

# REGIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE HOMELESS

March 14, 2006

## MINUTES

**Attendance:** Laurie Gross, Chair

Kevin Colvin, Nilda Havrilla, Betsey Gee, Iris Molina, Evelyn Castillo, and Catherine Brennan of United Way campaign staff.

Ms. Gross welcomed all to the meeting.

Ms. Gross asked for a motion to approve the January 10, 2006 minutes.

**Motion was made and unanimously approved.**

Gross gave an update for the 10-year plan to end homelessness. On March 1, 2006 the Public Information Task Force met with members of the Bridgeport City Council. The purpose of the meeting was to meet face-to-face with as many members of the City Council and explain the 10-year plan. Approximately 5-7 members of the council were in attendance on March 1<sup>st</sup>. Reaching Home video was shown. Megan Lowney of Operation Hope is in the video. Affordable, supportive housing is happening in communities such as Fairfield. People don't have to fear that we are talking about big high-rising housing projects and that this is good for communities and neighborhoods. Those in attendance had a good sense of what the Mayor's plan is all about. At some point a meeting will take place with leadership from the surrounding towns, not just Bridgeport.

Kevin Colvin, Saga (State Administer General Assistance) Social Worker of Community Health Network reported on Saga administrative services. They administer claims that are paid out of the state accounts. Offices are located out of Wallingford.

Betsey Gee of Southwest Community Health Center reported that they are about to go to JCAHCO Certification. This certification requires that all services, caregivers, and doctors have up-to-date degrees, and that cleanliness codes are met. This is a two-year certification site check-up. Southwest Community Health Center is still looking for a full-time nurse practitioner. A National Homeless Conference will be held in Portland, Oregon from June 7, 2006 to June 11, 2006. Participants include all who are involved in the community homeless movement.

Nilda Havrilla, Housing Attorney of Connecticut Legal Services, reported that the Eviction Prevention Roundtable is meeting every other Monday. This is a partnership between Connecticut Legal Services, Bridgeport Housing Authority and area agencies such as Southwest CT Agency on Aging, Mental Health Association and others. They problem solve cases where clients who have disabilities need services but have not been identified. Connecticut Legal Services identifies issues, problem-solves and helps keep people housed.

Iris Molina, Director of Social Services, City of Bridgeport reported that her group runs the food stamps and **employment** training program for those able bodied. Clients are put into educational programs. The goal is to make sure they have food, shelter and transportation. The program is performance-based. Other programs run by Social Services include the Healthy Start Program for Pregnant Women, including pregnant women with no place to live; Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program, grandparents

raising grandchildren who can't live in senior housing now because they are raising their grandchildren. New Haven has created their own senior housing Grandchildren Raising Grandchildren Apartments. They have been very successful. Social Services relocates for co-enforcement if there is an environmental or health reason. Social Services are 95% grant-funded. There are seven grants and 13 employees in the Social Services Department for the City of Bridgeport. Last year approximately 3,000 people were served through social services. Once a year (in March) the Department of Social Services will provide for energy assistance. Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport participate in this program. Social Services also have volunteers who provide services for free income tax preparation. Connecticut Association of Human Services has a Food Stamp Committee that meets on a quarterly basis and information on correcting your credit is covered in this booklet.

Evelyn Castillo of Stratford Community Services reported that she had received many calls regarding Sikorsky Aircraft going on strike and what resources were available to those in the labor dispute. Food stamps and energy assistance are available in some cases but the union pays strike benefits to employees. The energy season starts in November and ends April 17, 2006. Four hundred applications for the Town of Stratford residents only have been processed.

Ms. Catherine Brennan sat in on the Homeless meeting to get a better understanding of what is happening in the homeless area of our work. This enables her to keep the public enlightened as she does her community campaigns.

Ms. Gross thanked all for attending and stated that the next meeting will be held on May 9, 2006, 9:00 a.m. at United Way.