conversation with a person experiencing homelessness?
 - 72% Yes (23) v. 28% No (9)
 - Of “Yes”, 39% asking for money (9)
- How comfortable are you having a conversation with someone experiencing homelessness (1-6)?
 - 11% increase in comfort (avg 4.5 v. 5.0)
 - 94% felt more empowered connecting with a person experiencing homelessness after training (29/31)
- How comfortable are you navigating community concerns related to homelessness (1-6)?
 - 32% increase in comfort (avg 3.6 v. 4.7)

Appendix B
Emergency Shelter System Overview



Emergency Shelters in Allegheny County

Presentation to the Homeless Advisory Board
November 26, 2019

What is an emergency shelter?

"*Emergency shelter*" means any facility, the primary purpose of which is to provide a temporary shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless and which does not require occupants to sign leases or occupancy agreements.



Homeless Assistance Project Types

At risk of homelessness

- Homeless Prevention
- Case management/supportive services

Homeless

- Street Outreach
- **Emergency Shelter**
- Bridge (transitional) housing

Formerly homeless, now in permanent housing

- Rapid rehousing
- Permanent supportive housing

What is the role of an emergency shelter?

- Immediate response to a housing crisis
- Connect people experiencing homelessness to housing assistance and/or other services (i.e. can be “front door” to help access permanent housing)
- Diversion

Emergency Shelters:

Shelter Name	Men	Women	Family	Youth-specific	DV-specific
ACTION Housing McKeesport Shelter	X	X			
Alle Kiski Hope Center					X
Allegheny Valley Association of Churches (AVAC) Shelter			X		
Auberle Family Shelter			X		
Bethlehem Haven Shelter		X			
Center for Victims					X
Community Human Services (CHS) Family Shelter			X		
Community Human Services (CHS) Wood Street Commons; HAP Crisis	X	X			
East End Cooperative Ministry Men's/Women's Shelter; Orr Center	X	X			
Family Promise			X		
Familylinks				X	
Goodwill of Southwestern PA/Pleasant Valley Shelter	X				
Light of Life	X				
Salvation Army Family Caring Center			X		
Shepherd's Heart VA Residential Shelter	X				
Veteran's Leadership Program (VLP) Project Journey for Women		X	X		
Womanspace East		X	X		
Women's Center and Shelter					X

What is our CoC's shelter capacity?

Available year round:

	Units for households w/children	Beds for households w/children	Beds for households w/o children
General population shelter	66	197	187
Domestic violence shelter	23	69	10
Youth-dedicated beds (18-21)	0	0	18
Veteran-dedicated beds	7	16	3
Total	97	282	218

Additional capacity in winter:

	Units for households w/children	Beds for households w/children	Beds for households w/o children
Pittsburgh	0	0	120
McKeesport	0	0	15

How full are our shelters?

Data from domestic violence shelters not included

Single shelter utilization (excluding winter shelter and domestic violence shelters) for the time period was **93%**.

Time period:
July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019



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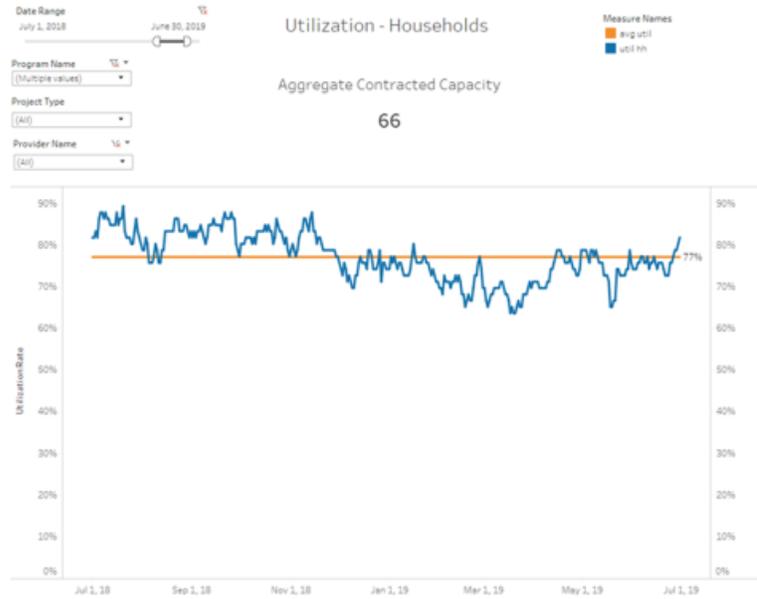
How full are our shelters?

Data from domestic violence shelters not included

Family shelter utilization (excluding domestic violence shelters) for the time period was **77%**.

