



Kent County Essential Needs Task Force * Energy Efficiency Subcommittee Meeting
Kent County Health and Human Services Building * 121 Franklin SE * Grand Rapids, MI 49507
ACSET Suite 110 * Conference Rooms C and D

September 27, 2016 Minutes

ENTF Energy Efficiency Subcommittee Members and Guests Present:

Dawn Broen (Flat River Outreach Ministries), Susan Cervantes (ACSET Community Action Agency), Tracie Coffman (Kent Co. Essential Needs Task Force), Darcy Cunningham (The Salvation Army Social Services), Cherie Elahl (North Kent Community Services), James Geisen (DHHS-Family Independence Agency), Sarah Miller (ACSET Community Action Agency), John Mitchell (United Way), Tom Oosterbaan (Senior Neighbors), Sheena Threatt (TrueNorth Community Services), Jody Ringnalda (Senior Neighbors), Marissa Boerman (TrueNorth EmPower)

Guests: Allison Rudi (Calvin College Center for Social Research), Charlotte Reynolds (Calvin College Center for Social Research), Neil Carlson (Calvin College Center for Social Research)

Darcy Cunningham (The Salvation Army Social Services), Co-Chair presided.

1. Welcome/Introductions

Introductions around the room.

2. Review notes from last meeting

Minutes provided from last ENTf EE Subcommittee Meeting, held on August 23, 2016.

Motion to approve: John Mitchell

Second: Susan Cervantes

Motion Passed

Dr. Neil Carlson noted one change on page 2. A change will be made on the notes to indicate a date of April 2017 regarding the software for DTE and Consumers Energy.

3. Update: Calvin College Center for Social Research – Dr. Neil Carlson, Ph.D. (Calvin College Center for Social Research)

Dr. Carlson presented via projection an example of one month's data at a geolocator of ZIP+2. He continued to explain this will allow a larger unit to be displayed and it is similar to data shown in census blocks. Dr. Carlson is planning to share the data with Consumers Energy within the week (at this point it has only been shared with stakeholders), which will allow 12 additional months data. Multiple months will have trend lines indicating more than the population with disconnects, possibly showing the population with late payments (which is very useful to most agencies as this is where most programs can start to intervene).

Ms. Cervantes asked how this data relates to the proposed indicator. The proposed indicator states the percentage of Kent County population with uninterrupted utility service for 12 months.

3. (Cont.) Update: Calvin College Center for Social Research – Dr. Neil Carlson, Ph.D. (Calvin College Center for Social Research)

Dr. Carlson explained that there is not access for account level data so inferences would have to be made from aggregate data instead. Once the aggregate data is available to include more months an “estimated rate” can be established. In addition, there will have to be separation in the proposed indicator of DTE and Consumers Energy, rather than combining the two as “utility service”. The DTE and Consumers Energy maps would be similar so overlaying the maps would be an option. The data will ultimately give us boundaries of neighborhoods where there are more poverty issues.

Ms. Cervantes asked if the data from Calvin College Center for Social Research could be used in conjunction with the census map of poverty rate to demonstrate the “need. Mr. Carlson continued the conversation regarding a possible affordability index. Mr. Carlson suggested using both data sources to define the poverty boundaries in selected ZIP+2. Mr. Carlson added that there is only 1 month of data being displayed, so the results after 12 months will be more conclusive.

Ms. Cervantes noted the proposed indicator’s range including all of Kent County, but further explained that most agencies are following their program guidelines to assist with only 16.8% of the Kent County population. Ms. Cervantes raised a question of changing the proposed indicator to reflect those “in need” of Kent County or something similar. Dr. Carlson agreed this may be worth investigating further with possibly a denominator provided by the utility companies at account level.

Ms. Coffman asked the ENTF attendees how the data collected from Calvin College Center for Social Research could encourage system change (on a larger scale). Ms. Coffman challenged the ENTF group to look beyond helping a specific population in the system, but rather to look at the system as a whole and define a goal based on this. Ms. Cervantes added that time is of shortage for the emergency programs due to funding and necessity. Ms. Cunningham agreed and further explained that all agencies present administer low income programs but the challenge is to “put that hat aside” and think bigger as part of the ENTF Sub-Committee.

Dr. Carlson added that the project with ENTF is supposed to end on September 30, 2016 but he will continue to make sure the results are a “win” for everybody.

