



COUNTY OF SOMERSET DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

27 Warren Street • P.O. Box 3000
Somerville, New Jersey 08876-1262
(908) 541-5756 • Fax (908) 575-3935
CommDev@co.somerset.nj.us
www.co.somerset.nj.us



Human Services Director
MICHAEL FROST

Community Development Director
KIMBERLY COWART

Aging & Disability Services
JOANNE FETZKO

One Stop Career Center
Juvenile Institutional Services
MONICA MULLIGAN

Richard Hall Community MHC
NICCI SPINAZZOLA

Rutgers Cooperative Extension
DARYL MINCH

Veterans Services
PETER NIEMIEC

Volunteer Services
WILLIAM F. CROSBY

Youth Services
LINDA M. PORCARO

January 8, 2025 Continuum of Care meeting minutes

The January 2025 meeting, which took place in-person in Conference Room 1 at 27 Warren Street in Somerville, was called to order and began at 12:30 pm. The minutes from the November meeting were reviewed and unanimously approved.

The guest speaker was Michael Callahan, Director of the NJ Office of Homelessness Prevention (OHP). The OHP was created in 2019 and is working on ways to create affordable housing. They gather information from other agencies on all areas of homelessness and then work with non-profits and municipalities. They are trying to do more in rural and suburban areas of the state.

They have a number of teams and projects in place to assist residents. Their incubator program takes data and creates programs based on those needs. Single parent women between the ages of 25 and 40 are the most at risk and fastest growing group. Their homelessness prevention program (HPP) provides up to 3 months' assistance to pay past due rent to households in imminent danger of eviction due to temporary financial conditions out of their control. And they have a special projects team which embeds advisors in areas where they are needed, and partners with other agencies and departments to provide support.

Through OHP's housing first model, if there is an imminent risk of homelessness, a case manager can follow up with a family indefinitely and provide on-going support.

OHP is working hard to ensure that veterans receive services. They are making sure that vendors work with local VFW groups. They have tripled the number of outreach groups and have a dedicated line for case management and funds to house veterans for up to a year, even if they are over-income.

Mr. Callahan also discussed the Medicaid Section 1115 waiver. Normally, Medicaid can't be used for housing, but this allows the states to start a 5-year test program. There can be tenancy sustainment services; move-in support, with a \$10,000 cap to purchase furniture or adaptive technology and can also be used to pay a security deposit; every family that is homeless is eligible for a security deposit, which can be made available within seven (7) business days and is payable directly to the landlord. The program needs as many providers as possible to enroll – there is no cost for enrollment. If the program works well for 5 years, and positive outcomes can be demonstrated, the State will have the opportunity to apply for rental assistance funding.

Kenya gave an update on the Point in Time Count. It will be taking place the last week in January, asking people where they slept the night of January 28th. In addition, she informed the Committee that Monarch Housing was awarded a \$1.2 million grant from the Bezos Fund to assist with family

- Mission Statement -

The County of Somerset is committed to excellence and innovation in public service, promoting the well-being of all residents and communities by providing effective, efficient and responsive leadership.

Somerset County Is An Equal Opportunity Employer

homelessness. This new program will be handled by Monarch's policy team. They have five (5) years to spend down the funds. Kenya also provided an update on the Lived Experience Advisory Board. This Board – which is funded and overseen by the DCA, along with someone from Monarch – is expected to be comprised of 7-15 members and will meet monthly, with their first focus group scheduled for February 11. This Board will give a voice to people impacted by homelessness.

Kim provided the results of the CoC survey. The survey results, along with comments from respondents, indicated that members:

- like coming together to share information
- feel there's not enough housing or housing resources
- would prefer to meet in person more often
- see a need for a community-based strategy to address homelessness
- wonder what can be done to incentivize landlords to take vouchers
- want to celebrate agency and member successes

Some topic ideas for trainings in 2025 include: organizations promoting racial inclusivity; how to find housing; self-care and mindfulness; information on Monarch and what they can provide; the effect of domestic violence on families; and how can data drive dollars into the community.

Agency announcements:

- The Office of Operations and Planning has hired two new employees who be part-time in the office and part-time at the foodbank.
- DCF is recruiting families to be foster families
- There are two housing vacancies available via Easter Seals.

Additional agency announcements will be sent via e-mail after the meeting and, as such, are incorporated as part of the minutes.

The meeting adjourned at 1:35 pm.

Attendees:

See the attached sign-in sheet