

DE Food Research Network Meeting

4/14/2021

Link to meeting recording:

https://capture.udel.edu/media/DE+Food+Research+Network/1_2cq2ct5z

Attendees- Tara Tracy, Allison Karpyn, Michelle Axe, Shebra Hall, Madeline Brooks, Mia Papas, Andie Elsby, Ronnette Anderson, Andrea Pierce, Carrie Casey, Anna McDermott, Lindsay Lancaster, Julia O'Hanlon, Laura Lessard, Kate Dupont Phillips, Navin Vij, Ray Fitzgerald, Jon Kirch

Purpose of DEFRN - saw void and interest in state level nutrition research

Introductions

Carrie Casey presenting on New Castle County Hope Center

- Homeless Operation Providing for Everyone
- Pre-covid
 - 665 people experiencing homelessness in NCC pre-covid
 - Shelters often have limited hours
 - Limited day access
 - Code Purple in NCC only applies when temps get below 20 degrees
 - Many remain unsheltered
- State shutdown
 - Much day access limited due to closures
 - NCC/Wilmington-funded sanitation stations provided handwashing and bathrooms
 - Governor created Homeless Outreach Teams
 - Best practice in national context
 - Placed those at risk in motels-led to expansion of motel voucher program
 - May 2020- Strategic partnership between jurisdictions to provide statewide HUD Cares Act funding→ motel program, shelters, cleaning supplies, PPE, food
- NCC received substantial Cares Act funding
- Carrie Casey placed on housing subcommittee for trying decide what to do with funding- with Senator Tizzy Lockman and Renee Beaman (DHSS)
 - Heard about CA buying hotels and recommended that for DE
 - New Castle County wins Sheraton South Auction for \$19.5million
- Hope Center opened December 15, 2020
 - Soft opening- 73 pre-registered street level homeless individuals through Friendship House
 - Creative Vision Factory conducted focus groups to see what people wanted out of a shelter
 - Partners- DHSS State Service Center, Bridge Clinic, Christiana Care
 - Planning for safety, security, and transportation
 - New security system
 - COVID precautions in place, especially during state lockdowns

- Signage, COVID testing, screenings
 - Only 2 guests have had COVID
 - No laundry facilities in hotel- still trying to figure out how to provide this for guests
 - Lots of accessible rooms for older adults, families, and individuals with disabilities
 - Rooms are single-family
 - One person won't share with a stranger, would remain a single room whereas a couple or family would share a room
- Current Demographics
 - Occupied 113 rooms
 - 234 residents, 137 adults, 112 children
 - 2 babies born while mother staying at the Hope Center
 - Pets- 5 dogs, 4 cats
 - Pets stay in rooms with guests
 - 58% African American/Black, 39% White, 2% Asian, 1% more than 1 race
 - Mirrors demographics of homeless population in DE
- 60% receive food benefits (141 guests)
 - Kitchen not open at Hope Center due to COVID
 - Full Circle catering- free meals delivered to guests
 - Healthy meals and snacks
 - Colonial School District to deliver more food for school children
- Guest Referral System for placement in Hope Center
 - Housing Alliance DE
 - No walk-ins as of right now
- Partners
 - Hersha Hotel Hospitality Management
 - A few managers, front-desk staff from Sheraton stayed on to work with the Hope Center
 - Friendship House
 - Health services-
 - DSAMH Bridge Clinic- provides screening/referral for mental health/substance use disorder
 - 80% of residents dealing with substance use disorder or mental health issue
 - 7 days per week
 - Christiana Care Center for Hope and Healing- wrap around health services
 - 2 days per week
 - Dr. Sandra Gibney- urgent care
 - One day per week
 - Nursing students help
 - St. Clare Medical Van- preventative and urgent care
 - Twice per month
 - Wrap around services with multiple providers to help residents with their physical and emotional health

- Faithful Friends Animal Society- veterinary services for pets
 - Transportation
 - Friendship House provides bus passes (30-40 per day)
 - Living Grace Cathedral DBA shuttle leaves every hour on the hour to the bus station from 7am to 7pm
 - Sunstates Security- local and national professional security
 - Security is unarmed and trained in de-escalation
 - 24 hours per day
- Focus is on moving out of Hope Center
 - Family Promise of Northern NCC- families referred here to figure out action place to move out of Hope Center
 - Housing locator hired to help people find housing and contact landlords
- Lessons Learned
 - Flexibility and communication- especially with COVID
 - Dialog with EMS and police is ongoing
 - Safety and security is of utmost importance
 - Low barrier challenges
 - Strain on coordinated entry
 - Revised expectations
 - Formalized guest agreement vs. code of conduct
 - Ballroom sheltering not feasible
 - Walk-ins
 - Health services are critical
 - Community support is so important!
- Not planning on buying any more hotels in the near future
- Focus is on securing long-term funding
- Metrics?
 - Exits to permanent housing and whether they find stable housing
 - Health outcomes and cost savings if provided housing vs staying in hospital
- Opportunities for evaluation of program and outcomes tracking

Wrap-up

- Allison will be in touch about timing and dates for next meeting
 - We will plan on having one more meeting before summer
- Group will take a hiatus over the Summer months and reconvene in the Fall