



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

November 29, 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), Sarah Miller (ACSET Community Action Agency), John Mitchell (United Way), Tom Oosterbaan (Senior Neighbors)

Guests: Allison Rudi (Calvin College Center for Social Research), Cheryl Stafford (DTE Energy), Earl Folks (DTE Energy)

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

1. Welcome/Introductions

Introductions around the room.

2. Review notes from last meeting

Minutes provided from last ENTF EE Subcommittee Meeting, held on October 25, 2016.
Ms. Cervantes noted a small change on first page.

Motion to approve: Jamie Curtis
Second: Tom Oosterbaan

Motion Passed

3. Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm Update

Jamie Curtis (The Salvation Army)

Ms. Curtis recently chaired a Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm meeting. Ms. Curtis reported that the majority of the meeting was conversations relating to energy pre-buy programs, specifically Consumers Energy. Consumers Energy is running a pre-buy pilot program which will operate similarly to that of a pre-paid cellular phone. The program would include minute-by-minute technology, in theory reducing client arrearages. Ms. Curtis explained the pilot program is relying on a lot of communication with the client, including emails, texts, and phone calls (client's preference) to ensure account status is available. If a client is in danger of being in shut-off status, the communication will increase. A client can make small payments during this time to avoid shut-

3. Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm Update (Cont.)

Jamie Curtis (The Salvation Army)

off, but once an account is due to be shut-off, the termination will happen immediately due to the technology of smart meters. Currently, the pilot program is not a requirement it is an “opt in”. In addition, the pilot program does not have income limitations. Also, the pilot program does not offer discounted rates. Ms. Curtis reported there was a PowerPoint presentation of this meeting available. Ms. Coffman reported that she would make the minutes from the meeting available.

Ms. Coffman addressed the concern for the low-income customer base who are disabled, have medical equipment, and small children and how this will affect their household bringing them into “crisis” mode. Ms. Coffman also noted that most clients will reduce their energy usage when they are close to shut-off, which is a benefit for energy consumption, but also a risk to a percentage of the population who already has barriers.

Ms. Cervantes added that this pilot program may be a positive way to hold people accountable, but may be an added burden to the low-income and senior population who may have to buy cell phone plans and internet services to receive utilities. Ms. Cervantes further explained that clients could possibly have multiple crisis if this were the case.

Mr. Oosterbaan commented that a system change would be inevitable if utilities were a pre-buy as program management would have to be re-structured. Ms. Coffman added that a pre-buy program would be a paradigm shift if implemented as it would change how our agencies give assistance.

Guest, Earl Folks (DTE Energy) weighed in on the conversation by announcing that DTE Energy is also beginning pre-buy program conversations. Mr. Folks reported that he will be attending a workshop at DTE Energy headquarters in Detroit within the week to discuss pre-pay program with other companies and technology vendors. Mr. Folks who manages the Customer Outreach Center raised concerns for low-income and senior clients who many not have access to technology. Ms. Cervantes asked Mr. Folks if there was a global goal to having a pre-buy program. Mr. Folks answered that it would not be a global goal but rather a customer satisfaction goal. Mr. Folks further explained that the pre-buy program would be beneficial to increasing the customer base, preventing customer arrearages from accumulating, and it will help customers be proactive about budgeting.

3.5 DTE Information (added to agenda)

Cheryl Stafford (DTE Energy)

Guest, Ms. Stafford informed the members that she would like to rebuild the relationship with agencies on the west side of Michigan. Ms. Stafford reported that in March of 2017 DTE Energy will be undergoing a major system transformation. The system update will involve a transition to SAP software which will improve the entire customer service process, giving a holistic view of the customer. Ms. Stafford explained that ORA (Online Resource for Agents) will not be affected by the update, but there may be some customer related issues that stem from the software update. Ms. Stafford noted that customer bills will still have the same orientation.

Ms. Stafford requested from agencies to designate a contact person and announced that she would be the contact for DTE Energy regarding ORA troubleshooting. Ms. Cervantes suggested that there should be a state-wide MEAP contact. This would allow a single entry into the system and the

3.5 DTE Information (added to agenda) (Cont.)

communication could be relayed to all agencies utilizing MEAP funding. Ms. Stafford will look into this idea. Ms. Stafford would like to have DTE Energy attend future ENTF Subcommittee meetings, receive emails, and meeting notes.

4. Update on data work

Tracie Coffman (Kent County Essential Needs Task Force)

Ms. Coffman explained the purpose of the ENTF Subcommittee and its relationship to Calvin College Center for Social Research (CCSR) regarding the metric study for the guests present. Ms. Coffman reported that there are still conversations with DTE Energy and Consumers Electric. The Consumers Energy test data, which has been shown at previous ENTF Subcommittee meetings, was prepared by Dr. Neil Carlson (Calvin College Center for Social Research). The test data contained data from one month, July 2016. Dr. Carlson was invited to Consumers Energy Headquarters in Jackson, Michigan to meet staff and present the data. The meeting went well and Dr. Carlson requested all data for 2016 and permission for future data. The ZIP+4 data will be available on Trello. After Dr. Carlson's visit, Consumers Energy sent a nice email.

