

**Council to End Homelessness in Durham** • August 17, 2017, 2017 10:00–11:30am  
*Location: Families Moving Forward, 300 N. Queen St, Durham, NC 27701*

**Attendance:** *Chairman Sheldon Mitchell (Urban Ministries); Randy Oberrath (Freedom and Hope Center); Valerie Haywood (Urban Ministries); Melody Marshall (Durham Public Schools); Olive Joyner (Housing For New Hope); Janet Xiao (Community Empowerment Fund); Charita McCollers (Lincoln Community Health Center-HCH); D. Malik Kennedy (Duke University Police Department); Carolyn E. Hinton (Healing With CAARE); Ann Tropiano (Families Moving Forward); Laura Punzell (Durham Housing Authority); Joyce Stancil-Williams (CASA); Jessie Pickett-Williams (Vocational Rehabilitation)*

The meeting of the Council to End Homeless in Durham was called to order by Chairman Sheldon Mitchell with welcomes and introductions. Minutes were reviewed with a motion to approve by Janet Xiao and seconded by Carolyn Hinton and approved by the body.

The first order of business was presented by Janet Xiao with the Unlocking Doors Initiative and Laura Punzell, DHA Eligibility Supervisor regarding training for the referral process for housing choice vouchers including knowing and understanding the referral process and the shift for persons experiencing homelessness as a priority.

Laura presented on the eligibility process including an example of the Housing Choice Voucher Referral Form and shared that eligibility is determined by *income, criminal history and debts owed*. Income is based on household size with limits set by HUD. Criminal Background clarity was provided revealing that any household member currently engaged in drug or violent related criminal activity within **3 years** will be denied. Registered sex offenders are also automatically denied. It was noted that if charges were dismissed, specific policies and considerations would be taken into account on a case by case basis. Information regarding previous debts owed was also shared noting that if a family owes any public housing authority they will have 10 days to prove good standing regarding the debt to include options of entering into a repayment plan.

Laura went on to discuss voucher issuance sharing that, if determined eligible, potential tenants are invited to a Voucher Briefing in which rules and regulations are reviewed (including the RFTA process)

and documents are signed. It was noted that applicants in this part of the process are still considered “applicants” until leased up.

Information regarding Voucher Terms was then shared. Vouchers last 90 days from the day the voucher is issued. Extensions can be granted by HA for reasonable accommodations. Vouchers include the number of bedrooms as well as the payment standard that indicates the maximum payment that the Housing Authority will make. If voucher holder finds a home with more bedrooms and it’s found that they are able to supplement the remaining monthly rent, it is allowed. Total tenant payment (40% of the monthly income), includes both rent and utilities. When a family finds a unit, the owner and family must complete the RFTA-request for tenant approval (accepted Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9-3) along with updated income information. The completed RFTA is submitted for request for approval. The process includes the rent reasonable and affordability test, inspection, signing of the lease and letter stating the tenant’s share of the contract for rent. It was noted that the contract be prepared and must be executed within 60 days of the lease. After the presentation, the floor was opened for questions which included the following: *How long is process after RFTA is submitted?* Between 30-45 days depending on the inspection. *Is there a place to review the updated eligibility criteria?* Administrative plan is on the website-search updated administrative plan. Donita Johnson is working on making the website more user-friendly. *Would you be more specific regarding what is considered in the criminal background search?* Felony or misdemeanor with a pattern. *When does voucher referral open?* Referrals will begin processing in September from both homeless providers and individuals on waitlist. 94% of vouchers are currently utilized with the goal of 98% utilization. *Should we wait until September to submit referrals?* No, you can begin sending referrals now with interviewing beginning in September. *Is this an electronic referral?* Yes.

After questions were answered, Janet took the floor to review the referral process for Unlocking Doors—a partnership between DHA, tenants, landlords and non-profits. Janet reviewed the partnership

and referenced it as a set of mutual commitments and accountability processes as well as a group that fosters system change and communication between all partners. Janet shared that the Leadership Team has worked to fund Risk Mitigation Fund and that multiple conversations have occurred among the partners with Unlocking Doors Initiative.

