**Youth Advisory Board Minutes from 12/07/2018**

Youth Present: Johnathan, Joshua, Aleta, Chavera, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Staff/Adults Present: Erika, Cassie, Adam, Michelle

Participants were provided with food and a gift card for attending.

Those present did an ice breaker.

Cassie presented the purpose of today’s meeting and what the Balance of State is. Michelle talked about her role with the coalition.

**Cassie asked what the youth think of the current services in our community today.**

There was discussion about needing an updated list of services. Joshua stated that the list that he has seen is not accurate, which makes it harder for people to access services in a timely manner. Those present also felt that there is a lack of services for single men ages 18-24 years old. One participant mentioned that there are programs like The Salvation Army that appear to favor women. Participants also felt that it is harder for men to find reliable transportation. Chavera stated that she thought that services were easy to access. She mentioned that she got a flier about Housing Resource Day at the Job Center, and that she attended Housing Resource Day. Chavera said that she was able to access numerous services at that event.

There was discussion about services at shelters. Participants were frustrated with New Community’s “two strike” policy, stating that it is not always fair. There was also conversation about St. John’s not being flexible with rules, and sometimes creating rules that make guests feel like they are being singled out. Cassie talked about the purpose of rules and the need to learn how to live independently while in shelter. Participants noted that New Community shelter allows easier access to case management and shelter services. The conversation then turned to discussing services on weekends. Participants said that there are very few services offered by shelters and other programs on the weekends, mentioning that the Micah Center is not open on weekends. Participants also stated that the library closes early and is closed on Sundays. Participants asked if it would be possible to have the Micah Center open on the weekends to help alleviate any negative behaviors. Participants think that weekend services and food need to be offered to the homeless community.

Participants mentioned the fact that St. Vincent de Paul is a great resource for basic needs items, clothing, etc but that the volunteers that do home visits are extremely religious. Participants mentioned that it is difficult to get in contact with the volunteers as well.

There was conversation about how to get connected with services initially. Participants stated that once you make contact with one person, things start to fall into place but that it’s hard to find that starting point. Joshua specifically stated that there should be one person in the community that all individuals can access that will assist in people with getting connected with different resources. All participants find it frustrating that community resources tend to say they cannot help and send them to someone else. There was discussion about Housing Resource Day, which participants liked the idea of but most had not heard of it. Participants discussed how transportation is often a barrier to accessing services, and that they liked the idea that Housing Resource Day would allow them to access multiple services in one place on one day. The conversation then turned to how to how get the word out about Housing Resource Day. Participants stated that people need to be informed about what it is, where it is, and if there is anything that needs to be brought with them. When asked what a centralized location would be for getting information about services and Housing Resource Day out to the community, participants mentioned: the downtown library, the Micah Center, and the bus station. Michelle asked participants if they think it would be helpful for people if there was someone outside of case management that would assist in accessing services. Participants all agreed that it would be beneficial.

Participants stated that there are not any emergency services for young adults and youth in our community. Participants mentioned needing shelter services, respite services, etc. When asked if they think that youth would be willing and able to follow rules at a shelter, participants said yes. Participants said that “those in need will follow rules.”

**Cassie asked how providers can help youth have more of a voice.**

Participants stated that board meetings should be more of an open forum, and that youth should be allowed to speak at those meetings. Participants stated that people on the boards cannot usually relate to situations at hand, and that youth would be able to provide more perspective to the situations. Joshua does not feel that clients are listened to at agencies, and that taking things to board levels is sometimes necessary. Participants feel that they need to be able to have a voice at the local level first, and then be able to go to the state level.

Participants also stated that they are not always aware of program options when approached about an opportunity to enroll in a program. Participants feel that sometimes they do not know that there are other programs that they could be eligible for in the future, and often feel like the only programs that they are aware of are the ones that they are currently in.

Adam talked about how there are providers at the coalition and board levels who also struggle with having a voice. Adam asked what providers can bring to the table, and the participants said that provider’s personal contact with the community is beneficial. There was also conversation about getting more government officials involved with the Point in Time count.

**Youth were asked what they think is the cause of the homelessness in the youth of our community.**

Participants mentioned that a lot of young adults (even teenagers) are getting kicked out of family homes and have nowhere to go. Participants stated that the younger population is more likely to couch hop than go to shelter. Participants also mentioned that when getting released from jail, not everybody has a place to go, and that the jail does not provide any information on services in our community.

Participants mentioned needing more preventative services, especially for those couch hopping. Participants mentioned, “you can prepare for a hurricane but you can’t stop it from happening.”

Participants stated that education and information needs to start being dispersed at high schools. Participants mentioned holding optional presentations at schools for students, along with making sure that there are brochures at all the schools. There was conversation about offering services during the lunch hours at school, and having posters in the school cafeteria, library, on the school doors, etc.

**Participants were asked how providers can gain access to participants that experience sudden homelessness for the first time.**

Youth responded with utilizing Facebook to access those that experience sudden homelessness. Participants talked about the importance of getting in contact with people quickly to prevent getting caught up in bad crowds due to their situation. There was also conversation about the importance of word of mouth.

**Participants were asked what is needed right now.**

Participants stated that they need more money.

**Participants were thanked for their time, and the meeting was adjourned.**