



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

October 25, 2016 Minutes

ENTF Energy Efficiency Subcommittee Members and Guests Present:

Dawn Broene (Flat River Outreach Ministries), Susan Cervantes (ACSET Community Action Agency), Tracie Coffman (Kent County Essential Needs Task Force), Jamie Curtis (The Salvation Army), Darcy Cunningham (The Salvation Army Social Services), Sherrie Gillespie (ACSET Community Action Agency), Sarah Miller (ACSET Community Action Agency), John Mitchell (United Way), Tom Oosterbaan (Senior Neighbors), Sherri Vainavicz (United Way 2-1-1)

Guests: Allison Rudi (Calvin College Center for Social Research)

Susan Cervantes (ACSET Community Action Agency), presided.

1. Welcome/Introductions

Introductions around the room.

2. Review notes from last meeting

Minutes provided from last ENTF EE Subcommittee Meeting, held on September 27, 2016.

Motion to approve: John Mitchell

Second: Darcy Cunningham

Motion Passed

3. Update: DTE, DHHS, CSR

Ms. Coffman reported that DTE Energy is unable to attend today's meeting, but will be attending the next meeting on 11/29/2016. DTE Energy asked Ms. Coffman to announce a Customer Assistance Day on Friday, November 4, 2016. It will be from 10:00 – 4:00 at New Hope Baptist Church at 130 Delaware St SW. DTE Energy will be signing up eligible Kent County residents for the LSP (Low Income Self-Sufficiency Plan). DTE Energy is partnering with The Salvation Army's THAW (The Heart and Warmth Fund) program for this event. Ms. Cunningham clarified that the Customer Assistance Day is intended for only the LSP program and is not for utility bill assistance. Ms. Cunningham further discussed the guidelines for the LSP program stating that a client must be in shut-off status or "crisis criteria", and there is an annual renewal. Ms. Cervantes indicated that ACSET Community Action has 15 openings for the LSP program.

3. Update: DTE, DHHS, CSR (Cont.)

Ms. Coffman read an announcement from James Geisen (MDHHS Section manager, Kent County) regarding the opening of SER (State Emergency Relief) on November 1, 2016 for addressing the Crisis Season. Mr. Geisen expects 700-800 people to come through the lobby on 11/1/2016. Mr. Geisen included highlights of the plan. Passwords for DTE ORA/CE PASS were reset for staff in October. The lobby will open a half hour earlier at 7:00 am from 11/1/16-11/10/16 and color-coded paper applications will be handed out from 7:00-7:30 to help ease the flow of traffic. There will be 2 additional staff serving as greeters to assist with traffic direction. SER clients will be directly sent to Desk D where a caseworker will file clear their case and identify the appropriate place to route them. There will be 10 additional staff added to the lobby. The 10 lobby staff will be responsible to registering the applicants, conducting interviews, collecting documentation, completing the ORA/CE checks, requesting holds, and completing SOLQ (Consolidated Inquiry Checks). The extra staffing will increase efficiency for the rest of the staff as the front end work will be completed. Mr. Geisen did not indicate a dollar amount on the SER, but the assistance for last program year was \$850.00. It was decided that an email would be sent to Mr. Geisen asking for clarification on this amount.

Ms. Coffman reported that conversations with DTE Energy and Consumers Energy are on-going, but there has been a slight delay due to a change in staff. Everything is in place for the “data dump” from the CCSR metric study and there is every indication that the data will arrive, with DTE’s expected to arrive next week.

4. Update: MEAP status in Kent County

Ms. Coffman opened the floor for each agency present to discuss the status of their MEAP program.

Ms. Cervantes reported that ACSET Community Action Agency had their waitlist opened for one time consisting of 3.5 hours and received over 230 names.

Ms. Cunningham reported that The Salvation Army is not keeping a list this year, but rather accepting “real-time” applications. Ms. Cunningham added that they are scheduling approximately 10 days out and have opened the program twice.

Ms. Broene reported that Flat River Outreach Ministries does not have a list that opens and closes. Ms. Broene added that October 2016 applications were higher than those received at the same time last year.

Ms. Coffman read the notes from last meeting of September 27, 2016 regarding the new grantees of MEAP, North Kent Community Services who were not present today. 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. Cherie Elhal will be trained to facilitate workshops. It was clarified this 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. It was added that St. Vincent funding is

4. Update: MEAP status in Kent County

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. Ms. Coffman added that North Kent Community Services are taking in-house referrals.

Ms. Cervantes added that ACSET Community Action Agency would like to be the first referral for propane assistance and also clarified that this program is always open.

5. Discussion: Frequent Users

Ms. Coffman re-visited a discussion from previous meetings regarding frequent users. Ms. Coffman would like to see how the data from a recent intern study with ACSET Community Action Agency effects the program/delivery of services and the entire energy system. Ms. Coffman displayed a visual displaying three area of “need”: Shelters, Pantries, and Energy. The resolution of “needs” were displayed as being: Permanent Housing, FAP/Food Centers, and “?”. Ms. Coffman further discussed the solution of shelter shifted to permanent housing, and the same for food assistance shifted to FAP/Food Centers, so logically the solution for energy assistance would need to be long-term and would need to involve both agency level and system level support. Frequent users play a major role in this solution. Ms. Coffman opened the floor up to discussions on how to alleviate frequent users. Suggestions of education, heavier case management, program success rates and subsidy usage were all presented. Everyone agreed that subsidies are a positive and can help a client budget. Mr. Oosterbaan summarized the discussion by adding that it is a complex problem and needs a complex solution.

5. Next Meeting

Date/Time: November 29, 2016 10:30 AM

Ms. Coffman suggested the meeting be moved from 11/22/2016 to 11/29/2016 due to the holiday. Attendees agreed to a change of date for the next meeting.

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

6. Adjournment 11:45 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:

November 29, 2016

December 27, 2016