



**WORKING GROUP ON RESOURCE COORDINATION TO SUPPORT VICTIMS OF
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, VIOLENCE AND DOMESTIC ABUSE**

MEETING #2 – FEBRUARY 16, 2024 @ 1:00 PM

ROOM 118, BALTIMORE COUNTY HISTORIC COURTHOUSE AND VIA WEBEX.

Welcome and Introduction

- Henry Callegary (Working Group Coordinator) welcomed the members of the Working Group.
- The primary focus of the February 16, 2024 Working Group is to discuss solutions to the ongoing housing issues in Baltimore County.

Presentation:

- **Terry Hickey – Director of Housing and Community Development**
 - Providers need resources to provide services to the community.
 - DHCD support the Commission on Disabilities.
 - After 120 days if you have not used your housing voucher it expires, per HUD.
 - There isn't enough housing inventory for all the vouchers that are issued.
 - Low credit scores and adverse criminal background checks prevent qualification for housing assistance.
 - Need to work with providers to obtain more housing inventory in Baltimore County.
 - Focus on the barriers to achieving better housing opportunities for those in need.
 - Baltimore County is in a housing crisis.
 - The Baltimore County Council passed legislation that includes the housing opportunity fund. This will develop and preserve housing and acquire and renovate new housing. That legislation also creates a process for identifying vacant housing.
 - The Mixed-Use bill is currently in front of the Baltimore County Council at this time, this would allow mixed use development, which encompass areas that contain both housing, commercial, and retail spaces together.
 - Baltimore County is a single-family jurisdiction, and it is difficult to place people

in single-family homes.

- Master Plan 2030 was developed by the Planning Department, which extenuates the need and the avenues to get to housing development, and finding areas in Baltimore County that are appropriate for this sort of development.
- Dr. Tiffany Manuel was hired to find Language of Common Ground, which comes up with language that an average lay person can understand and can address the concerns of the community in regards to housing.
- Agencies and providers need to band together to obtain more housing funding.
- Significant resources for all agencies will be available through federal government grants.
- Link to House Bill 693 Renters' Rights and Stabilization Rights Act of 2024: <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/legislation/details/0693?ys=2024rs>
- The goal is to find resources and protect the ones that are already in place.

- **Group Discussion and Questions:**

- Are there possibilities of increasing accessibility to undocumented, mixed status households and families that are survivors?
 - Most federal funding prohibits and limits undocumented persons from being qualified for public housing.
- Lisa Nitsch, Chief Operating Officer of the Maryland House of Ruth asked if a Language of Common Ground listening sessions with Dr. Manuel can be done with survivors specifically.
 - She should email Director Hickey and he can be forward her email to the appropriate person.
- Amy Blank, Baltimore County Commission for Women, asked if the current definition of “imminent danger” should be inserted into legislation to obtain safe housing for those that are affected, quickly?
 - Director Hickey will look into this and then he will be able to talk through how to transition those in need to immediate emergency housing and into the next step.
- The question was asked how do we address the financial and safety concerns of victims of domestic violence? Are there policy considerations that will allow for the protection of identity, personal information, location, etc.? Are there other levels of protection and a way to identify with a law enforcement agency to be a handle with care property?
 - There are many policies related to domestic violence and the safety of victims. A voucher tenant must be allowed to relocate by breaking their lease, if there are provable safety issues related to domestic violence. Through the Address Confidentiality Program domestic violence, sexual assault and trafficking victims can have their addresses and names shielded (<https://sos.maryland.gov/ACP/Pages/default.aspx>). The Baltimore County Police Department also has information on the shielding process.
- Pat Young, Baltimore County Councilman, stated that he would like to address what can be done at the County Council level to make addressing housing policy easier and accessible to present changes in legislation related to housing stemming

from this workgroup.

- Director Hickey stated that there are exploring the possibility of taking over multi-family units and fixing them up to be used as a safe space for a certain period of time and set up Master Lease.

- **Presentation on Housing with TurnAround Inc. and Family Crisis Center - Jean Henningser, Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives of TurnAround Inc.**

- Director Henningser describe TurnAround's purpose and work. TurnAround works closely with the Family Crisis Center and provides emergency shelter for victims of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. The hoteling model is used, and case management is done, to get victims to a steadier place after a short term stay. The Advocacy and Resource Team does intensive case management wraparound services, helping victims apply for benefits and getting linked to different resources and legal support. The clinical team provides counseling and crisis emotional support. TurnAround provides wraparound support to victims in shelters and when they exit. In the last several years, TurnAround has sheltered approximately 150 to 200 individuals, including the survivors and children. There has been approximately 1,700 to 1,900 total bed nights yearly.
- A question was asked, how many victims have not been able to obtain services from TurnAround in terms of providing shelter?
 - If victims are screened as high risk, then, they will be placed in emergency shelter. If a victim does not screen high risk, they will still be connected to resources, such as the Coordinated Entry System.
- There is a need for increased housing to meet the demands for imminent safety or long-term housing. There needs to be data that will show the demands that are needed to provide this specific need for housing.
- The Governor's Family Violence Council is currently working with focus groups with survivors of domestic violence to find out how they access services, gaps in services, issues with policies, laws, etc. A survivor shared that she didn't want to take away services from someone else who might be more deserving. This indicates that victims may not think that their situation is as bad as some others, but they still could have benefitted from services.
- Lisa Nitsch commented that TurnAround's emergency housing shelter resources are limited. House of Ruth of Maryland is taking a significant number of referrals from Baltimore City based facilities regarding the brief hotel stay option. There is a need for a longer respite time between emergency and permanent sheltering.