Ms. Coffman asked DTE Energy guests present who would be the contact for this data study at DTE Energy. It was decided that Alex Bodea is the principal supervisor.

Ms. Coffman referred to the white board where One (1) success measure and three (3) indicators were displayed for the metric study:

Success Measure- The percentage of Kent County households with uninterrupted utility service for 12 months

Indicator- Number of days assistance is available

Indicator- Percentage of eligible households receiving a subsidy in the last twelve (12) months

Indicator – Percentage of Kent County households spending no more than 2% of income on electric

Ms. Coffman referred to the metric study chart named "ENTF Energy Indicator E-1: # of days utility service is available". The chart displays the % of Open Program Days for each month in 2016. The chart also displays the sum of days open between the two agencies (The Salvation Army and ACSET Community Action Agency). Ms. Cunningham clarified that this program year The Salvation Army is not utilizing a waitlist, so this data would have to be updated to reflect this change of operation.

Mr. Geisen asked if the number of clients on the waitlist (230) at ACSET Community Action Agency is about the same for last year's waitlist. Ms. Cervantes answered that the waitlist averages around 250 names each time it is opened and it fills up in less than a day. Ms. Cervantes added that the waitlist needs to be closed at this number so the staff can get to the client's crisis in a timely manner per grant regulations.

Ms. Coffman asked Ms. Cervantes if any funding has been pulled from the current program year's Deliverable Fuel Program. Ms. Cervantes answered no, but that it will be looked at soon. The Summer Fuel Program was so effective that most of the propane customer base was able to pre-

4. Update on data work (Cont.)

Tracie Coffman (Kent County Essential Needs Task Force)

buy their fuel before the season started. Ms. Cervantes will continue to inform 211 and The Salvation Army for open/close days.

Guest, Ms. Stafford informed members that Kent County, along with other western counties have a lack of participation in DTE Energy Customer Assistance Days. Customer Assistance Days are partnered with The Salvation Army's and THAW (The Heart and Warmth Fund) program. It is usually a one day event that is held one to three times during the year where customers can receive assistance with their arrearages. Currently, in East Michigan counties the customers are contacted by phone to pre-register. Ms. Stafford would now like to partner with West Michigan agencies to produce a bigger turn out for the one day event. Ms. Curtis commented that timing may play a crucial role in turn out, as clients would more likely need the help after February due to arrearages and customers who only use gas seasonally. Mr. Folks agreed on the timing and would like to try these events at different months. Ms. Coffman suggested partnering with 211 to communicate with clients who are already needing assistance with other programs. Mr. Geisen offered a possible station in the DHHS lobby and Ms. Cervantes added that ACSET Community Action Agency has direct customer contact. Ms. Cervantes asked how the customers are screened to eliminate a duplication in services. Mr. Folks answered that there is a data-cleansing that happens before customer contact. Ms. Stafford reminded agencies to record "MEAP" on their payments in ORA to ensure correct funds are being used.

Ms. Coffman referred to the indicator "Percentage of eligible households receiving a subsidy in the last twelve (12) months. Ms. Coffman would like to discuss this further at the next meeting and so a plan was discussed on how to pull the data. Ms. Coffman will pull the data from the census block. Ms. Curtis announced that she now has access to a state data base and will investigate into whether there is useful data for this indicator. Ms. Broene also has access to the state data base.

Ms. Coffman referred to the indicator "Percentage of Kent County households spending no more than 2% of income on electric". Ms. Coffman clarified this indicator is for any income. The 2% was determined by deviating from the average of 7% for all utilities. Ms. Folks asked how much the percentage would be if gas was included with electric. This scenario would change the indicator to use the verbiage "energy" instead of electric and the percentage would be 6%. The rest of this discussion was tabled for the next regular meeting.

5. Action Plan

Ms. Coffman discussed the action plan for 2017. First, all three (3) indicators will need to be more successful. There needs to be an increase in the days open, an increase in the number of households using subsidies, and an increase the percentage of households spending no more than 2% of their income on energy. Ms. Coffman also challenged members on system change and the possibility of advocating for a universal assessment for all agencies for reporting.

6. Data Report

Ms. Cunningham asked members present if they would like to participate in an annual data report. In the past, agencies reported the assistance by type and "crisis" or "non-crisis". DHHS reported the federal poverty level and zip code. Weatherization information was provided. 211

6. Data Report (Cont.)

reported “un-met needs” data. Ms. Cunningham asked if this annual data report is useful, or does it need to be simplified? Ms. Broene commented that the data report will be very useful to attain our indicator goals for the Action Plan in 2017. Ms. Curtis added that she can also utilize the state data base for the annual data report.

6. Next Meeting

Date/Time: January 24, 2017 10:30 AM

Location: ACSET Community Action Agency 121 Franklin St SE, Suite 110
Conference Rooms C & D

It was decided to cancel the December 27, 2016 meeting by the members due to holiday travel

8. Adjournment 11:58 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

2017 Meeting Date Schedule:

January 24, 2017

February 28, 2017

March 28, 2017

April 25, 2017

May 23, 2017

June 27, 2017

July 25, 2017

August 22, 2017

September 26, 2017

October 24, 2017

November 28, 2017

December 26, 2017