

SOUTH BAY COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

General Meeting

Wednesday, 3/12/14, 10:00 – 12:00 pm

St. John Fisher Church, Auditorium,

5448 Crest Rd., Rancho Palos Verdes

Attendees: Hosting Agency (St. John Fisher Church): Misty Jesse & Thomas Matthew. Guest Speakers: Ed Gonzalez (1736) & Denise McCain-Tharnstrom (*Our Children LA/Every Child*). Others: Co-Chairs Mark Silverbush & Nancy Wilcox (*St. Peter's By The Sea*), Maureen O'Crean (*Bed of My Own*), Mary Bartel (*Project Needs*), Carrie Bach (*DPH CHSA*), Kathleen Clarke (*WUMC*), Roy Currence (*WUMC*), Tim Smith (*BCCF*), Yolanda Polony (*DPSS*), Ann Reogo (*DPSS*), Tom Hoffarth (*American Martyrs*), Cliff Gardner (1736), Jared Carson (*First Lutheran*), Robin Fitzgerald (*Door of Hope*), Emma Ogle Oliver (*Marymount CU*), Jimmie Simpson (*Toberman Neighborhood Ctr.*), Connie McOsker (*Harbor Service Ctr.*), Elaine Ruggiero (*HCC*), Mary Agnes Erlandson (*St. Margaret's Ctr.*), Sue Castillo (*Central S.P. Neighborhood Council*), Shari Weaver (*Harbor Interfaith*), Karen Ceaser (*DMH/ SP Neighborhood Council*), Paul Stansbury (*NAMI So. Bay*), Aaron Montes (*Volunteer*), Zhen McCullom (*DMH*).

1. Welcome & Introductions. Mark Silverbush opened the meeting at 10:08 am by thanking St. John Fisher for hosting this month's General Meeting.
2. Minutes Review & Approval. Carrie Bach accepted corrections to the February General Meeting minutes, adding two missing names to the attendees list: Karen Ceaser and Julie Jacks. The Minutes were approved as amended.
3. Hosting Agency Overview. Misty Jesse presented an overview of St. John Fisher Church. They celebrated the opening of their new sanctuary in October 2013 serving its 3,000 parish members. The church also has a grade school for Kindergarten through 8th grade. Misty described the active involvement they have with the homeless: supporting the Palos Verdes Thrift Shop in Lomita (who in turn gives its proceeds to several social service agencies that provide direct services to those who are homeless), and to a feeding program in Long Beach.
4. Featured Speaker: Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF). Ed Gonzalez of 1736 Family Crisis Center gave an overview of the SSVF program. The Veterans Administration's (VA) goal is to end Veteran homeless by 2015; \$600M is committed to this program nationwide, which employs the rapid re-housing (RRH) model. In addition, the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (CoC) was given a special one-time "Priority 1 Surge Funding" increase of \$24M distributed over the next three years to address the large number of Vets in our CoC. SSVF is also using the "housing first" model to eliminate common barriers in finding permanent housing for many clients. A majority portion of the funding goes into RRH and the rest into prevention from becoming homeless.

SSVF has four core components:

- a. Outreach: Teams search street and facilities to locate the highest need Vets.

- b. Case management: the program is considered short term, with the average client requiring about 90 days of support. An additional 90 days is included if the family needs extended supportive services.
- c. VA benefits enrollment: assist with obtaining VA healthcare services.
- d. Coordinate public benefits: such as Supplementary Security Income, Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF – called CalWORKs in California), etc.

There are certain eligibility criteria for families or individuals using this program. Only VA healthcare eligible clients can receive services if they have an honorable or general discharge; “Other than honorable discharge” is not eligible unless they are already “service connected” (i.e., have a documented disability related to military service) or if they served prior to 1980. Other eligibility information includes: Definition of the “family” which can be a single Veteran, one with a partner and not married, or a family where one of the head of households is a Veteran. The Average Medium Income (AMI) limit vary by region but those that fall in the lower bracket of 30% AMI have a higher priority to receive SSFV assistance.