- **Presentation from Shelby Frink – Executive Director Baltimore County Family Crisis Center:**

- Family Crisis Center is the only operating emergency state shelter in Baltimore County.
- The shelter is a two-floor building with 12 rooms, made up of single-family units.
- Those in imminent danger are given housing priority.

- The middle class can't get help from the Rapid Re-Housing program because of their income and assets. Conversely, the lower income clients do not have the funds or a job to obtain housing. There has been a partnership built with some landlords.
 - With the step-down program (Rapid Re-Housing Program), once the FCC stops paying half of the rent, renters still have to have the ability to afford housing. Survivors and victims need to have access to jobs to sustain themselves financially.
 - Henry Callegary asked if the FCC has data on how many survivors return to their former abusive situations, and can the reasons why be identified?
 - There is some data, but without a return to the facility there is no way of collecting information on where survivors go. Ms. Frink stated that FCC does have case management services that go into homes after placement, where they connect with the survivors to figure out their needs.
 - Ms. Frink stated that often times in the Rapid Re-Housing Program, the only affordable housing is in Baltimore City, but FCC funds cannot be spent outside of Baltimore County.
 - FCC has 90-day shelter stays and inventory isn't readily available.
 - A question was asked that if a victim of domestic violence is in need of Rapid Re-Housing, is the preference to remain close to your original location or be a safe distance from that location?
 - Generally, the Rapid Re-Housing funds go to moving away from where the person was previously located for safety purposes, but if someone doesn't want to move from the area, their request must be honored, if the location is within Baltimore County. They are working to provide individuals with obtaining for instance, Ring Cameras, so that there is a sense of security.
 - The State Attorney's Office has access to a funding program that allows individuals to be relocated. This program often relocates individuals to other counties and sometimes other states.
 - In Baltimore County homeless shelters there are approximately 550 beds, with 90 day stays, and as of this year approximately 1000 people have been served. Specifically at the Eastern Family Resource Center and the Hannah More Family Shelters (about 25% at the Eastern Family Resource Center and 18% at Hannah More are identified as victims).
 - There needs to be more awareness of rights with regard to housing and the process that goes into housing and domestic violence for the victims. Making other resources, such as the police department being made more aware of the eviction process when dealing with individuals.
- Mr. Callegary proposed that the Working Group would draft and endorse ideas that can be looked at in different areas of Baltimore County government and find potential solutions to housing issues.
 - The question was asked if the Working Group can think in a broader manner to find out what resources are available, such as, funding, laws, policies and programs, social services, educational services and pooled funding that could be utilized in other departments that are relatable to this particular issue.

- Mr. Callegary stated that no meeting topic is sequestered, topics will overlap. Part of the Working Group's goal is to have a forum where providers and partners can work together.
- Mark Millsbaugh stated that there is the issue that people don't want to leave their pets when provided shelter. Would like to get direct input from persons who use these systems, and some who have chosen not to use the system, to engage the community that is being served. Better input leads to better decisions.
- Mr. Callegary asked the group if there are any other common threads that are heard from people who chose not to use that system, and that may be deterrents to utilizing the resources that are available.
- The question was asked that if there are foster/support systems, where if a person has a pet, is there an allotted amount of stay time for respite needs, so that they aren't alone and would feel safe? Ms. Frank stated that she doesn't know of any such system, mostly because of the trust factor for the victim and survivors.
- A comment was made on looking at the intersectionality of needs between senior citizens and those who need assistance and safe shelter and the possibility of co-living in a safe and supporting environment.
- Mark Millsbaugh stated that there is an organization that fosters pets of misplaced persons temporarily
- The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (mnadv.org) is doing a workshop on housing people with pets in crisis in April 2024. The MNAD is partner with the Red Rover Foundation.
- Ms. Frink stated that the Family Crisis Center does accept pets.
- Mr. Callegary commented that for the June meeting a comprehensive breakdown of what organizations are receiving grant funding and what is being provided, where are the gaps in coverage and identifying where there is overlap will be discussed. Being able to identify these things is a core point of the Working Group. Also, to identify the challenges countywide that aren't being addressed as much as they need to be. Addressing where the money and resources are going to at this time and if they can be possibly redirected is a central goal of the Working Group.
- Councilman Young noted the need for a flow-chart for what services are provided, and what is available to survivors.
- The Working Group will begin to dive into the data starting this summer.

Next meeting:

- A proposed April meeting date will be circulated by Henry Callegary to the Working Group members.
- Representatives from the colleges, universities and the public schools in Baltimore County will be present.