



YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD (YAB)

Balance of State Continuum of Care Youth Advisory Board Minutes from July 25, 2017

Welcome and Introductions were made. Erin Blair gave a brief overview of the Balance of State Continuum of Care and the purpose of the Youth Advisory Board (YAB).

The upcoming Point-In-Time (PIT) street count was explained. There was discussion about where homeless youth stay. Most agreed that when they have had homeless friends, they have stayed with other friends. Other places they were familiar with them staying were the woods around downtown, under local bridges, and the Kwik Trip by Seymour (near the Fed Ex location). Suggestions were made to check the Banbury area, and a cave downtown, especially in January, where they have heard of people staying.

Discussion ensued about youth experiencing homelessness. The majority of the group felt that they may shy away from shelters for various reasons including fear, people they may know, prefer to stay with friends, etc. A few talked about the use of drugs in and around Eau Claire, specifically opioids and how easily teens can become addicted to them. That can tie into reasons of homelessness.

The following questions were discussed about their thoughts of Shelter Standards:

- Should a person be able to enter a shelter at any time?
 - Yes, hours may not work for all.
 - People with jobs should be able to get in any time of day or night. A form could be provided to the employers to complete/sign
- Should a person be required to be sober?
 - Since drinking is legal, the use of alcohol prior to check in should not screen people out. They shouldn't drink in the building, but should be able to elsewhere.
 - If people come in drunk, they might be dangerous and harmful to others.
 - There should be houses for all homeless, such as a trailer park. Then it doesn't matter.

- Shelters should conduct criminal background checks. Murderers and sex offenders shouldn't be allowed in shelters. However, if the criminal activity happened a long time ago, the person might have changed. That should be taken into consideration.
- Resources that shelters should provide are financial, employment and independent living. Youth need help with those things. Shelters seem to be lacking that service piece.
- Should a person be kicked out for not doing chores?
 - Maybe after having 3 warnings.
 - It should be up to the shelter.
 - If they are capable, then yes, they should have to do things.
- Should a person be able to go to school?
 - Yes. All agreed. They should be able to go to any school they choose.
- Should a person be able to work and enter back into shelter at any time?
 - Yes.
- Should shelters conduct criminal background checks?
 - Yes. All agreed.
- Are youth treated differently in shelters? Anyone have experience in an emergency shelter?
 - Yes. People make certain assumptions about youth. They are treated differently by veteran stayers.
 - One youth and her family stayed in Section 8 Housing. The experience was good. However it was hard for the parents to do the required community service hours due to their employment. Also, any youth over 18 have to provide income verification when staying with parents, which can negatively affect the rental amounts.

Marketing of the YAB was discussed. How can we let youth know the group exists? Most agreed that social media, especially facebook, would be the best tool. Other suggestions included schools, offices, their case workers, announcements on school planners, JDC and the Academy, coffee shops, and colleges. Some talked of how their experience working with Fresh Start has helped them. They felt they've learned a lot of responsibility. Drug and alcohol use isn't tolerated.

It was explained that there is a T-Shirt contest with the goal of having a youth design a logo to raise awareness. All felt that having a logo, and having it on t-shirts, etc. would be very helpful.

Discussion was held about the best way to get providers on board. Suggestions included putting up signs at places like the mall and Walmart, having youth go to schools and talk with kids, and look at data.

Lastly, there was discussion about whether there should be shelter for youth aging out of foster care. There were mixed responses. Some felt the youth would need shelter. However, others felt that they may want to be more independent now that they were out on their own.

Following this discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

~Respectfully submitted by Jeanne Semb