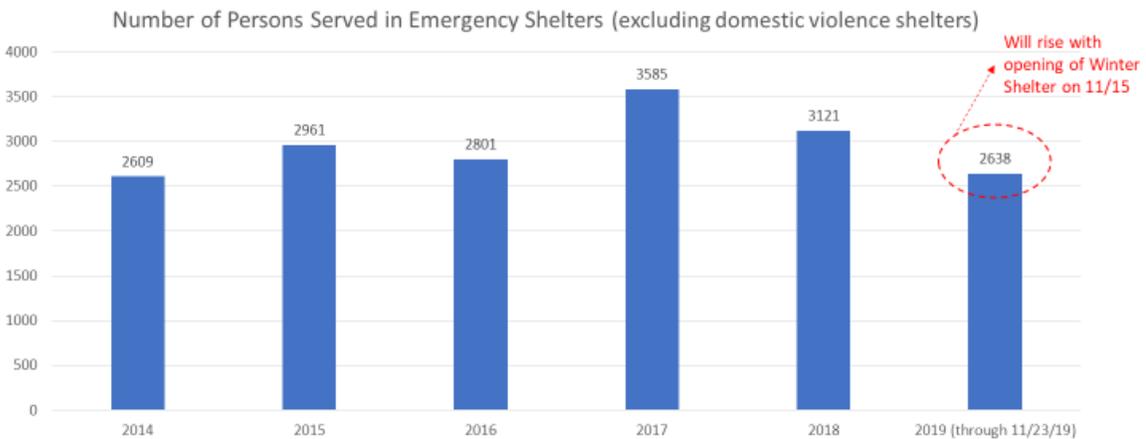
Time period:
July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019

Note: Bed utilization is higher (82%) during time period; unit and bed utilization can fluctuate based on family size and shelter unit size availability.



How many people do we serve in our emergency shelters?

Data from domestic violence shelters not included



How many people do we serve in our emergency shelters?

Data from domestic violence shelters not included

Over the past 12 months, approximately....

450

per day

(375 per day when Winter Shelter is not open)

675

per month

(540 per month when Winter Shelter is not open)

3000

per year

How many people do we serve in our domestic violence emergency shelters?

From 7/1/18 – 6/30/19:

228

families with children

335

adult-only households

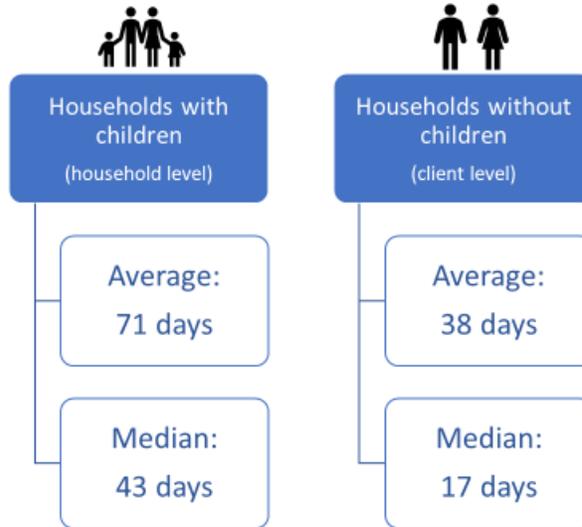
1048

total persons

Data from domestic violence shelters not included

How long do people stay in shelters?

Persons active
7/1/18 – 6/30/19:



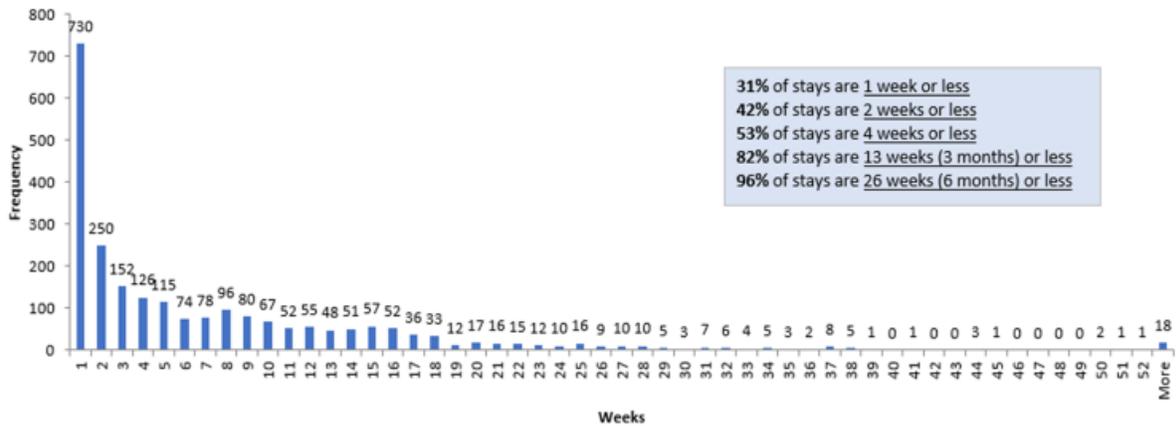
Data from domestic violence shelters not included

Length of Stay in Homeless Shelters

time period = July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019

household type = singles/households without children

n = 2355 (total shelter stays)



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Length of Stay in Homeless Shelters

time period = July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019

household type = families/households with children

n = 949 (total shelter stays)

Data from domestic violence shelters not included

