



**September 9, 2021
Zoom Meeting
9:30am- 11:00am**

Minutes

Attendees

- Adrienne Cassidy, Advocates (co-chair)
- Joe Finn, Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (co-chair)
- Amy Callahan, Edinburg Center
- Andrew Fagan, Advocates
- Anne Martineau, Department of Mental Health Hampshire County
- Ben Bailey, Brien Center
- Bianca Atkinson, Department of Mental Health Brockton Multi-Service Center
- Brent Rourke, Department of Mental Health Northeast Region
- Chris Zabik, Department of Mental Health Western Mass
- Dan Reis, Baycove
- Danna Mauch, Massachusetts Association for Mental Health
- Deborah Lovell, Vinfen
- Edina Rivera-Carrsaco, Baycove
- Erin Flynn, Community HealthLink
- Gary Comeau, Department of Mental Health Central Region
- Heidi Trainor
- Jennifer Urff, Massachusetts Association for Mental Health
- Jess Larochelle, Massachusetts Association for Mental Health
- Jill Gichuhi, NAMI Massachusetts
- Joan Flynn, Eliot
- Joe Vallely, Department of Mental Health Central Office
- Jonathan Bowen-Leopold, Department of Mental Health Central Office
- Linda McMahon, Mass Housing
- Lucy Davies, Department of Mental Health Corrigan
- Monica Luke, NAMI Massachusetts
- Nancy Coulter, Advocates
- Stephanie Kan, Department of Housing and Community Development
- Tom Timms, Department of Housing and Community Development
- Yuka Gordon, Metro Boston Recovery Learning Community

Welcome and Introductions

Co-Chairs Adrienne Cassidy and Joe Finn called the meeting to order at 9:36 am. Adrienne welcomed everyone to the meet. The meeting agenda for this meeting and meeting minutes from the May 2021 meeting were made available to the group in advance.

Review of minutes from May 6, 2021

Adrienne asked for a motion to accept the Minutes from May 6, 2021. Stephanie Kan suggested spelling out what Department was being discussed in future meeting minutes. For example if DMH is being referred to, stating DMH. Danna made the motion and Andrew seconded. The May minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

House Budget & Advocacy Updates

Danna Mauch started the discussion by thanking Subcommittee members and other housing advocates for their efforts. Jess Larochelle noted that particular legislators were especially helpful advocates.

Jess noted that housing related advocacy wins are listed on the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health's website at <https://www.mamh.org/state-budget>. She shared some of the successes, including:

- an increase for the DMH Rental Subsidy Program
- expansion of Safe Haven housing
- funding for program staffing supports at Pine Street Inn's New Chardon Street shelter
- funding for expanding low-threshold housing for people with substance use and mental health conditions at risk for HIV, employing a Housing First model
- funding for the Home and Healthy for Good program, a supportive housing initiative for homeless young adults who identify as LGBTQ+
- funding for a statewide permanent supportive housing program to serve people experiencing long-term homelessness and who have complex health needs

Roommate Opportunities

Adrienne Cassidy gave an update on this project. A group met in March and April to talk about roommates. Adrienne shared a form that is being used at Advocates that is designed to help match people with compatible roommates. She also shared a form that was created by NAMI Massachusetts that also can be used to help match potential roommates. Adrienne will share the spreadsheet at form with Subcommittee members.

Adrienne said that this conversation can be revisited, if folks from other provider agencies think working together to match people would be a possibility.

Stephanie Kan reminded Subcommittee members that some subsidy programs prohibit roommates. Adrienne noted that these tools are primarily aimed at people paying out-of-pocket for housing, versus people who have a housing subsidy.

2022 Fair Market Rents

Adrienne Cassidy stated that the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development released their 2022 Fair Market Rent values. She noted that these numbers have decreased in some parts of the state, including a \$100 monthly decrease in Boston.

Stephanie Kan noted that landlords must give 60 days notice for non-renewals of leases with the DMH Rental Subsidy Program (RSP). These changes go into effect in October. She reviewed some of the additional program rules for the DMH RSP and Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP).

Several Subcommittee members asked about how flexible DHCD can be with rent. Members also noted that the rental market is challenging right now, and some people have lost their housing due to this and the decreasing FMR values. The extra paperwork that comes with rental subsidies is also a roadblock with some landlords

Stephanie noted that DHCD tried to be flexible, where it can. Provider agencies can also provide more information to housing agency if they think that rent assessments are not accurate. Landlords cannot discriminate against people who using a housing voucher, and DHCD is setting up an internal housing advocacy program to focus on this. Stephanie also described the process that housing agency can use to appeal FMR values to HUD.

There was a discussion about how Subcommittee members can advocate collectively to change FMR values. Stephanie noted that housing agencies typically drive these efforts, and DHCD tries to be responsive to this. Adrienne encouraged members to send additional comments about this to her.

Bringing Housing Needs to Scale & RFI

Joe Finn stated that he participates in this Subcommittee because he believes in permeant supportive housing that is low barrier. He noted that the state legislature is in control of supplemental federal funding, and this funding could be used to increase the availability of permeant supportive housing.

The Governor filed a supplemental budget and has posted a Response for Information regarding permeant supportive housing: <https://www.commbuys.com/bsa/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-22-1076-OCDDE-OCD01-66133&external=true&parentUrl=bid>. This RFI could represent an opportunity to increase housing stock. Joe encouraged Subcommittee members to respond.

Peer Supporters & Housing

Jill Gichuhi reminded Subcommittee members that a series of listening sessions were held last year in each DMH region. A list of recommendations was drafted related to supporting people working in peer support roles, as they support people with finding and keeping housing.

Jill noted that the Peer Supporters and Housing project steering committee was recently reformed. The committee met once during the summer and will meet again next month. The committee will prioritize the recommendations, and begin planning for addition regional meetings. An additional priority for the project and steering committee is developing a web-based resource for peer supporters related to housing.

Statewide Provider Meeting & Educational Opportunities

Adrienne Cassidy noted that the next Statewide Provider meeting is happening next week. It is an opportunity for people working for providers to brainstorm and get feedback from others. Staff vacancies and professional development and education for people in housing roles are agenda items for the meeting.

DMH Housing Plan Updates

Joe Valley noted that 1800 people are benefitting from the DMH RSP. DMH is working on an RFR for Safe Havens in the Northeast, Southeast, and Western Mass. They have also created an internal survey relating to educating DMH staff about the DMH RSP.

Joe stated that encouraging developers to include DMH “set aside” units as part of new builds should be a future conversation. There are currently limited numbers of these units in the planning process.

Other Business/Updates

Stephanie Kan promoted the Housing Navigator website: <https://www.housingnavigatorma.org/>. This is a new tool to help people find affordable housing.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:02 am

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, November 4th, 9:30 - 11 am (tentative)

minutes taken by Jill Gichuhi, NAMI Massachusetts