



**GRAND RAPIDS/WYOMING/KENT COUNTY  
CONTINUUM OF CARE  
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES**

October 17, 2019  
9:30-11:00am

Facilitator:	Casey Gordon		
Meeting Attendees:	Melissa Hoezee (Fountain Street), John Considine (Fountain Street), LoRae Robinson (Covenant House), Carolyn Allen (Covenant House), Angela Gilliese (Community Rebuilders), Anna Diaz (Community Rebuilders), Jeffrey King (Community Rebuilders), Kendra Avila (3-11), Elizabeth Stoddard (Fair Housing Center), Laura St. Louis (DAKC), Ameer Paparella (North Kent Connect), Becky Diffin (YWCA), Alonda Trammell (Dwelling Place), Domenica Dault (Mel Trotter), Laurie Craft (GRCF), Anna Solomon (Safe Haven), Gabriela Guzman (ICCF), Roxane Hiler (ICCF), Anya Ward (ICCF), Deanna Rolffs (ICCF), Sherri Vainavicz (2-1-1), Casey Gordon (Kent ISD), Rebecca Rynbrandt (City of Wyoming), Stephanie Brock-Knoper (City of Wyoming), Tiffany Clarke (Bethany), Lisa Cruden (Family Promise), Lauren VanKeulen (3-11), Berniz Constanza-Terpstra (ICCF), Arlene DeKryger (Salvation Army), Todd Furlong (Salvation Army), Laura Oesch (GRHC), Trenea Allen (GRHC), Gayle Witham (VA), Ebony Crane (VA), Johanna Schulte (City of Grand Rapids), Stephanie Gingerich (LINC UP), Victoria Sluga (Pine Rest), Bryan Holt (Pine Rest), Katherine Besaw (Genesis), Julie Kendrick (Degage), Sherrie Gillespie (KCCA), Erin Banchoff (City of Grand Rapids), Dave Gantz (Pine Rest), Emily Schichtel (HWMUW), Courtney Myers-Keaton (CoC), Brianne Czyzio Robach (CoC)		
Time Convened:	9:34	Time Adjourned:	10:05

<b>Approval of Minutes</b>			
Motion by:	John Wynbeek	Support from:	Elizabeth Stoddard
Discussion	None		
Amendments	None		
Conclusion	All in favor by acclamation with no dissent		
<b>Community Rebuilders Day One Fund</b>		<b>Anna Diaz</b>	
Discussion			
<p>Community Rebuilders staff, Jeff, Anna, and Angela presented the plan for Community Rebuilders' Day One Funds.</p> <p><u>GRACE Network</u></p> <p>Through these funds, Community Rebuilders (CR) has an opportunity to establish the Gather Resources Align Community Network (GRACE Network). This is a platform of high performing community service providers who will work to make family homelessness rare, brief, and one time in our community by supporting consumer needs. They will work with partners to meet needs relevant to all social determinants of health. This process will also allow them to identify primary needs and ensure that services are provided through referrals. In addition, the system will be used to provide housing resources. The goal is to quickly connect families to outcomes via consumer choice. In addition, they are investing in temporary housing accommodations as a service intervention. They have seen about 70% of families exiting to a permanent destination by increasing support and focusing on successful exits. They are hoping to partner with organizations with a housing first</p>			

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approach who focus on exiting to a permanent destination. Temporary housing is through the Housing Connections Center, include CR's scattered site shelter models.

My Housing Connect

In addition, they are building an online portal – My Housing Connect. This is an online portal where individuals can identify their current situation. The information will be sent to solution specialists. Families will have the opportunity to select a date and time for an appointment online. Before rolling this out, they will be getting user feedback. My Housing Connect will roll out in early 2020. Through the Resource Connect system, families can access Coordinated Entry (CE) if needed. The goal is that all families have access to a solution specialist to help meet their needs. There was a question about whether there is a focus on prevention. CR is building a system that they hope can do this, however, Jeff emphasized that this will be dependent on partners to help expand the diversity of resources. Solution Specialists will be housed in CR to begin, but the hope is to expand the number of agencies/specialists. This is a different model from Diversion Specialists, but there are similarities. Solution Specialists focus will focus on more than housing stability. There will be specific training provided through CR and partners for solution specialists. If a single individual access the network, it will provide them with information for CE and YWCA.

My Housing Connect does not necessarily mean that families do not have to contact HAP. Some families may go through CE and receive services, but this process may allow them to meet with a solution specialist to go through an assessment. Anna indicated that their hope is that this network is something that the CoC can adopt or expand. CR will still have programs that operate through CE, this process will not change. In addition, all participants will be entered into HMIS, individuals will also have a profile on the GRACE Network. GRACE Network is a separate piece from My Housing Connect. The network will allow them to track what is working and what is not working. There was a question if there would be a dual referral process – referral to HAP and referral to this model. In an ideal world, Anna indicated that this could be something that the CoC could transform/adopt. When this is rolled out, people will be able to access both. Families will have the opportunity to choose which (or both) process they would prefer. Any family that CR is working with will be enrolled in the GRACE Network and have access to services by all providers. Referrals through HAP to CR will also access this system.

A member noted that this seems to be a pilot project for expansion of CE as My Housing Connect is not taking the place of the current process. Jeff indicated that their flexible funding allows CR to experiment with things federal funding will not allow. This provides an opportunity to create a bridge between a variety of resources. This will allow CR the ability to address consumer needs other than housing while they address housing issues.