4. Update: MEAP Awards, Planning and Coordination – All Agencies

Cherie Elahl (North Kent Community Services)

North Kent Community services is a new grantee receiving \$50,300 in MEAP funding this year and its service area includes northern Kent County north of the river up to 22 Mile Road. The NKCS Utility Assistance Program will be an approximate 5-6 month process and will include a financial literacy service, Skype services for home repair, and classes. Ms. Elahl will be trained to facilitate workshops. Ms. Elahl clarified it is not a one-time crisis assistance payment, but along term program. The initial payment will get the client out of emergency then there will be a \$250.00 monthly incentive rewarded to clients for completing goals such as good grades and attendance. Once the long term program is complete the client will be made current. Ms. Elahl also added that St. Vincent funding is available, but will only be used once MEAP is expended. NKCS is hoping to assist 25-30 families and is capped by a \$3,000 MEAP allowance.

4. (Cont.) Update: MEAP Awards, Planning and Coordination – All Agencies

Dawn Broen (Flat River Outreach Ministries)

Flat River Outreach Ministries is participating in a fourth year as a MEAP grantee and its service area is Lowell School District. Traditionally there is a 12 week program with graduated percentage payments in place (40%, 60%, 80%, 100%), but a one-time crisis payment option has been added. Included in the 12 week program is financial literacy, 2 weeks of Weatherization classes, empowerment coaching, an energy audit, and possibly a referral to Home Repair Services of Kent County (clients are not required to be home owners). The additional one-time crisis payment will still require an online financial management class and attend a condensed weatherization class. If a client needs additional assistance beyond the crisis payment, the 12 week program must be completed. Flat River Outreach Ministries is capped by a \$3,000 MEAP Allowance.

Sheena Threatt (TrueNorth Community Services)

TrueNorth Community Services will be servicing the entire state of Michigan this program year, with a priority to rural clients. The TrueNorth Community Services programs will include a heavily case-managed self-sufficiency program (a referral system will replace the case management for Kent County), educational classes, an Upper Peninsula pilot (due to a longer winter season), Affordable Payment Plan with DTE, Agency Call Line, Call Plan Payment Processing, and online applications. TrueNorth Community Services is capped by a \$3,000 MEAP Allowance.

James Geisen (DHHS-Family Independence Agency)

The Department of Human and Health Services is prepared for a large client turn out for assistance, after referrals have been utilized.

Susan Cervantes (ACSET Community Action Agency)

ACSET Community Action Agency will be servicing Kent County with MEAP funding for metered-utility assistance, LSP funding for propane assistance, LIHEAP funding for deliverable fuel (propane, fuel oil, wood, and pellets). ACSET community Action Agency should be the first choice for clients in need of propane, referrals should be made accordingly.

Darcy Cunningham (The Salvation Army Social Services)

The Salvation Army will be servicing Kent County with four programs. GPS Model will include the one hour applicant interview, an eligibility screening, a needs identified and addressed through available in-house services or referred to a service provider within the community. Energy assistance will be available up to \$3,000 per household. Pathway of Hope (Pathway) will include case management to empower participants in achieving change and an action plan developed to include personal aspirations and practical actions. Referrals will also be given to appropriate community resources. Together Implementing Monthly Energy Discussions (TIMED Fund) is accessed by case managers to support the case managed household's goals toward financial stability. The maximum amount of energy assistance is \$4,000 minus payments from the GPS Fund. Affordable Payment Plan (RISE) is a pilot program with DTE Energy where arrearages are capped at the time of enrollment at \$2,000 per account. 30% of the arrearage is forgiven at the time of enrollments and the remainder of the arrearage is forgiven quarterly over a two year period. Annual usage may not exceed \$3,750 (combined), \$2,150 (per gas account), and \$1,600 (per electric account). Affordable Payment Plan (REACH) is a pilot program with Consumers Energy where arrearages are capped at the time of enrollment at \$2,000 per account. 30% of the arrearage is forgiven at the time of enrollments and the remainder of the arrearage is forgiven quarterly over

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5. Next Meeting

Date/Time: October 25, 2016 10:30 AM

Location: ACSET Suite 110, Conference Rooms C & D at 121 Franklin SE

6. Adjournment 11:53 AM

Meetings are on the fourth Tuesday of every month, at 10:30 AM.

Meeting Location:

ACSET, 121 Franklin SE, Suite 110, Conference Rooms C/D

2016 Meeting Date Schedule:

October 25, 2016

November 29, 2016

December 27, 2016