

Morris County Advisory Committee on Women
March 15, 2023, 5:30pm to 7:00pm
Via Microsoft Teams

Present: Donna Boyce, Joann Bjornson, Kasey Errico, Elaine Muller, Pam Bennett-Santoro, Karen O’Keeffe, Sydney Ugalde

Welcome: Ms. Boyce called the meeting to order at 5:39pm and welcomed members.

Review of January 18, 2023 meeting minutes: A motion to approve the minutes were made by Ms. Bjornson, seconded by Ms. O’Keefe.

Public Section/Questions: None

2022 Annual Report/Status – Ms. Boyce reported that to date there is no movement. Ms. O’Keeffe will resend the report to Ms. Kisatsky for distribution to committee members for a final review. The Annual Report will then be submitted to the Commissioner Board at the March 22nd Commissioner’s meeting.

Subcommittee Reports:

- a. 2023 Seeds of Change Award March 22nd:
 - Ms. Bennett-Santoro reached out to Alice Cutler to see if she will be attending. Unfortunately, Ms. Cutler will not be available. Her ex-husband, Tim Cutler will be accepting the Seeds of Change Award on her behalf. In addition to Mr. Cutler’s talking points, Ms. Boyce and Ms. Bjornson also plan to say a few words.
 - Ms. Ugalde reached out to the nominators and nominates that were not selected for the Seeds of Change Award. Several cannot attend, and some did not return Ms. Ugalde’s messages.
 - The Award will be presented at the 7:00pm meeting. Ms. Kisatsky will provide refreshments for committee members and guests. Attendees were recommended to arrive between 6:00pm and 6:30pm that evening. Ms. O’Keeffe will be unable to attend as she will be out of town on business.
- b. 2023 Sub-Committee Meeting Dates/Times: Ms. Bjornson stated that this year, the subcommittees will be meeting every other month from the full committee meetings (January 18, March 15, May 17, July 19, September 20, November 15). Full committee meetings are virtual, subcommittee meetings can be virtual or in person. Ms. Bjornson recommended having an in person full committee meeting in the Fall. Ms. Bennett-Santoro suggested meeting in person at the September 20th meeting, committee members agreed. Ms. Errico reminded members that the conference rooms at 1 Medical will be undergoing upgrades to the A/V system. However, the project should be completed by then. Ms. Bjornson offered to host the meeting if the project is still not finished.
- c. Membership – No updates. Both Ms. Boyce and Ms. Bjornson reiterated to members to keep searching for individuals who may be interested in joining this committee. Ms. Errico shared that at a recent Veteran’s related meeting, attendees discussed not having enough woman Veterans on that particular group. They talked about reaching out to Operation Sisterhood (<https://cornerstonefamilyprograms.org/programs-services/operation-sisterhood/>) to see about getting some members there. It may be another option for this committee as well.

- d. Action/Planning Status of Goals/Purpose: Ms. Boyce stated that Ms. Bjornson started the effort for Housing as Healthcare, so that can be part of our driver. She acknowledged that there has been some progress recently and asked Ms. Bjornson to share an update. Ms. Bjornson reported that Housing as Healthcare was the topic that was chosen a year or two ago. It is a three-year endeavor to look at how housing and healthcare intersect and how one impacts the other. Housing as Healthcare is all about:
- If an individual has poor health, that impacts their housing stability because they may not take care of their health, but people may also spend a lot of money taking care of their health, and then how do they have money for housing?
 - If an individual is in the hospital or unemployed, how do people maintain their housing?
 - If an individual has poor housing, or lack of housing, or unsafe housing, how do people keep themselves safe and healthy.

There is a program in Rhode Island that has 36 housing units which hospitals pay for all of their programming. Ms. Bjornson's goal is thinking about how hospitals, HMO's, and Medicaid can pay for housing. In south Jersey, through Housing Mortgage Finance (HMFA) and Robert Wood Johnson, they are working with Medicaid and funding an acquisition to create affordable housing for people to move to who have health challenges. So, she is looking at what Medicaid is doing because Medicaid and HMO's are paying in different places across the country and they're starting to ramp up in New Jersey.