Through this process, CR will be updating and providing data. The framework includes continual improvement. They will be able to identify whether referrals work so they can make new referrals as needed. In addition, it will help track the needs to families who are experiencing homelessness to identify gaps in the system. This will provide a longitudinal analysis on how people move through systems, and the ability to do predictive modeling around needs. In addition, there are very specific legal documents throughout the system to ensure clients information is protected.

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Long term, CR does not want to be the one housing the system/network long-term. There was a question about long term sustainability. Jeff indicated that this is dependent on community partners. Current community partners have expressed interest in sustaining this project long term. In addition, CR has seen support from foundations and other organizations. The plan is that this will continue after Day One funds run out. Angela noted that consumer voice has been essential in the design and flow of the system, showing their commitment to a long-term system. In addition, there are likely other systems would be interested in buying-in to this type of model. Jeff noted that there are great examples of strong Signify Health (GRACE network platform) networks throughout the country.

Community Rebuilders will be offering session to learn about solutions specialists. If you want to learn about GRACE Network, let CR know. If there are questions after the meeting, reach out to [Jeff](#), [Anna](#), or Vera. They are willing to come to organizations if there are groups/teams that want to learn more.

Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline

<b>Diversion Pilot Update</b>	<b>Lisa Cruden</b>
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Discussion

Lisa Cruden shared that the Diversion pilot program was designed to explore whether diversion could help alleviate the shelter system and help families avoid a shelter stay. Diversion is a front-line conversation that identifies ways to help a family avoid shelter and stabilize. They will divert nearly 600 families over 2 years by the end of the year. 30% of families did not return to the system and 50% of families avoided shelter for a year.

Funding for the pilot program will end around the beginning of 2020. They will be working with Org Code to develop a report-out on the process. On average, about \$400 dollars was spent per household that needed financial assistance. About 50% of families did not need financial assistance, but instead needed case management. The financial assistance was provided to mitigate any barrier that families were experiencing (rental deposit, childcare, clothing, rent). Lisa indicated that the flexible funding was key to the success of this program. The pilot team is actively working to identify financial resources that could help move this work forward. Lisa noted that it is up to the community to decided what the next iteration is for this project. Deanna noted that this program costs about \$40,000 per quarter to serve families which is much less expensive than shelter-related expenses.

Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline

<b>Family Homelessness Task Force Update</b>	<b>Courtney Myers-Keaton</b>
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Discussion

Courtney Myers-Keaton shared that the Family Homelessness Task Force is an ad-hoc committee that was formed by Steering Council late last year. Their next meeting is on October 30. The goal of this meeting is to identify tangible strategies that the group can act on to ensure that families are not in crisis. Courtney encourage everyone to attend the meeting and bring actionable strategies.

Fulton Manor Update:

Fulton Manor (FM) was a short-term emergency shelter for families in the community. Based on the contract, they will not be able to continue this past the end of 2019. Throughout 2019, they will have sheltered 300 families. They have been at capacity throughout the year. Currently, there are 70



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families in FM. The team is thinking through what the draw-down process will look like. They are being extremely mindful about how to get families currently in shelter into permanent housing. In addition, Family Promise has been working closely with HAP to identify next steps for families access shelter and to ensure all families go through a diversion conversation. A shelter in northern Kent County has opened for families through the combined efforts of North Kent Connect, HAP, and others.

Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline

**2020 Steering Council Elections** **Courtney Myers-Keaton**

Discussion

CoC staff provided a sheet that lists Steering Council members and their terms, as well as a CoC membership list and roles and responsibilities of Steering Council members. Steering Council members whose term is up are welcome to re-run. The election will be held at the December full CoC meeting. Nominations forms will be provided in a few weeks. After the Steering Council election, there will be an Executive Committee election at the January Steering Council meeting.

Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline

**MSHDA Homeless Preference HCV Waitlist** **Courtney Myers-Keaton**

Discussion

Courtney shared that 126 households were added to the Homeless Preference List Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) waitlist in Kent County in September, 73 were pulled by a housing agent. A total of 505 are on the Homeless Preference List in Kent County. In future months, Courtney will try to include the number of vouchers available as well as the number pulled. With questions about the HCV waitlist, contact [Robin](#) or [Sandy](#) from Community Housing Advocates.

Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Include number of vouchers available with the number of vouchers pulled in future months.	Courtney Myers-Keaton	

**Announcements & Updates**

Discussion

**Voices of Youth Count:** Youth Committee and Youth Action Board jointly decided to postpone the Voices of Youth Count to spring of 2020. There were concerns that the count would not encompass all of Kent County. Moving forward, both groups will discuss what it would look like to reach all of Kent County and ways to ensure this happens.

**Local Applications:** Steering Council approved an ad-hoc group to review the process for local application next year. Please reach out to Courtney if you are interested in this discussion.

**Pine Rest:** Street Reach moved from 300 Commerce to 320 Commerce to consolidate with other Pine Rest resources.

**Disparate Impact:** the deadline to submit comments around changes to the disparate impact rule is the 18. Comments can be made as an agency or individually through the [Defend Civil Rights website](#).

**North Kent Connect:** They will be pulling together all agencies that work on housing and homelessness in northern Kent County, reach out to [Amea](#) if interested.