SSFV provides benefits to the entire household, not just the Veteran. For example, childcare is available through this program.

There are three categories of clients:

- 1. Cat 1: those in imminent risk of losing their housing (in 14 or less days)
- 2. Cat 2: those who have been literally homeless for less than 90 days
- 3. Cat 3: those who have been homeless for more than 90 days

Other information about this program was brought up: It provides financial assistance for such items as move-in assistance. SSFV case managers will help the Veteran find appropriate housing. It is being integrated in the countywide Coordinated Entry System (CES) system.

The following questions were asked during the presentation:

- 1. *Is this a rental subsidy?* No, just financial assistance for short-term support. For example, utility bills for two months can be paid; utility deposits on a new rental are covered; motel vouchers for families who have already signed a lease and are just waiting until the first of the month to move is also covered; additional background check fees are covered as long as they are directly connected to housing.
- 2. *Where do you find the housing?* The location depends on where the Vet wants to live. 1736 covers Los Angeles and Orange counties. They work with several property managers and have success with landlords in which they have ongoing relations.
- 3. *What about connections to HUD-VASH?* SSFV provides assistance to apply for VASH vouchers (these are like Section 8 Shelter + Care vouchers that provide longer term wrap around services for generally up to 5 years or as needed).
- 4. *Is there any priority given to those of a certain age?* Veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts are given priority.

5. *Can Veterans with "Other Than Honorable Discharge" get SSVF benefits?* These cases can be appealed. Veterans should contact 1736 and it can connect the requester to an appropriate agency to assist with the appeal process.
6. *What can we do if some Vets don't want to deal with the VA?* Refer them directly to an SSVF grantee. They will provide the assistance and case management for those who have government institutional challenges.

Mark is writing the annual SSVF report to Congress and thus has a systems-level perspective on this program. He reported that the 80-90% success rate for SSVF nationwide is very impressive, with it having an equally high retention rate (defined as Veterans who have not signed up for additional VA homeless service benefits after successfully exiting the SSVF program). It is also serving 2-3 times more female veterans than other VA programs. The large Year Two funding expansion has been in more rural and suburban areas (Year One was primarily for urban regions), yet has maintained the same high success rate seen in the program's initial year. This is in part due to the heavy emphasis on providing technical assistance and regional training, including focusing on the challenges of dealing with Veterans with substance abuse and mental health challenges.

5. Youth Countywide Resource Guide. Dr. Denise McCain-Tharnstrom gave an overview of this Los Angeles countywide guide. In 2011-12, LA City libraries asked her how to help the Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) connect to services. When she sought out resource guides, she found there were none that addressed the unique needs of this population, so she developed one called a First Response Directory. Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) then asked if she would partner with them to create a guide. She is now meeting with all homeless coalitions countywide to get their assistance with identifying services in their regions that serve homeless youth.

She would like to include area food/meal guides in addition to health, drop-in, shelter, crisis, benefits, employment, and education opportunities. The target audience is youth aged 10-24 years. She is developing a mobile app as well that will have a searchable database. All the resources should be emailed directly to Denise at denmct@aol.com. She is going to provide additional information to Nancy for attaining this information, who will forward it to SBCH members.

6. Coalition Projects Review & Discussion:
 - a. Resource Guide. Misty Jesse distributed 500 copies of the first Harbor Area "pocket guide." It will be emailed to SBCH members for them to copy and distribute. If possible, she suggests it be copied on yellow paper to easily distinguish it from the other two regional guides being developed by Marymount students and St. Margaret's Center staff.
 - b. SBCH Retreat Planning. Nancy reported that since most of the goals from our first retreat last May have been met and our coalition membership has grown, it would be good to celebrate these accomplishments as well as to set new goals. A Saturday retreat in either summer or fall is being planned. She is considering having breakout groups with different interests, such as health care, faith based organizations, etc., that can work on topics relevant to that group.

