



CARES Act Task Force Committee to Assist the Most Vulnerable Meeting
Meeting Minutes – Wednesday, July 15, 2020
4:00 p.m. Virtual Zoom Webinar

Attendance:

Committee Members Present: Chairperson Senator Elizabeth Lockman, Co-Chair Marcus Henry, Carrie Casey, Judge Aida Wasserstein, Reverend Clifford Johnson, Chuck McCausland, Valerie George, Renee Beaman, Marihelen Barrett

Committee Members Absent: State Representative Nnamdi Chukwuocha, Ian McConnel, Ashley Christopher

Others in Attendance: New Castle County Attorney Mary Jacobson, County Director of Community Resources Jane Rattenni, County Community Services Secretary Rachel Burton and ten members of the public

Proceedings:

- Meeting called to order at 4:02 p.m. by Chairperson Senator Lockman
- Roll call.
- July 8th, 2020 minutes approved.
- Chairperson Senator Lockman presented the four subcommittees, reviewed and explained their population groups and stated the subcommittee goals for the past week to be presented. The subcommittee goals included: definition of harm, outreach/partners, potential solutions, definition of success.
- Carrie Casey presented on behalf of the Housing Access Subcommittee. Carrie outlined the Covid-19 related challenges associated with homelessness and the lasting effects of eviction. The presentation included data sources with the expressed need to focus on data collection. Carrie stated that various homeless services organizations also serve the at-risk populations. Carrie expressed the importance of providing safe shelter to these populations to prevent the spread of infection, with the goal of working towards permanent housing. Carrie provided an extensive list of service opportunities which included funding assistance programs, creating shelter and permanent housing through the purchase of properties and/or partnerships with existing organizations, counseling and educational services, case management and legal representation. Carrie concluded that success of these programs could be outlined by comparing statistics from past years to the present; additionally, success could be identified through the prevention of the anticipated influx in reported cases of evictions and foreclosures.
- Valerie George presented on behalf of the Low-Resourced Households Subcommittee. Valerie identified three isolated areas to service, which included food services, technology/internet access and transportation access. Valerie brought attention to how these areas may impact access to basic services and quality of life such as healthcare, employment, education, and childcare along with communication and entertainment for isolated populations. Valerie proposed that numerous organizations already exist within New Castle County to services these needs; New Castle County could act as a funding sources to these organizations to expand and better meet the current needs of these populations and the available programs. Valerie stated the plan

to create an online survey for public communication, which could be shared through further reaching means such as television, phone, signage, etc. Valerie concluded that success of these programs would be self-monitoring based on quantities distributed and individuals served.

- Co-Chair Marcus Henry presented on behalf of the Special Populations Subcommittee. Marcus outlined three areas that overlap with the Low-Resourced Household Subcommittee's projected areas of focus, which were food services, technology/internet access and transportation access, specifically relating to affordability. Marcus brought attention to the youth population that have been removed from their educational settings, especially the special needs youth population, and suggested partnering with providers to help fulfill their needs; in addition to having more youth recreational activities available and accessible. Marcus presented the challenges of serving the immigrant/undocumented population due to economic and political fears that prevents these populations from seeking and accepting government-provided assistance. Marcus proposed partnering with other CARES Act Task Force committees to provide accessible testing in areas with population groups susceptible to higher rates of infection. Marcus concluded that funding resources and allocation will largely determine the initiatives.
- Jane Rattenni presenting on behalf of the Behavioral Health Subcommittee. Jane brought attention to the lack of, the limiting of and/or the change in delivery of services, including providers, resources, transportation and technology, during a time when the need for services has increased due to Covid-19. Jane stated the potential for increased cases of mental health problems and substance abuse, along with the need to gather Covid-19 impact data. Jane presented various organizations to collect data and recommendations from, along with mention of a feedback survey to distribute to these same organizations. Jane outlined the need to focus on access, including the investment in technology and transportation. Jane also outlined the potential to fund existing programs and organizations to meet their current need; additionally providing support to these programs in the areas of reporting and communications. Jane concluded that success is hard to quantify on an individual level, but that success can be shown through provider program reports.
- Chairperson Senator Lockman stated the need for subcommittee meeting reports to be shared on the New Castle County CARES Act website for public review.
- Committee members recommended programs for partnership and the need to include the population group potentially facing homelessness due to physical housing conditions. Program recommendations for housing repairs included: New Castle County – Habitat for Humanity – Good Neighbors.
- Marihelen Barrett made recommendation for the review of program thresholds that prevent the inclusion for many persons in need of services.
- Judge Aida Wasserstein made recommendation for the vulnerable populations need for skills and connecting these populations to volunteer-based organizations to help develop new marketable skills.
- Chairperson Senator Lockman recommended that the Low-Resourced Household Subcommittee look at including labor issues pertaining to reskilling/training and funding for Covid-19 related wage-loss.
- Committee members brought attention to the CARES Act Funding allowing necessary programs to be set in motion and/or expanded and potentially continued beyond Covid-19.
- Chairperson Senator Lockman outlined the goals to be accomplished before Wednesday, July 22nd, 2020. These include contacting identified partners and data resources, report on the findings – soliciting information – refinement of the subcommittee outlines, include any new recommendations. Chairperson

Senator Lockman stated that committee members must use their county provided email addresses and shared file-drive for committee related matters.

- Co-Chair Marcus Henry emphasized the narrow three-week timeframe remaining for the conclusion of recommendations. Marcus thanked committee members for their volunteered time and efforts.
- Chairperson Senator Lockman called for public comment.

Public Comment:

- Rachel Stucker, Executive Director Housing Alliance Delaware, offered to assist the Housing Access Subcommittee regarding data needs and shared that 60-65% of Delaware's homeless population is currently in New Castle County. Rachel recommended three areas of focus: safe access to non-congregant shelter – preventing new cases of homelessness – targeting resources to populations within the lowest income percentiles. Rachel also recommended that New Castle County create a program comparable to SRAP. Rachel made praise for the CARES Act funding allowing for significant assistance opportunities.
- Leah Coles, Goodwill of Delaware and Delaware County, shared that Goodwill provides job training and case management, along with financial management through Stand By Me and provides connections to resources such as transportation and childcare, etc. Leah thanked the committee for the opportunities that they are providing.
- John Whitelaw, Advocacy Director of Community Legal Aid Society, shared that Eviction Court will allow for new filings as of August 1st, 2020, which will provide better data regarding the at-risk population. John mentioned that the Eviction Court in New Castle County sent out 300 notices of trial for the dates of August 10th, 11th and 13th, in error and that these will instead be pretrial conferences. John supported and emphasized the need for rental assistance programs to prevent homelessness and provide landlords with needed funds.
- Shyanne Miller, H.O.M.E.S. Campaign, supported long-term solutions and sustainability for homeless and sheltered populations along with the priority need for rental assistance. Shyanne asked if subcommittees were responsible for recommending funding amounts to be allocated to specific areas of interest. The response was that the committee is still in the problem definition and solution identification process.
- Robert Wasserbach, New Castle County Auditor, requested subcommittee meeting reports be made public.
- TNiQue' Traylor requested that effective communications include ESL populations both in-person and in-print, to also include American Sign Language and other languages beyond Spanish.

Adjournment:

- Chairperson Senator Lockman adjourned the meeting at 5:03 p.m.