

2016 CoC Site Visit Notes

Crisis Intervention and Advocacy Center

(will be referred to as CIA in notes)

Johnna, Casey, Mark Phillips

Visit conducted by Ashley Schwalm and Dennis Lauterbach

Intake Process:

- The participants fill out an application then meet with them in person. The participant completes an interview process which assists in streamlining applications. The staff also completes a housing assessment with all participants.
- CIA uses the VI-SPDAT, but feels it is challenging because it is so long. The staff do let the participants know they will get no matter what their score is.

Local Community

- CIA has strong relationships within the communities. CIA is the "umbrella program" for the homeless population.
- CIA attends housing coalition meetings
- CIA receives local funding from churches, rotary, and county dollars. They receive approximately \$20,000/year in private donations.
- CIA staff go to all local meetings to pass out regarding services.

What's Working? What's Not?

- CIA is innovative in regards to housing. They were already doing RRH and diversion before it was called RRH and diversion.
- CIA feels they do a good job at bringing together landlords. They don't have landlord meetings, but they have 50 plus landlords they work with, all of which waive the deposit.
- CIA works with contractors to use spec homes and motor homes for participants.
- CIA has a TH program in Perry that started in 2006. It is for chronically homeless individuals with children who have high barriers. CIA has 4 large apartments with 3 bedrooms for TH. The average stay in transitional housing is 10 months.
- CIA has mou's with landlords, PD, hospitals, and DHS to ensure collaboration.
- CIA currently uses Service Point and Alice. They will be moving to ClientTrack once the Crime Victims Assistance Division releases the database.
- Transportation is a huge barrier as well as language barriers. Currently, CIA employs 3 Spanish speaking individuals.

The Council

- Suggestions: Should have some collaboration within the CoC to know what the funded agencies are doing. So maybe doing a yearly symposium with all providers to discuss services, addressing barriers, etc.
- There should be discussion regarding how often the Council plans on conducting site visits and what the outcomes of these site visits will be.
- The Council should explore how to become familiar with each other-maybe regional meetings
- Amber needs additional staff at IFA to help her out. It seems like she is constantly getting more things put on her plate. Amber does a great job, but CIA feels like Amber needs more staff to help her out.
- At the beginning of Council meetings there should be a role call or an online sign in. The process right now for saying who all is on the line, who is at ICN locations, and also who is in person is very long and drawn out.

YWCA Clinton

Scott Mather

Jessica Bliele

Paige Boyer

Pam Eggers-Agency contact RR program

Pam was relieved to learn the purpose of this site visit was not an audit but to rather just learn more about their programs. Pam discussed how they serve homeless families that have at least one child under the age of 18 in the household. They have each client complete an application, perform the VI-SPDAT to determine which program they are the best fit for. They make referrals whether they are accepted on the spot or not. They provide services to the families, which are voluntary. They have apartments and houses in Clinton and Jackson counties. Based on their score, they go on a waiting list.

With their rapid rehousing program, it is a housing first model. They have a list of landlords they give the families and they may also make a call to the landlords on behalf of the families. With this program, they can pay their rent for up to a year, with no cap on cost of rent. They work off the housing stability model with some minimum expectations, like to meet with them once a month, or they stop paying their rent. If they don't want to do this, we can help other families that need it. The lease is in their name so they can build up credit. They use money from other programs to pay their utilities.

We discussed job seeker services and she indicated using Pam Bisbee, with IowaWORKS.

She felt that the community is aware of the homelessness issues but there needs to be more education. She thought 60% understood while 40% didn't. She said there is a homelessness coalition that helps get the word out in the community about the issue of homelessness.

Pam said the initial application was to serve 5 families and they currently have 11 in the program. Rural rent is less costly so they have been able to serve more families. They define a successful outcome as families being able to maintain their housing. Since this is their first year in the grant they haven't gone a full cycle. Once they are done paying their rent, they provide 3 months of case management as aftercare.

Gaps in resources-They have no money for transportation so they drive clients around sometimes. Lack of phones was also listed as a gap.

Notes from July 29, 2016 site visit to
Family Alliance for Veterans of America (FAVA)

Present: Rhonda Jordal and Laura Lidsay, FAVA; Scott Mather, Carrie Dunnwald, Tim Wilson, Iowa Council on Homelessness

The current CoC project is in its first year, so performance data are incomplete. This project focuses on providing permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless; primarily veterans. FAVA is an affiliate of Westcare, which is a national nonprofit organizations that provides a wide spectrum of health and human services in both residential and outpatient environments.

FAVA was formed a few years ago and quickly morphed from a relatively small, volunteer-based operation to an entity serving 28 counties in Iowa's northern tier through a grant from the Veterans Administration to administer Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) in 2014. The CoC grant complements the services offered through SSVF.

When asked about the idea of creating sub-regions within the Balance of State CoC, Rhonda indicated she prefers that support remain statewide. She has a concern that models may become too urban-centric without real representation or capacity building in rural areas like those served primarily by FAVA.

