

GOVERNOR’S COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS

Quarterly Meeting

OCTOBER 17, 2019

The quarterly meeting of the **Governor’s Council on Homelessness** met on Thursday, October 17, 2019 at the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, Boardroom, 10600 S. Choctaw Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70815. Ms. Winona Connor, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:40 a.m. Introductions were made and the roll was called and recorded by Ms. Terry Hale, recording secretary.

I. Welcome

Janet Pace, Senior Vice-President of Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank welcomed the Council and gave an overview of what the Food Bank provides to the community and how folks can volunteer. Later, interested Council members were provided with a tour of the facility.

II. Roll Call

Members Present: Ms. Winona Connor, Mr. Chip Coulter, Ms. Amanda Larkins, Mr. Barry Robinson, Ms. Antigua Hunter and Ms. Tewabetch Negatu

Members Absent: Ms. Michell Brown, Mr. Joshua Hollins, Mr. Joey Strickland, Mr. Bruce Parker, Ms. Martha Kegel, and Mr. Dylan Waguespack.

Staff Present: Mr. Gordon Levine, LA Balance of State Continuum of Care Manager, and Ms. Terry Hale, recording secretary.

III. 2019 Statewide Point-in-Time (PIT) Count

Gordon provided a Louisiana Statewide Point-in-Time 2019 chart with statewide statistics of Population by Region, Homelessness Decline by Year, Household Types, Demographics, Subpopulations, and Population Types. Discussion and questions ensued.

Several things were noted:

- 1- The chart was only as good as the surveys conducted which were in the urban areas.
- 2- Only include those with homelessness or domestic violence, but excludes a much larger at risk population - youth 16-24 who are “couch surfers”. Going into 2020, Gordon Levine and Antigua Hunter are going to work on doing a more effective youth count.
- 3- The count is only Point in Time count around January.
- 4- One in five reported severe mental illness, which is severely underreported. All info is self-reported which includes 50 - 80% of folks counted have mental illness and substance abuse.

It was also noted that the majority of folks in homelessness are from human trafficking. Question was asked what is being done with those who are rescued from human trafficking.

Answer: CoC explicitly lets those fleeing human trafficking skip the diversion process, become top priority and is referred to Rapid Rehousing quickly.

As a reference, Empower225 is the most effective vocal advocate of Human Trafficking.

IV. Diversion Project

Three Different Populations of Homeless:

- 1- Those who can quickly return home – they are diverted by encouraging them to go home because of support networks.
- 2- Those who cannot go home unless provided with funds to return and can improve their income.
- 3- Chronic homelessness – related to mental issues

Frequent national disasters will change number of homelessness.

Question was asked about recidivism amongst the homeless. The data reflects that if someone is returned to housing and remains for more than 7 days, then it will take a pretty serious lapse to return to homelessness.

The downtown Baton Rouge has seen a rise in homelessness. It was found that no one is coming from the outside. Suggestion was that leases have gone up in accordance to Fair Market Rent and folks got priced out of market. City of Baton Rouge has agreed to give \$15K to return folks back to homes, whether through bus tickets, gas or help in rent. Agreement was to give \$3K to each person within the \$15K.

Mr. Barry Robinson noted that the DOC is looking at Camp Nora to bring DOC Veterans. The LA VA is doing well in taking care of Vets. It was noted that Monroe has a great program.

V. 2019 Continuum of Care (CoC) Program NOFA Update

All CoC's successfully participated. Members of the Governor's Council on Homelessness turned out to participate in the evaluations.

Three programs were selected:

- 1- Education and Treatment Council of Lake Charles for women and children
- 2- The Haven in Houma
- 3- Youth Oasis – innovative transitional housing especially for Youth

Suggestion was that each agency hire grant writers to help with the process of the application and to give the best possible submission.

VI. 2019 National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week

The LA BOSCO is in partnership with St. Vincent de Paul, Raising Cane's, the city of Baton Rouge, and the Louisiana Housing Corporation to provide Thanksgiving dinners for the hungry and homeless on November 21 (week before Thanksgiving) at the Raising Cane's River Center and St. Vincent de Paul.

VII. Connections Conference 2020 – April 1-3, 2020 – Hilton Hotel, 201 Lafayette, Baton Rouge, LA

Winona Connor announced that the 2020 Connections Conference is in the planning stages. It is a joint effort between the Homeless Coalition and the Louisiana Housing Corporation.

The preliminary agenda includes Youth Homelessness, Sex Trafficking, etc. There is a possibility that the Shaw Center would be added as a venue along with the Hilton Hotel.

VIII. LHC/DCFS SNAP Employment and Training Pilot

Gordon noted that the program has funds to use. The Balance of State is used as an incubator for use SNAP training through case management, which will need referrals to other service applications. It will provide job training and can fund SOAR case management. It is a 12 month grant to fund new activities to expand grants statewide. The federal government reconciles 50% of it in operating expenses.

IX. Statewide Advocacy/Council Revision

Chip Coulter suggested that the Council table the revisions until after the election. It is possible that if there is a new governor, the Council may change.

The meeting was adjourned by Winona Connor at 12:06 p.m. The Governor's Council on Homelessness was invited to tour the facility.

Winona Connor, Chairman

Terry Hale, Recording Secretary