



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

April 24, 2018

ENTF Energy Efficiency Subcommittee Members Present:

Susan Cervantes (KCCA), Sherrie Gillespie (KCCA), John Mitchell and Sherri Vainavicz (211), Marissa Boerman (True North), Tom Oosterbaan (Senior Neighbors), Ken Ford (FROM), Wende Randall (ENTF)

Susan Cervantes, presided.

I. Welcome/Introductions

Introductions around the room, state your name and organization.

II. Review notes from last meeting

Amendments: To correct spelling of Marissa Boerman's name and to add the date of the meeting.

Minutes provided from last ENTF EE Subcommittee Meeting, held on March 27, 2018

Motion: John

Second: Tom

Motion Approved

III. Updates

a. Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm

Wende reported that the Coalition had a Strategic Planning session in April to review mission and values, as well as discuss what had been achievements over the years and what were goals to be focused on in upcoming years. More information will be shared as it becomes available to the full Coalition.

a. Agency Updates

FROM – 80% of funds utilized already; having trouble evaluating energy assistance impact (have contacted Calvin about how to evaluate); right now doing qualitative analysis (prevention of crisis over 30 days and what other services are being accessed in addition to utility assistance); administrative burden is heavy, so thinking about how to structure – gathering more options for other resources (How could energy assistance look different in program design?) KCCA uses the utility program as a feeder program to other services, so this might be an avenue to dig into (the service allows FROM to connect with the client on different levels)

b. True North – business as normal; plenty of CARE spots available (deadline extended through May); plenty of emergency assist through website www.helpfourheat.com 8am-8pm; trying to be conscientious about capacity and may cut off applications on any given day due to capacity – sometimes have gotten up to 600 applications per day for the entire state

- (considering exceptions for over \$850 in assistance); about 50% of the applications received have missing documents (MEAP, CARE, LSP enrollment at the same time, if they opt in); application asks if they have received assistance (take them at their word); the website is a good resource for smaller agencies or for areas where capacity is an issue (when others have closed their lists, True North may still be able to assist); what happens if a client reapplies after defaulting on a payment plan? Can't assist that same year; with CARE, if they default on one, TN will contact them and engage them in financial resource program so they do not default completely, self-sufficiency navigation services
- c. Senior Neighbors – about where they should be this time of the year; money can be used for things other than utility – using a lot for rent right now
 - d. Kent County Community Action – closed gas and electric lists but open for water and deliverable fuel; 60% through MEAP funds (need to be at 70% by end of May)
 - e. DHHS – (Susan provided update from James) – SER is considering over-cap exceptions to households, due to longer cold weather; case by case
 - f. 2-1-1 – partnership with Consumers Energy to all households that are behind \$200 or more – robo-call to 8,086 households that are receiving public assistance now through May 10th – push a button to get 2-1-1 to apply for SER funds before May 31st (referral to DHHS); DTE will be making the same push to their consumers (repeat of an initiative that began last year; some language has been changed to make the intent of the message clearer, but not giving income guidelines in the message)

IV. Basic Needs Feedback and Next Steps

- a. Once we get DTE data, perhaps we can do preventative rather than reactive services; something like the robo-calling (noticed behind on bills, work on budgeting, case management, empowerment, etc.);
- b. With funding changing that they do not need to be in shut-off, could we negotiate data from the utilities that casts a wider net of households that are at risk so interventions can be made to assist; do they have a way to give us households that are flagged (at risk); study by NYU that a utility shut-off is the first indicator that a household is spiraling downward, so we should be more in tune to wrap-around services; last year the KCCA recidivism rate was only 19% (truly reflective of fixed income population (tracked income and number of visits), only 6% had been each year for three years; on a fixed income, more of a resource than a crisis (good for telling the story of the system) consumers are encouraged to stay with the same agency year after year now. Senior Issues group may be an audience for these stories; DAKC could be another audience; CMH
- c. Related to mapping of relationships and other basic needs areas; such a lack of resources, where do we map it to? Usually when people call, they are calling for more than one area of need; the call is recorded as one call (three needs in one call); is this the mapping to look at (the connections between need areas); how easy is it to gather this information (within the new 2-1-1 software)? Looking for patterns to predict the upcoming needs for people who are calling the 2-1-1 system; there is potential to explore this data collection at 2-1-1; at the agency level it would be counted as a referral
- d. Heating season is always an identified barrier because agencies are rushing to spend the money during the season and then the community runs out of money before the funds renewal (especially when the funds are released late); having data from the corporations is a barrier; also, how are we defining self-sufficiency? Previously able to use funds for up to 200% of poverty now that it is only 150% of poverty, the supports are removed for the

working poor who are now maybe one paycheck away from a crisis; how do we build excitement around the work we are doing; not linking it to climate change? Weatherization is going that route to get people interested in the issue (carbon footprint, etc.); shift the strategy from a maintenance approach to a reformist approach (for example the link to job creation and alternative energies); need other partners at the table;

- V. **Advocacy** -- discussed opportunities to explore other communities and pilots
- a. There is an opportunity to apply for grant funds from the Dept. of Energy to apply for innovative project ideas (Muskegon and Livingston have used the grants in the past; Allegan is the number one county for wind in the state, so they are gathering information for doing a wind project);
 - b. Are there things that are bigger than themselves that they could tap into in order to do things differently? Do they even have the internal resources to think differently and see the opportunities? If presented the choice, people like to make the “renewable” choice; may also depend on the approach? Lots of ways for the consumers to be involved --

II. **Adjournment**

Next Meeting

Date/Time: Tuesday, May 22, 2018

Location: Kent County Community Action

121 Franklin St SE Suite 110

Meetings are on the fourth Tuesday of every month, at 1:00 PM.

Meeting Location:

Kent County Community Action,
121 Franklin SE Suite 110

2018 Meeting Date Schedule:

March 27th

April 24th

May 22nd

June 26th

July 24th

August 28th

September 25th

October 23rd

November 27th