

RI Coalition for the Homeless
Learning Group II: Strengthening the Coalition and its Members
Meeting Minutes September 1, 2010

Date: September 1, 2010 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., RICH, 1070 Main Street, Pawtucket, RI 02860

Present: Linda Barden, Laura Jaworski, Diana Dumin, Rev. Mary Margaret Earl, Taylor Ellowitz, Janice Lavallo-Fisher, LeeAnn Byrne, Karen Jeffreys, Kamila Barzykowski, Tom Miller, Amy Rainone, and Anne Nolan

Consultant Facilitator: M.J. Kaplan **Staff Liaison:** Jim Ryczek **Notes:** Connie Vergowven

Welcome and Introductions: M.J. Kaplan: welcome, and check-in with a review of the LGII guidelines.

M.J. Kaplan: Review question one from the June/July discussion. How can RICH support all members, etc. in regards to staffing and client needs?

Some of the needs are: adequate and a broad range of skill sets for C.M.'s

M.J. Kaplan: what role(s) should RICH play?

- Some members felt that RICH could be the field for CM students, all MSW students would be placed for one year at internships. J. Ryczek knows of two key allies at RIC in the Social Work Department and notes that there may need to be a year of planning for this to happen.
- Shared resources (of CM's)
- VISTA/AmeriCorps, but cannot do direct services
- Campus Compact: academic background is matched with agencies
- Agencies need consistency and continuity for investment in training etc. to add adequate value

It was felt by most of the group that interns should be available 40 hours per week if they are only available for a short duration, such as three months. If an intern is available for a year it was felt that the time availability could be in the 10-20 hours per week range to meet the needs of the clients and for training of the CM's by current staff.

Next steps:

- Meet with K. Jeffreys and other key staff to find out if there could be a statewide plan for student placement
- Bi-weekly group supervision, if student placement becomes reality
- Conversations with providers about applying for Federal AmeriCorps. The application process is competitive and there would need to be fifteen providers working as a collaborative (three-year funding cycle, if approved). The next application period is this coming spring. It takes a lot of energy and time to manage this program and it would require a full-time coordinator

Some members were concerned about the training period for students who were placed at their agencies and it was felt that the long term outcome of training field placement students would help to build the work force for the future

M.J. Kaplan: Follow-up

There was discussion around using students this semester to create information sharing through the RICH website. The orientation process for new staff, volunteers and interns needs to be more structured to include: orientation of each agency, including site visits. This process will help to build relationships between agencies and on a personal level. It was felt that there could be a standard curriculum for this and it was felt that RICH could take on this role. There was some feedback on visits already made, many felt it has been a positive experience and felt as though it strengthened relationships.

M.J. Kaplan: How can RICH support members and stakeholders to be engaged in advocacy efforts?

Some examples include:

- G.R. Committee: identify priorities
- NOP Event-worked really well
 - Every step of the way agencies were involved
 - RICH role – coordinator: develop campaign, template documents, make it easy for agencies and clients to be involved

How can RICH clarify that it's working on the most important issues? When should member agencies get RICH involved?

Multiple levels:

- big picture ie. ending homelessness
- elections – engage candidates
- federal and state legislation
- raise awareness of issues
- system level issues that aren't legislation ie. not enough beds
- address agency issues
- recognize legislators and other leaders who care about and support issues

How can members be more involved? RICH has limited resources and needs to prioritize.

Priorities for next legislative session:

- Permanent funding streams, rental vouchers

The GR Committee was also formed to help with the most important issues as viewed by member agencies.

Members suggested sending out an info email that indicates importance or urgency.

What is RICH's appropriate role to represent constituents?

- It was felt by some members of the group that individual agencies should advocate for their own clients and that RICH should look at other issues such as: commonalities between agencies, DHS issues, etc. J. Ryczek assured the members when that learns of issues and finds a commonality he does work on the issues. For example: when funding hasn't arrived: he will make calls to get this process moving.
- RICH's role is delicate because it risk posturing RICH in conflict with member agency
- Does RICH distinguish between person persistently complaining and angry vs. investigated/verified issue?
- What's the protocol for RICH's role as advocate in regards to constituent grievance process:
 - Clarify funding source for program
 - Communicate appropriate grievance process
 - RICH is written into state process as advocate for constituents and clearinghouse for information.

In closing: Please remember to buddy up if you were not at the last meeting.

Next meeting: Wednesday, October 6, 2010, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. at the RICH office 1070 Main Street, Pawtucket, Rhode Island 02860

Future Dates for LGII meetings: Wednesday, November 3, 2010, 12-2 p.m. location TBD

Wednesday, December 1, 2010 12-2 p.m. location TBD

End: 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Constance Vergowven