



HAWNY Monthly Meeting Minutes

Meeting Information

Date: Wednesday, October 15th, 2024

Time: 3:03 PM -3:50 PM

Location: Virtual

Attendance (79): Kexin Ma, Evan Coyle, Dan Gordon, Tracy Schmidt, Daniella Gallego, A. kuczka, Abby Szarowicz, Amy, Angela, April Taplin, Arianna Halter, Ashley.Olsen@uwbec.org, Caitlin Bauer, Carly Grimm, Carolyn Brunelle, Celina Bryan, Char Ford, Christine Slocum, Christopher Brown, Clare Corbett, Cornelius Delaney, Dan Szewac, Dgibson, dhill, Donna Fitts, Drew Friedfertig, Erin, Gwendolyn Solanke, Haley Diagostino, Holly Rutkowski, Jamie Dolan, Jean Bennett, Jeni Arroyo, Jennifer Kaminsky, Jes Starks, Jmartin, John Banas, Jziccarelli, Kaitlyn Dickey, Karen Rybicki, Kelly DeMatteo, Kristin Rivera, Kristin Tanner, Larissa Bachman, Latrenda Perry, Laura Gawel, Lisa Bloomingdale, Lisa Freeman, Lu Firestone, Marthe Limage, Michael Devine, Minnie James, M Seitz, Nadia Pizzarro, Nick Arlain, Nicola Lalonde, NPyzikiewicz, Pam Quigley, Rae Frank, Rebecca Batt, Robyn Krueger, Sara Carlson, Sara Gartland, Sarah Catherine Sargeant, Sasha Rodgers, Ebony, Stephanie Saunders, Stephanie Vroman-goodrich, Sue Lumadue, Thanh Nyugyen, Tracy Gannoe, Virginia Eddy, Will Marcy, Willa Torres, Yulissa Pena.

1.) Welcome and Introduction

Homeless Alliance Executive Director Kexin Ma welcomes participants to the meeting

2.) Updates on SNAP, HEAP, Medicaid, and Other Programs

Presented by Erie County Department of Social Services

HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program)

- No new updates at this time.
- Early Outreach Applications have been released.

- Awaiting approval to begin processing those applications.
- Start date for the program is still unknown.

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)

- No new updates currently.
- New work requirements (employment, schooling, or volunteering) will begin November 2 and are expected to impact approximately 17,000 individuals.
- November SNAP benefits are at risk due to federal processing delays.
- October benefits have already been distributed.
- Awaiting state guidance and will update the community as soon as more information is available.

Medicaid and Childcare

- Childcare support remains uncertain.
- Code Blue shelter program is scheduled to open on November 15.
 - A vendor has been selected for this program.

3.) Focus Group Insights: Building Solutions Together

Presented by Daniella Gallego, CoC Supervisor, HAWNY

Daniella Gallego shared her professional experience as a community engagement coordinator as well as her personal experience with homelessness, highlighting the importance of incorporating the voices of those directly affected into service design and delivery.

Focus Group Participants:

- Clients in Rapid Rehousing (RRH), Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), and emergency shelters

- Format included group discussions, breakout sessions, and shared reflections
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Key Barriers Identified

Transportation

- Multiple bus transfers required
- Limited bus routes to suburban job locations
- Difficult and unreliable commutes

Childcare

- Last-minute cancellations from informal caregivers
- Few providers available for children with developmental disabilities
- Delays in DSS payments and unclear eligibility criteria
- No daycare transportation options
- Lack of trust in available providers

Employment Readiness

- Low confidence and limited access to appropriate attire
- Limited digital literacy and resume-building experience
- Few opportunities for mock interviews or job training

Criminal Background

- Frequent disqualification from job opportunities
- Secondary background checks performed without disclosure
- Lack of awareness of employers who are background-friendly

Community Connections and Skills

- Social isolation
 - Limited communication and interpersonal skills
 - Difficulty navigating or accessing available resources
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Participant-Identified Solutions

Employment and Transportation

- Expand medical-style transportation services to include job interviews and daily commutes
- Organize community carpool systems for access to suburban job sites

Childcare Trust and Transparency

- Host open houses at childcare centers
- Provide live feed access for parents to view their children in care
- Improve clarity around DSS payments and eligibility processes

Job Skills and Confidence Building

- Collaborate with training centers to offer flexible learning opportunities
- Provide employment readiness workshops, including mock interviews and resume help
- Launch professional attire programs
- Offer on-site childcare during interviews
- Provide financial empowerment education

Support for Justice-Involved Individuals

- Create and maintain a directory of employers open to hiring individuals with a criminal background
 - Educate job seekers and providers about the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and the NYS/Federal Bonding Program
 - Advocate for 90-day trial employment periods to allow individuals to demonstrate skills and reliability
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Moving Forward Together

- Implement ideas generated by clients
- Continue including individuals with lived experience in planning and service design
- Encourage service providers to host focus groups and support groups
- Participants can sign up to engage in policy advocacy and further conversation with the Homeless Alliance of WNY by scanning the provided QR code
- Erie County Reentry resources
<https://www3.erie.gov/mentalhealth/reentry-services>
- Niagara County Reentry resources
<https://www.communitymissions.org/parole-re-entry>



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4.) Community Announcements

Sara Carlson – Homeless Alliance of WNY

- The **Annual Luncheon** will be held on **December 5th**, from **11:30 AM to 3:00 PM**.
 - Tickets can be purchased online: <https://wnyhomeless.org/luncheon/>
- Planning is underway for the upcoming **Point-in-Time (PIT) Count**.
 - The team is currently **seeking lead volunteers**.
 - Those interested can sign up using this form:
[Volunteer Sign-Up Form](#)

5.) Adjournment