Janet further shared that as non-profits, we have been allocated 4 referrals/per month. DHA now has a dedicated liaison, Laura, and is able to assist with referrals and will be accepting applications by email. Any questions/concerns can also be submitted to Laura to assist with referral process.

An overview of the partnership was presented highlighting that open communication between agencies and landlords is the goal with a maximum 2 business day response time to landlords if they have a concern. Laura is dedicated to this process as the liaison for DHA as well as Grace, Janet and the Unlocking Doors Core Planning Group. It is also asked that each agency identify a liaison for each organization. The core group is also requesting emails with information regarding agency experiences, what referrals have been made, and reporting when a referral has been rejected. This information will be used to populate a spreadsheet and identify which referrals have been able to lease up.

Janet went on to share expectations of the Non-Profit Partners of the Unlocking Doors Initiative which include the following: 1) Committed to pre-vetting referrals for benefit of all involved and streamline processes. 2) Make Referrals; 3) Provide support for paperwork--committing to extra hands-on support with clients; 4) Provide Inspection support. Partner agencies are asked to utilize the checklist to assist with walk-through and passing inspections. (Landlord Workshops are available from DHA periodically to assist with inspection expectations.) Providers are asked to offer assistance with documentation of the state of the unit prior to move in to include video/photos to assist with claim risk mitigation fund. A place to upload these files is available on the Unlocking Doors website and will be kept on file for one year. 5) Provide Crisis intervention/or case management for tenants. Providers are asked to provide client case management and touch bases with client each month with commitment from both tenant

and agency. The floor was then opened up for questions: *How will clients be prioritized in September?* Depending on the numbers of referrals received but there is a strong chance of clients being called in September. It was noted that a commitment to lease up 30 voucher holders by January was made at the Landlord Roundtable, increasing the priority. Chairman Mitchell shared our appreciation regarding the presentation, process and efforts to support and move this process forward.

The floor was then opened to presenter, Jessie Pickett Williams from Vocational Rehabilitation. Ms. Williams shared that Vocational Rehabilitation is a nationwide program designed to serve persons with disabilities and considered a state agency that is funded federally and state. Our local office is located at 4312 Western Park Place. Components of VR include Employment Services, Independent Living, NC Assistive Technology, Disability Determination Services and Client Assistance programs. Information regarding Eligibility Requirements was provided noting the over-arching requirement as being an individual that has a disability. If a person already receives SSDI benefits, they automatically qualify VR services. Weekly orientations are offered to individuals that meet eligibility requirements. The Rehabilitation Process includes the following: application and intake, eligibility determination, planning, Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) development, services and employment. Core Services include treatment of impairments, counseling and guidance, education & training, job-related services & assistance with rehabilitation technology. Other services may include transportation, books/supplies, modifications as needed, tools/licenses; interpreter services, personal assistance & employment maintenance. A Financial Needs Test is completed to receive cost services. However, services that are not subject to financial need are also offered to include counseling, on-the job supports, specialized assessments and trainings. Services are available beginning at age 16. A packet of information was provided to the body along with contact information for Ms. Pickett-Williams, [Jessie.pickett-williams@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Jessie.pickett-williams@dhhs.nc.gov).

**Announcements:** Joyce Williams (CASA)-CASA just acquired biggest property ever –Maplewood& Underwood (79 units). Veterans, workforce housing—no waiting list. It’s available to people living with disabilities and working families. 2 apartments are reserved for chronically homeless veterans, 13 units preferred housing for Alliance BH. If someone is interested, sign up for e letter at [www.casanc.org/faq-applications](http://www.casanc.org/faq-applications) . No units are available now but renovations of units are currently underway.

Wednesday, August 23, CASA will have Open House-1407 W Chapel Hill St, 3-5.

Thursday Sept. 21—Cabin for CASA annual fundraiser event will be held at Compass Rose Brewery in Raleigh from 6:30-9:00. Advanced Registration and tickets are available at [www.casanc.org](http://www.casanc.org)

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman at 11:31 am.

Next Meeting: September 21, 2017

Respectfully Submitted,

Melody Marshall

CEHD Secretary