Because the service area is expansive and largely rural, FAVA put an emphasis on identifying providers of various services in the 28 counties and building relationships with those entities. They used county level veterans affairs offices to help with this, which has resulted in the creation of a database for every county in their service area. The database includes an inventory of available housing units. This seems to be a good model that could be applied to other rural areas in which few or no shelters and other services that primarily serve homeless populations exist.

We concluded the visit with a tour of the facilities. I skipped much of this because I had been there a couple of times before and needed to return to work.

CoC Grantee Site Visits August 3, 2016

Anne Brown and I visited to CoC grantees in Dubuque on August 3, 2016. We used the CoC Site Review Questions as a guide, but allowed the conversation to flow based upon the comments of the participants. Two different grantees; both concerned about the loss of Project Concern, a member of their local network that addresses homeless concerns that closed its doors on June 30, 2016.

I. Hillcrest Family Services (2005 Ashbury Road, Dubuque, IA 52001)

Who was in the room?

Several staff from Hillcrest (led by Julie Heiderscheit, COO) and representatives from community stakeholders involved with homeless concerns in Dubuque (PATH program coordinator, school representative)

Intake Process

Project Concern had been the central intake process, but they were no longer part of the Dubuque solution to homelessness; they used the VI-SPDAT. With PC gone, the homeless providers in Dubuque are re-assessing their intake process and who will be picking up the pieces.

Local Community

The core of the remaining conversation took the shape of needs identified within the local homeless community:

- Program data suggests that the period of homelessness for people is growing when compared to previous years.
- Transportation, food, and social services system navigation are issue.
- Dubuque recognizes a large homeless youth population.
 - School data: 209 homeless youth (3 to 21 years of age) in 70 to 80 households.
- There are significant barriers to affordable housing
 - Quality of existing units is often "terrible."
- Landlord engagement is a critical issue.
 - Of the 40 some landlords that support the PATH program, many do not have available units.
- In summary, this group perceives that there is a shortage of affordable market housing for rent assistance programs (like rapid rehousing) and thus, asserted a continued need for transitional housing in the community.

S.W.O.T

- Many landlords perceive that homeless populations are high risks
- Landlords incorrectly assume taking a homeless person means an increased level of inspections.
- Racial prejudice exists at some level
- Landlords believe that once they take a homeless person, they will be "forced" to rent to the individuals.

The local community knows little about what Mr. Nash would label "systemic homeless" where women & children, low-income populations with mental health concerns, and people living doubled up (as a result of the affordable housing shortage).

Low-income housing in Dubuque has become geographically concentrated, suggesting that NIMBY is a local issue.

S.W.O.T

Weakness: Loss of Project Concern destabilized the network provider network.

Threat: Strong concern that coordinated entry and the potential to regionalize services will mean less local control and fewer resources directed to local organizations.

The Council

We needed to clarify to Mr. Nash that everyone on the Council was a volunteer appointed by the governor or a department head for those representing state government. It was suggested that the Council needs to provide more measurable homeless advocacy with respect to the characteristics and diversity of homeless populations throughout the CoC. The implication on the table is that homeless populations and available resources to address it will vary by geographic space.

Mr. Nash suggested that Project Concern was having other issues that had been bleeding it of funds over time, but there was a concern that the CoC's ranking of the project without consideration of its critical role for local intake could signal the loss of additional funds to support the local efforts to end homelessness.

In summary, I think it is fair to assume that they want to work with the Council and the BoS CoC requirements. However, they would like to see more consideration of local needs and how local homelessness may look different than larger urban centers and need a different mix of housing services to be sustainable.

Iowa Quality Standards

We did not get to the Iowa Quality Standards questions.

Prior to the collapse of Project Concern, I believe they felt that they had a functioning network of providers. The loss of PC destabilized the network; once a new partner takes on the intake role, this should probably be re-visited.

Emerging opportunities clearly is linked to the identified growing population of homeless youth.

Threats related to the potential loss of transitional housing funding, which this group of community stakeholders believes provides a critical component for homeless housing services given the perceived shortage of affordable housing, especially housing that unaccompanied homeless youth could sustain. Consequently, there is a concern that length of homelessness for youth with grow.

Iowa Quality Standards

We did not get to the Iowa Quality Standards questions.

II. City of Dubuque (, Dubuque, IA 52001)

Who was in the room?

Four city representatives (led by Alvin Nash, director) were present; the other three represented members from the business team and field staff. A fifth person represented their housing board and a formerly homeless individual.

Intake Process

The discussion with the city mirrored the intake concerns presented at Hillcrest. At the time of the interview, Mr. Nash said that they were in the process of identifying a new partner that would take on Project Concern's intake role. (Then they had two potential partner agencies for the task.)

City mentioned an issue with HMIS where back data from past homeless events appears on new applications. [I believe this may be a training issue.]

Local Community

City officials discussed high rent levels means that fewer landlords are willing to work with homeless populations. They mentioned that city officials are considering an affordable housing development plan to increase the number of safe and affordable housing units that met the International Property Maintenance Code. (Either the city is in the process of implementing this code or it is the opinion of the director that it should be implemented for the city.)

