



Mission: *Build partnerships and promote strong collaborative action to ensure all residents within the County have stable, safe, and healthy places to live.*

**Housing for Health Partnership (H4HP) Policy Board
Regular Meeting Minutes
June 12, 2024; 3 pm**

Call to Order/Welcome

Present: Heather Rogers, Karen Kern, Kate Nester, Mali LaGoe, Mariah Lyons, Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson, Suzi Merriam, Tom Stagg

Absent: Fred Keeley, Justin Cummings, Manu Koenig, Terence Concannon

Additions and Deletions to the Agenda: None

Non-Agenda Public Comment

No public comment received.

Action Items (vote required)

1. Approval of Minutes: April 17, 2023, Regular Meeting

Discussion: Discussed that there was a lack of quorum to approve the February minutes and the note regarding approval of the February minutes requires correction.

Public Comment: None.

Motion: Direct staff to correct approval of February Minutes noted in April Minutes and approve April minutes with this correction

Motion to Approve: Suzi Merriam

Motion Seconded: Kate Nester

Abstentions: Heather Rodgers, Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson, Mariah Lyons,

Board Action: Motion approved {Yes votes- Karen Kern, Mali LaGoe, Tom Stagg, Suzi Merriam}

2. Approval of Local Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Policy Manual

Discussion: The County of Santa Cruz and Housing for Health Partnership Continuum of Care (CoC) received nearly \$10.4 million of Emergency Solutions Grant Coronavirus (ESG-CV) funding during the pandemic and underwent a state audit in the summer of 2023. Discussed that the Audit revealed that our CoC did not have an adequate local ESG policy and procedure manual consistent with state regulation. Mentioned that there were changes to federal regulations during the pandemic which required corresponding adjustments to the state's policy and procedure manual. Discussed the Housing for Health division staff developed a manual to align with the new state requirements. Mentioned that the proposed ESG program manual developed has been approved by the California Housing and Community Development (HCD) Department. This manual applies to agencies that receive ESG funding.

Public Comment: None.



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Motion: *Move to approve the CoC ESG Policies and Procedures updated March 2024.*

Motion to Approve: *Heather Rogers*

Motion Seconded: *Tom Stagg*

Abstentions: *None.*

Board Action: *Motion passed with all members.*

3. Approval of CoC Grievance Policy

Discussion: *The CoC Operations workgroup and CoC staff have collaborated to develop a proposed Grievance policy and procedure for programs and services that receive CoC funding or utilize the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Discussed that the Grievance policy outlines the process for reporting a policy or legal violation, gross misconduct, or negligence associated with a program. Mentioned that individuals who are not filing a grievance but submitting a complaint or feedback about a program or service can email info@housingforhealthpartnership.org or call 831-454-7312. Concerns were raised about clients not being able to make grievances without support. Mentioned that individuals can call the Housing for Health Division (H4H) staff to seek accommodations with submitting grievances. Discussed that CoC staff should establish protocols for programs and services to submit reports on how grievances are reported and resolved. Discussed that the CoC should seek mediation for resolving any conflicts. Mentioned that CoC staff will be responsible for identifying any issues or obstacles that may arise during the implementation of the Grievance policy.*

Public Comment: *Appreciate proposal that participants can have a voice. Mentioned that language used should be consistent, clearly defined, and simple. Recommended to include two board members with lived experience in the CoC and in the ad hoc panel. Suggested there should be training provided for investigations. Mentioned concerns about significant changes in how Santa Cruz and the ad hoc panel, including non-profit organizations, interact with each other and that there should be a discussion or procedure for the ad hoc panel to recommend sanctions or withdrawal of funding. Would like agencies to submit their complete Grievance documentation to the CoC, or at least provide a list of the number of cases and how they are being managed, along with relevant demographic information. He also suggested the CoC seeks mediation for resolving any conflicts.*

Motion: *No formal motion made. Directed staff to take feedback from today's meeting and return to a future meeting with an updated proposal.*

Information Items (no vote required):

4. Lived Expertise Action Workgroups – Updates

Discussion: *Sheryl Norteye, a staff member of Housing for Health, shared that the first Lived Expertise Action Workgroups meeting was held in May. Both the general and youth*

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groups have onboarded their five members each. Discussed groups are forming with the goal of identifying members of these groups that would participate on the CoC board. Mentioned that all group members have been enrolled in the Lived Expertise Training Academy in collaboration with the National Coalition for the Homeless, and they are expected to complete the training by the end of June. Discussed that the board is currently focused on establishing a regular meeting schedule, transitioning group facilitators, and creating operational guidelines. Mentioned that Goodwill Central Coast has successfully processed the first payroll for the board members. A system has been set up to provide financial and other support to board members as needed.

5. Central California Alliance for Health – Housing Investment Opportunity

Discussion:

Central California Alliance Health announced the launch of the Alliance Housing Fund in May and is currently accepting letters of intent from organizations applying to build, renovate, and/or rehab permanent housing units, recuperative care facilities, and/or short-term post-hospitalization housing units. Mentioned that the deadline for submitting letters of intent is June 30th, and decisions will be made by July 31st. Discussed that The Alliance aims to allocate a one-time investment of \$5 million to establish a revolving Santa Cruz County specific supportive housing loan investment fund with a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). Applications are also due on June 30th, and decisions will be made by July 31st. Discussed that the revolving supportive housing loan investment fund could be leveraged by encouraging different jurisdictions to work collectively by annually contributing funds to a housing trust fund, thus enabling them to receive additional state dollars.