Ms. Boyce recalled from the Obamacare policy days that there was a provision in the health care law for healthcare systems to pay for housing because it was recognized. She asked Ms. Bjornson what the congressional allocation specifically funds for Family Promise. Ms. Bjornson stated that \$700,000 was for rental assistance. She is looking into seeing if this allocation can also pay for motel and landlord incentives. Also, \$100,000 will be allocated to the Hope One partnership. Some dollars will go to Zufall Health Center, to St. Clare's for research, and for an Electronic Medical Records system. None of this funding will go towards current programs or services.

Ms. O'Keeffe commented that she hopes there are also wrap around services to keep people housed. She sees a lot of eviction proceedings in her job. Ms. Bjornson stated that in their current budget, there is one Resource Navigator, who assists people in getting housed and maintaining housing. She is also going to hire another Caseworker.

Ms. Boyce stated that ERAP funding under ARPA is still ongoing for many communities that affirmatively requires coordinating with other funding sources. It did include wrap around services, so there was coordination there already. That data may be useful to Ms. Bjornson as she moves forward.

Ms. Errico commented that she has heard from the Office of Temporary Assistance (OTA) that a number of times people arrive at OTA, being dropped off there from the hospitals, and have no place to stay. This matter is particularly challenging as individuals no longer need hospital care, but there's not actually a place for them to go. Unfortunately, it is not always a smooth transition, there's a lot of compounding challenges. There is not always a link ahead of time to OTA to help ease that transition. If OTA staff knows an individual is arriving, services can begin to be set up for that person. If Ms. Bjornson's anticipated grant funding would be able to assist in some type of linkage that's a little more fluid, it would be helpful.

Ms. Bjornson stated that she is already working on this process with Gwen Rippey. Ms. Bjornson shared that individuals also get dropped off at their Drop In Center. There's also overlap because right now, the hospital has an outreach program that goes out to motels for people that are housed in the motel. When they get discharged and they're living in the motel and they are doing outreach, but yet they might be the same clients of OTA and our waiting list. So, there's a gap and there's duplication at the same time.

Ms. Boyce stated that if this committee can support or participate with this matter, she thinks that would be huge for us too. A great CoC project would be an affordable housing unit. It could have a targeted population or special populations, but that there might be a nexus here to pull in the CoC members.

Ms. Bjornson plans to hire a project manager. She will then conduct a round table discussion with the community, hospitals, healthcare facilities, OTA, the Correctional Facility, and everybody who is connected, for their input and then help us create a plan. She hopes that this committee could assist with this project.

Ms. Boyce concluded that if this committee is in year three of Housing is Healthcare, members should start thinking about the next goal and purpose. We may say that Housing is Healthcare has finally gotten to a point where we can provide some additional supports.

- What would those supports look like?
- Should committee members consider another goal and purpose for next year?

Old Business: Ms. Errico reminded members to submit their Annual Report revisions/comments to Ms. Kisatsky by Friday, 17th so she can incorporate them into the report. She will forward to Ms. O’Keeffe for the final review. The Annual Report will be presented to the Commissioner Board at the March 22 meeting.

New Business: A former member (who lives in Sussex County) reached out to Ms. Bjornson regarding the Women’s Committee. She is a member of the State Women’s Advisory Committee. She had all these amazing ideas about how the Women’s Committee should work and the things that they do. Maybe that’s something we can look at. We need to ensure this committee remains viable, and that we’re doing impactful work and that we’re here dedicating our time to something that makes a difference. Ms. Bjornson will bring those ideas for discussion at the next meeting or she will send them to Ms. Boyce in advance of the meeting for discussion.

Ms. Boyce asked if there has been anything in the past or whether it would be appropriate for this committee to consider a linkage with the State Women’s Advisory Committee so that some of these ideas percolate back and forth.

Ms. Errico reminded the committee that the next meeting will be held on May 17th. Is there an idea of what subcommittees plan to meet in the off month (April) so that they’ll be reports for the next meeting. Ms. Boyce suggested that subcommittee members let Ms. Kisatsky know when they are meeting by April 1st.

Next Meeting: May 17, 2023 via Microsoft Teams

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 6:34 p.m.