Landlord engagement continues to be a concern. The city summarized the local situation as difficult for four critical reasons:

Humility of Mary

Scott Mather

Jessica Bleile

Emily Harvey-Agency contact

Sister Johanna-board member

They discussed their intake process and that they review their openings daily. If there are no open beds, they complete the VI-SPDAT and the highest scores get the next opening. They are a 90 day shelter which is calculated on a calendar year. If a client leaves their bed for more than 3 consecutive days, they lose their spot.

They discussed starting a rapid rehousing program next year and will use the VI-SPDAT as initial assessment to determine which program will be the best fit for them. In terms of housing, they work with landlords on behalf of those clients that need that extra assistance. Some clients are able to take care of this on their own. With their current PSH, they have developed relationships with landlords and currently have 45 units where they work with landlords in serving chronically homeless. With their shelter, PSH, and TH they serve the most vulnerable clients facing the more significant barriers. If they don't have an opening in shelter, they refer to other shelters and explore family supports to see if that would be an option until they have an opening.

Regarding coordinated intake, they felt this would help for PSH and RR. They are excited how it will help with documentation and collaboration.

With the CoC they appreciate what they are doing but did express a concern. They feel that there have been some significant decisions made last minute that have big implications for applicants. The example given was they were in the process of writing the application and then the committee decided to take all of the \$ from tier 2 versus a percentage from each grantee in tier 2, which is how it has been done in the past. If they knew this earlier in the process they may have decided to re-allocate but since it was decided so late, they didn't have that option. On the positive side, they feel the CoC is on top of information and changes occurring. They really like the website.

For areas of improvement, they feel they need to be less dependent on grants for operation and need to look at other funding streams outside of HUD.

Regarding Iowa Quality Standards, they use most of them and feel it provides consistency and accountability.

They provided handouts regarding their various programs and capacity which have been attached. They also provided a PP on homelessness in the Quad Cities which is also attached.

Mason City Housing Authority

July 28, 2016

Visitors: Carrie Dunnwald, Tim Wilson

Host Site: Cathy Burtness, Executive Director

The agency is housed with other services in a renovated school building not far from the center of downtown. Housing sites are scattered but concentrated in the north part of the city. The agency has worked hard to develop good relationships with several landlords/property managers. Residents tend to stay a long time in their placement once they enter the program. All clients so far have been able to find housing within 60 days, with the possibility of two The agency separated from the City in 2006, forming a separate 501(c)3 with a board appointed by the mayor.

Waiting lists are rare, as they seem to be able to place people within a short time of applying. The support services are provided by referral agencies; all referrals come from agencies, such as Shelter Plus Care (mental health).

They have access to 35 HUD VASH vouchers but these are not all claimed, as FAVA and other local programs seem to be able to keep up with the needs of area veterans. TBRA support from IFA is coming to an end but this isn't creating a panic, at least at the moment. Also there are 90 new 1-2 bedroom homes for seniors being built. They are looking forward to whether or not they will be accepting any people with disabilities.

They complete the VI-SPDAT but don't really use the data from this or HMIS. It feels like duplicate efforts, given the other intake they do. Had a good discussion of value in finding how to more effectively use HMIS data.

YSS Site Visit

Sam, Roberta, Andrew, Marney, Becky, and David
Visit conducted by Ashley Schwalm and Dennis Lauterbach

Key Programming:

- Prevention, Child Welfare, Treatment, and transitional services. Goal is to wrap services around the child.
- Serves 7 communities with an Advisory Board in each of the communities
- YSS has a \$20 million dollar budget

Intake Process:

- Individuals can come from any county to receive services
- Completes a couple different intake
- The VI-SPDAT is used with all participants. YSS uses the VI-SPDAT score to place them on a waitlist.
- YSS receives no city funding, but does receive county funding. The city doesn't support any non-profits financially.

Local Community:

- Serves Marshalltown and rural areas.
- Key community partner is addressing the needs of the local homeless population is Access.
- YSS is the only provider that has shelter and transitional housing.
- There is a community funded church shelter that will be temporarily closing down. YSS is working closely with the Director of this program to see how to help.
- There is a large immigrant population in the communities served. YSS has two full time Spanish speaking staff, which is very helpful.
- YSS has seen more individuals come from Illinois to receive services.
- David is the chair of the local homeless planning group which meets September through May. This local planning group completes the PIT.

What's Working? What's not?

- Currently YSS is using a shared database called VisionWorks. This is working okay, but as with any system there is always challenges. The office manager handles the HMIS database and that works well.

S.W.O.T.

- Currently, YSS has more open beds than what they typically have had in the past. Staff are working with other providers to talk about the openings.
- YSS see's a lot of repeat participants. If the participant has been in programming twice it will be harder for them to get in programming again.

The Council

- It is suggested that the introductions at the beginning of the Council meetings are very time consuming. If the Chair of the Council could do a roll call of all members that would shorten the introduction time.
- It would be helpful to space deadlines out. ESG and CoC applications were due very close to each other.