6. Housing for Health Vendor Pool – Behavioral Health Bridge Housing Opportunity

Discussion:

The County of Santa Cruz received a Behavioral Health Bridge Housing (BHBH) Grant from the California Department of Health Care Services. The grant will be allocated towards establishing a new low-barrier navigation center and providing services for individuals experiencing homelessness with behavioral health challenges at 2202 Soquel Ave. Mentioned that The Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors has approved a predevelopment contract with LifeArk, a company involved in this initiative, and the developer of the site. Discussed that the current group of approved Housing for Health vendors has been notified of an opportunity to apply to operate the new center and provide services. Responses from vendors to this solicitation are due by June 28, 2024. Mentioned that interested individuals and organizations seeking inclusion in the Vendor Pool list can submit their applications for consideration by June 24th, 2024.



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Report/Discussion Items (no vote required):

7. CoC Project Monitoring Update

The Housing for Health Division Staff (H4H) and our CoC consultant have collaborated to develop a comprehensive process for monitoring CoC projects. In 2023, H4H implemented risk assessment tools and processes for ongoing CoC projects that had been operational for at least a year. Discussed that the H4H staff conducted assessments remotely, and focused on gathering information related to spending, performance, and compliance. Mentioned that agencies were provided with a summary of the risk assessment results and requested necessary corrections. Mentioned that the results of the risk assessments were shared with the CoC NOFO rating and ranking committee last year. Discussed that this year, H4H monitoring process, involved in-depth, on-site local monitoring of CoC projects to help them prepare for anticipated HUD audits. Discussed including monitoring of agency grievance policies and procedures as part of this process. Mentioned that H4H staff are considering holding workshops or office hours for agencies experiencing challenges with HUD requirements. Discussed the following projects were selected for onsite monitoring and support: Community Action Board's (CAB) Youth Homelessness Response Team (YHRT), Walnut Avenue Family and Women's Center's (WAFWC), Housing and Employment Program (HEP), and Monarch Services' (Monarch) Domestic Violence (DV) Bonus Project. Mentioned that by the end of the month, each project will have completed a Corrective Action Plan and resolved any identified issues.

8. CoC NOFO Scoring Improvement Memo

Discussion:

Discussed that our Continuum of Care (CoC) participates in a highly competitive annual and national U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Continuum of Care funding process. Mentioned that HUD provides a detailed report of CoC scores received in their review process based on data and narrative responses submitted by local CoCs. In 2023, our CoC scored 163 out of 200 possible points. Discussed that most points were lost due to data and system performance data reported out of HMIS. Mentioned that a higher CoC overall NOFO score increases the likelihood of receiving awards for new and bonus projects. Discussed that our CoC received awards for most of our project last year, leading to a steady increase in overall CoC funding because of our success. Our overall CoC score ranked in the top 20% nationally. Discussed involving BitFocus (HMIS vendor) to enhance HMIS-reported data, ensuring accurate and improved annual Rapid Rehousing bed count, and convincing agencies and programs to participate in HMIS to improve our overall CoC scoring. Discussed that the CoC aims to attain smaller point increases from a few improvements in program activities such as racial equity, lived expertise steps, healthcare leveraging, and corresponding changes to narrative responses. Discussed that the CoC needs to work on



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developing a comprehensive domestic violence emergency transfer plan and conduct training with providers to prevent families from being separated when entering an emergency shelter to earn more points. Mentioned that the CoC also recently imported data from the VA's HUD-VASH program into HMIS to improve our system performance and increase our CoC NOFO scores.

9. Preliminary 2024 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count Data

Discussed that the preliminary data is based on matching HMIS data with the survey data collected from all volunteers who participated in the effort to measure the extent of unsheltered homelessness in Santa Cruz County. Mentioned that the total number of homeless individuals on a single night remained relatively consistent with the 2023 count, with an estimated 2.5% increase to 1,850. Discussed that there were reductions in homelessness among families, youth aged 18-24, and veterans, while there was an increase in homelessness among individuals aged 55 and older and those with disabilities, including mental health and substance abuse conditions, as well as individuals who have experienced prolonged homelessness. Mentioned that the rise in homelessness among seniors is a national trend. Discussed that Housing for Health collective efforts have made significant strides in providing housing vouchers, services, and landlord incentives, and facilitating greater collaboration among partners. Discussed that there are concerns regarding the ongoing budget negotiations between the governor's office and legislative office, particularly how the allocation of funding and resources will impact our community. Mentioned that the Point in Time data will be distributed in July and published on the website, accompanied by a press conference. The county board and cities will be informed to prepare for potential inquiries.

Board Member Announcements

No additional announcements.

Adjournment

Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 21, 2024, 3 pm

The County of Santa Cruz does not discriminate based on disability, and no person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied the benefit of the services, programs, or activities. This meeting is in an accessible facility. If you are a person with a disability and require special assistance to participate in the meeting, please call (831) 763-8900 (TDD/TTY- 711) at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting to make arrangements. Persons with disabilities may request a copy of the agenda in an alternative format. As a courtesy to those affected, please attend the meeting smoke and scent free.