**NY-603 Governance Board Meeting Minutes**

**November 17, 2023**

**Recording:** [**https://youtu.be/kAV3nwzxcIg**](https://youtu.be/kAV3nwzxcIg)

**Ensuring Families are Not Separated- creating local policy and best practices**

* HUD requires us to have a CoC policy on preventing family separation and to provide training on this topic. We are looking for feedback on what provisions should be included in such a policy.
* If we create this policy, does DSS have any obligation to follow it? If not, does that hurt our region competitively?
  + DSS regularly separates families, especially when children turn 18. They also separate couples that have a domestic partnership or a new marriage on occasion.
  + DSS usually does not implement policies that we come up with. We can explore points of leverage with DSS to influence their policies.
  + We can work with ESG funded shelters to adopt our policies into their practice standards
  + While HUD does not evaluate us on family separation specifically, it may affect other outcomes such as housing retention.
* Situations where family separation is a concern
  + When children in a homeless household turn 18 (DSS)
  + Couples being admitted into DSS without a long-term marriage
  + Pregnancy during admittance into housing program (PSH, SPA)
  + Families where children are already separated from parents and reunification is dependent on the parent obtaining housing, leaving DV situation, or mental health stability
* More consistent coordination with other systems is needed for families involved in the family court system
  + Direct coordination with CPS and the foster care system foster system can help better understand the family’s situation
  + CPS brings case to family court, court goes off what CPS says – would have authority to tell us status of case and help make recommendations to family court
  + Voucher size dependent on standing with family reunification, will not go down unless children permanently removed
    - For pregnant people: PHA does not deem household larger until baby is born
  + Someone needing SPA housing currently separated from family, get treatment they need in housing in short-term and long-term look at other housing interventions/supports to reunite with family
  + Important to know policy of each congregate housing program, also it is a matter of working with residents
  + Prospective participants may pull back from housing placement if they cannot get firm answer on ability to have children visit and/or stay overnight
* Family reunification should be a focus of a policy
  + Coordinate with CPS with consents to understand situation
  + Applicants information on what they would like, back-up with other conversations with people who can verify
  + Important to know policy of each congregate housing program, also it is a matter of working with residents
* A transfer policy can help promote family reunification
  + Participants can submit request for transfer if program cannot meet their service needs. Not currently spelled out that that is a reason for transfer. The current policy is only for a PSH to PSH transfer. Households would nee chronic status to be transferred to a PSH program.
  + Family PSH vacancies do not become available on regular basis
  + PSH to RRH might be a possibility. PSH residents are eligible for RRH if facing violence or at-risk of homelessness
  + A move-on strategy to connect with vouchers for reunification. PSH & RRH households should apply for every HCV list available.
    - Families stay in PSH for very long time, especially if entering w/ small children
    - We are not doing what we need to do in terms of increasing income
* When do we take from transfer list?
  + DV has to be top of the list, lethality assessment within that
  + Need to look at system flow – dedicating % of PSH for RRH transfers of chronically homeless households
  + Regularly look at transfer list, maybe monthly – still creating space with transfers as household moves from one unit to another
  + More ESSHI will allow us to be more flexible and accommodating

**Attendees**

Terray Gregoretti, TSCLI

Holly Richards Mosby, FREE

Donna O’Hearon, Mercy Haven

Deirdre Trumpy, MOMMAS House

Stephen Brazeau, Hope House Ministries

Sarah Brewster, Circulo

Allison Covino, Options

Vicki McGinn

Valerie Chamberlain

Elizabeth Lunde

LICH Staff: Mike Giuffrida, Samantha Grimaldi, Jessica Labia, Al Licata