



Bridges Out of Poverty Champions for Change Steering Committee
FDRHPO Conference Room
October 18, 2019 2:00 - 3:30 PM

Present: Brandy Burnett, Getting Ahead Graduate / Northern Regional Center for Independent Living
Cathy Brodeur, Community Action Planning Council
Dawn Cole, Urban Mission
Max DelSignore, Northern NY Community Foundation
Rosetta Landis, North Country Family Health Center
Tracy Leonard, CREDO
Shayne Lippincott, Catholic Charities
Aileen Martin, Northern Regional Center for Independent Living
Don Mesibov, St. Lawrence University
Cindy Nelson, River Hospital
Irene Parobii, Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization
Tim Ruetten, Jefferson County Community Services
Pastor Jeff Smith, First Baptist Church
Courtne Toms, Maximizing Independent Living Choice / Points North Housing Coalition
Sarah Yerdon, Getting Ahead Graduate / Staying Ahead

Excused: Jamie Cox, United Way of NNY
Joanna Loomis, North Country Initiative
Cheryl Mayforth, Jefferson-Lewis Workforce Development Board
Stephen Todd, Jefferson-Lewis BOCES

I. Welcome and Approval of Minutes

All were welcomed, and introductions were made.

Minutes from the July 19, 2019 meeting were approved on a motion from Aileen Martin; seconded by Pastor Jeff Smith, with all in favor.

II. Action Items

Staying Ahead – Sarah Yerdon shared that Staying Ahead is currently hosted monthly at Urban Mission and Northern Regional Center for Independent Living. Graduates are working with the Alliance for Better

Communities on the development of a survey that will be made available to individuals living in specific Census tracts within the City of Watertown with high poverty rates. The survey is part of a Statewide Opioid Response (SOR) planning grant made available to Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI) communities. The Center for Community Studies at Jefferson Community College will host orientations for those graduates interested in administering the survey, tentatively scheduled for November 1 and November 6, 4:00 – 7:00 PM each date. Sarah suggested that confidentiality and HIPAA compliance be included as part of orientation. Irene Parobii agreed to provide Sarah with options.

Data Tracking for Getting Ahead – Dawn Cole reported that Urban Mission and Community Action Planning Council both hold licenses in CharityTracker for the recording of Getting Ahead data. She explained that three pieces of data are collected as part of the Getting Ahead curriculum: financial assessment outlining income, assets, debt and use of benefits; stability assessment across a number of domains; and an assessment of resources. The ESPRI proposal called for baseline data collected as part of the workshop, with follow-up data collected three months and one year post graduation. Dawn suggested that as more workshops occur outside of ESPRI, organizations give consideration to purchasing licenses to CharityTracker, a relatively inexpensive, user-friendly database that aggregates local data into national level results.

Training of Additional Getting Ahead Facilitators – Irene Parobii asked for suggestions for additional Getting Ahead facilitators, particularly in St. Lawrence County. Seaway Valley Prevention Council, St. Lawrence County Community Development Program (CDP), and Cornell Cooperative Extension were discussed. Don Mesibov indicated that he would be willing to distribute information about GA facilitator training opportunities during the poverty forum on October 30, 2019.

Steering Committee Webpage – Irene Parobii reported that the charter and meeting minutes for the North Country Bridges Steering Committee have been added to the Population Health section of Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization website, under Poverty: <https://fdrhpo.org/population-health/#priorities>

Points North Housing Coalition Submitted Application – Courtnie Toms shared that the Continuum of Care application has been submitted. She explained that Jefferson County Department of Social Services (DSS) applied for bonus funds to provide rental subsidies to individuals with disabilities, the chronically homeless or those recently released from incarceration. If awarded, this would be a new project; the remaining projects submitted through the collaboration are renewals. A coordinated entry project awarded to Jefferson County DSS last year is due to begin soon with a project staff person acting as a single point of access to connect the homeless to available resources.

Point in Time Survey – Courtnie Toms also discussed the Point in Time Survey, conducted in January to determine the number of homeless individuals (in keeping with the HUD definitions of homelessness). Individuals who are experiencing homelessness are encouraged to stop in to predetermined locations for special events where they can learn more about community resources. While there, individuals are

invited to complete a survey. Courtnie explained that the City of Watertown provides financial support for advertising for the initiative. The Operations Committee is hosting a conference call on October 30 for those interested in hosting an event. It was noted that Getting Ahead graduates might be willing to help plan and conduct street outreach, an area that has been lacking in the past. Irene agreed to provide space for those interested in attending the conference call as a group. Other points of discussion centered around HUD's rigid definition of homelessness which does not take into account those who are couch surfing or transient.

HEARTH / STEHP Closure – Courtnie Toms explained that STEHP is a five-year grant that has traditionally included a local match. The match requirement was removed from the 2019 RFP resulting in an extremely competitive grant process with 160 applications received from across New York State. Jefferson County's STEHP, operated by DSS in partnership with Urban Mission, was not refunded. Lewis and St. Lawrence Counties received funding. Dawn Cole shared that this is a tremendous loss to the community, as STEHP funds supported the Mission's HEARTH programming, serving upwards of 1,000 individuals annually with rental assists, security deposits and arrears. Urban Mission leaders are in communication with elected officials and key stakeholders to identify other potential funding opportunities – both short and long term. Pastor Smith is seeing an increase in the number of calls from individuals seeking assistance with housing. He described the homeless as an "invisible community," sleeping in laundromats, public washrooms, cars and caves along the Black River. As winter approaches, those who are experiencing homelessness will sometimes go so far as to commit a crime so that they will land in jail where they have access to regular meals and a warm bed. In most cases, jail will no longer be an option when bail reform takes effect on January 1.

Next Steps: Joint Meeting with Grads – All agreed that it is imperative that we gather robust data on the level of homelessness in our local communities. With that in mind, Irene offered to share information about the Point in Time Survey and host upcoming conference calls as FDRHPO.

III. Bridges out of Poverty Training

Dawn Cole inquired whether there was interest in facilitating Bridges training for board members and/or senior leadership. It was suggested that the United Way's Center for Excellence might be willing to incorporate Bridges into professional development offerings.

IV. Getting Ahead / Staying Ahead Updates

Sarah Yerdon reported that several graduates have been involved in organizing clothing as part of the graduate closet, located on the third floor of the Agape Shoppe. Nelson's Dry Cleaners has donated services to remove stains and press clothing donations. Max DeSignore shared that the LEAD Council is engaged in a little friendly competition to gather donations in support of the closet. More than 1,000 clothing items were delivered to the closet earlier today. Given the volume of incoming donations, it was suggested that consideration be given to a second location, specifically Lewis County where Getting Ahead is about to launch.

V. County Updates

Lewis County – Aileen Martin reported that a three-day train-the-trainer Bridges workshop is planned for November 5, 6 and 7 and that Phil DeVol (author of “Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin’-by World”) will attend the Chamber of Commerce dinner in Lowville on November 6. Dawn Cole shared that she co-facilitated a two-day Bridges workshop in Lewis County with Stephanie Houser-Fouse and found the community to be very supportive – and well organized – around the Bridges constructs. Aileen indicated that four two-day Bridges workshops have been facilitated in Lewis County and that participants are being tracked to monitor what is happening as a result of their exposure to the material.

In more Lewis County news, Shayne Lippincott reported that Catholic Charities has opened a new office and transitional living facility in Glenfield.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Bridges Steering Committee will take place on January 10, 2020, 2 – 3:30 PM at Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization.