**From the National Conference on Ending Youth & Family Homelessness**

Two weeks ago I attended the national conference in Oakland, CA. There were a large number of excellent break outs and it was difficult to choose between them! But here were some of the takeaways that I felt were worth sharing. Please feel free to contact me by email at eloveland@mhsjvl.org if you have any questions.

**From HUD and/or the Alliance:**

* A budget initiative is being proposed that would add $11 billion dollars (to be spent over the course of 10 years) to the mandatory federal budget that would be used to end *family* homelessness in the course of that time. It would be used for evidence-based intervention, rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing.
* Because of the upcoming election, it is felt to be important that the initiative have great momentum and buy-in from the current administration so this can be locked in. This was stressed in multiple sessions and by multiple individuals, including Nan Roman and Julie Klein (NAEH Advocacy), and supported by Denise Neunaber, who advocates on a regular basis and gave key advice on how to advocate. She referenced a number of relationship tips that she related to advocacy, most of which centered around taking a risk, making it a two-way street, and keeping the lines of communication open and honest.
* On the discretionary side of the budget, which is what is currently used to fund HUD programs, the FY15 request includes a renewal of 2.2 million housing choice vouchers, 1.3 million project based Section 8 vouchers, 1.1 million public housing vouchers, and additional voucher admin funds, flat funding for HOME projects, and money for the National Housing Trust.
* Nan Roman stated that PSH programs are being used inappropriately – households in those units may have benefited better from RRH, opening PSH up to households truly needing them
* Norm Suchar stated that his department is moving away from individual project evaluation and towards system evaluation instead. The researchers are beginning to focus on shelter model best practices, specifically regarding barrier removal. He further stated that “things don’t go away if we don’t let the issue in the door,” in regards to a question posed by one individual about their organization’s requirement for proof of custody. While we hear that repetitiously in various forms, it was a way of phrasing it that made you think.
* He discussed environmental reviews for rapid re-housing funded units – the requirements are going to be lessened.
* Lastly, he said that Tier 1 announcements would come “very very soon.” Tier 2 will be announced in late March/early April.

**On shelter:**

* At the point of entry the exit planning should start
* The shelter intake procedure should be focused more on a successful exit than a successful stay – spending the majority of your time talking about rules is discouraged
* In a breakout called “Everyone is Welcome,” shelter providers discussed throwing out the rulebook. They challenged shelters to look at their rules and decide which must be kept and which could safely be discarded. The speakers cited a decrease in staff burnout and an increase in productive activity by the residents
* One speaker stated that “people that opt out of case management may not have needed it.” She was speaking specifically about shelter, although if we consider the words outside of the shelter system we could apply it to any program, without eliminating the need for home visits
* On a side note, and completely beside the point – one of the speakers sounded *exactly* like Ferris Bueller. It inserted a bit of levity to a serious conversation ☺

**On rapid re-housing:**

* Researchers have not found ANY characteristics that predict success or recidivism, including income at point of entry. We should *never* think that housing someone without income is “setting them up for failure.” That thought process was called BS in one session. High barriers do not necessarily equal low retention
* We need to remember the “rapid” part of rapid re-housing. If it’s not fast it’s not rapid re-housing. It should be designed to get people out of shelter or off the street fast to make the shelters more efficient
* “Having standards of time and rent subsidy don’t work” – a quote from the speaker on RRH 101. It needs to be individualized, and provide as little services as possible for the shortest term needed to be more effective. When recidivism in the near future isn’t imminent, the client should be prepared to be exited from the program
* Clients should always pay a portion of their rent if they have income, or any support network– *always*. Clients will not save their money if they don’t pay – they’ll find something else to spend it on (even if it’s a legitimate expense – help them find another way to make those expenses happen). Remind them it’s their job to keep their housing.
* The 3 Core Components of Rapid Re-Housing are:
	+ Housing identification
	+ Rent & Move-in Assistance
	+ Case management & services – focused on barriers to retention and make sure it’s home-based. CM should be voluntary, visits mandatory
* There were several sessions on RRH – because I haven’t heard if I will be awarded I only attended the one, but it was a common theme. There was another session I attended on emerging trends for homeless families, which I thought would have a different focus, but which catalogued the reasons why transitional living is less effective than rapid re-housing. It wasn’t new information, although it was the first time I’d seen the statistics. The theme was repeated throughout the conference in various ways, allowing for TLP’s to be successful in different situations such as AODA and DV in limited amounts. They did make the statement however that in these cases the facilities really act as long-term shelters
* Another suggestion regarding RRH vs. PSH was that if there isn’t PSH available RRH should be tried in the interim