7. Report Back: LA CoC. Nancy reported for Jessy Neeham, the SPA 8 alternate to the Coordinating Council. Elections for new primary and alternate representatives to this important council will be held soon. Nominations are due by May 1, 2014. Elections will then take place during the June LAHSA Quarterly Meeting and also via online voting. New members will then be trained in the fall, with them assuming their new positions in January of 2015. Nancy is requesting that our June General Meeting be held in conjunction with LAHSA's Quarterly Meeting to better facilitate the elections. She also encouraged any Coalition members to be involved and consider running for these two positions.
8. Co-Chairs' Report Back.
 - a. Family Solution Center (FSC): Mark discussed the soon-to-be-released request for proposal (RFP). There currently is no FSC in SPA 8. These will connect families to needed community resources.
 - b. Coordinated Entry System (CES): Nancy said the application for this RFP is due April 18th. United Way has asked for one collaborative application from each SPA. Harbor Interfaith Services will be the lead agency, with St. Margaret's also playing a key role in northern SPA 8. The City of Long Beach will also be part of our application. Nancy invited other agencies to join this effort and to contact her ASAP so they could be included in the planning.
 - c. Winter Shelter Program. Nancy reported that the South Bay does not have a winter shelter program except for the one in Long Beach. She visited the one operated by First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood (FPCH). This particular shelter is not publically funded but operated by neighboring churches that take responsibility for running the program each week. Those homeless who participate spend the night at FPCH each night during the operating months of January and February. They have identified about 30 individuals that participate in their program. Their model is to build deep relationships with them. In contrast to this approach, the East San Gabriel Valley Coalition for the Homeless (ESGVCH) is funded through LAHSA to provide a shelter for approximately 200 persons. It is also operated by the faith community. Those who are homeless are bussed to the participating church sites. Nancy has a copy of LAHSA's Winter Shelter RFP for anyone interested in viewing this program opportunity. Karen Ceaser is speaking to a group of San Pedro churches to see if there is interest in this.
 - d. National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) Conference on Families and Youth. Nancy attended this conference and reported there was a huge emphasis on rapid rehousing, CES, visibility on youth homelessness, e.g., how to count TAY during homeless counts. She encouraged other SBCH members to attend this conference.
 - e. FPCH Homelessness Forum. Nancy participated in a forum sponsored by FPCH where members of the Presbyterian denomination shared ideas for how the faith community could be more effectively involved with serving the homeless.

9. Agency Announcements

- a. NAMI: Paul Stansbury announced that the theme of “Hearing Voices” will be discussed at the regular NAMI meetings held at First Lutheran Church, 7:30 PM this coming Monday evening.
- b. Harbor Interfaith Services: Shari Weaver encouraged members to attend the premier of “Hope for Our Own and LA’s Story,” a 1 hour documentary about Los Angeles homelessness by 16 year old high school student Riley Beres.
- c. San Pedro DMH: Karen announced the San Pedro Mental Health 3rd Annual (May 22) Community Health Resource Fair & Art Fair. It is also holding a can food drive in honor of Cesar Chavez Day.
- d. Center San Pedro Neighborhood Council: Karen also spoke of the Quality of Life Forum, which features two Coalition members as panelists: Jeremy Sidell (PATH) and Tayhia Hayslet (HIS), “Ending Homelessness: Mission Not Impossible” on April 2nd at the Grand Warner Annex.
- e. Toberman Neighborhood Center. Jimmy Sampson announced the grand opening of the new Family Center, Thursday at 9:30 – 11:00 am, 131 N. Grand Avenue, San Pedro.

The meeting concluded at 12:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Carrie Bach.

Upcoming Meeting Dates & Locations

2nd Wed 10 am-12 pm	Host Name	Address
4/9/2014	Wayside United Methodist Church (Janet Mercer)	25904 Cayuga Ave, Lomita
5/14/2014	St. Joseph Church (need to confirm) (Mary Agnes Erlandson)	11901 Acadia Ave., Hawthorne
6/11/2014	San Pedro United Methodist Church (Rev. Johan Dodge)	580 W. 6 th St., San Pedro