

CHC - Basic Needs Sub-Committee

Meeting Wednesday, September 9, 2020

9:00 – 10:00 am

Discussion Summary

Introductions:

- Lisa Zuhn – Los Alamos JJAB
- June Gladney – LA Cares
- James Keane – LAPD
- Christal Salazar – Victims Assistant
- Maura Taylor – Self Help
- Charles Keller – Christian Concern Committee (CCC)
- Kim Ferguson – Hope Pregnancy Center
- Susan Williams – First Born Program
- Father Mackey – Representing Macrina's House
- Unable to attend – Christine Martinez, JJAB Resource Specialist

Current needs in community:

- LA Cares saw an increase in distribution with COVID-19, but this month is at normal level of around 80-85 participants. They have not seen a huge increase in utilities or rent requests as anticipated.
- Self Help is starting to see an increase in inquiries with 50 calls the day before, waiting for a possible wave of evictions
- OB/GYN care is needed in Los Alamos County
- Affordable Housing continues to be an issue
- JJAB has been assisting with internet access for families (remote learning) and has seen an increase in basic needs requests
- Hope Pregnancy has not been able to do diaper drives to receive material donations due to COVID-19 and is starting to run low on diapers and wipes.
- Father Mackey provided information regarding Macrina's House. 501(c)3 organization, working to create a women's shelter in Los Alamos that would provide short-term services for 1-2 people in need. The shelter would not be affiliated with any religious organization and is currently in the planning/fundraising stage.
- Maura Taylor expressed a concern with the lack of low-income utility programs in the County. Currently the County provides some payment assistance, but other communities have programs where residents receive a reduced utility rate if they fall below the poverty line. Also, reduced rates are needed for those in medical situations such as the need for oxygen. Another option would be to waive some of the basic service fees.

Role of the Sub-Committee

The group discussed the role being to network/share information with each other, provide information and advocate to the County Health Council regarding community needs, and to work on ways to provide awareness of current programs to Los Alamos County residents. Additionally, the need for agencies to collaborate was discussed and how the sub-committee could assist with that.

Other Discussion

Father Mackey suggested creating a poster of services and who to contact. The poster could be provided to local churches, organizations, and businesses. The poster would assist those who do not have access to websites or internet searches to look for services. Father Mackey also volunteered to be the sub-committee liaison to distribute information to the Ministerial Alliance.

Maura Taylor provided a quick overview of the 211 system in Los Alamos and how residents can call to receive information about organizations that can provide help.

James Keane, Christal Salazar, and Maura Taylor spoke about the importance and challenges with the current emergency assistance voucher program. The program was created several years back with funding from local churches and for financial/legal reasons the funds need to be moved to an organization other than Self Help. One option is to see if the County would make the funding a line item and take over the program. Lisa had spoken to Donna Casados with LAC Social Services and brought the topic up at the County Health Council meeting. The last information received was Donna was discussing it with the County Attorney, Lisa will follow up with her. In the meantime, the suggestion was made for Self-Help to approach United Way or the Community Foundation about options within their organization. If donations continue to be needed (County unable to fund) these organizations might be able to assist while providing the flexibility needed.

There was discussion regarding the CARES Act and the application process from LAC for individual assistance with rent and utilities. Maura Taylor has been speaking with LAC Social Services, she will try to get an update and distribute it to the sub-committee.

Group Logistics

The group agreed to the following:

- Meeting by Zoom works best (even after COVID-19)
- Meet every other month, 3rd or 4th week of the month is best
- With current remote learning, afternoon meetings work best and no Mondays

The request was made to send out a contact list for the County Health Council members and the sub-committee members. Lisa will send this out to the group and schedule the next meeting for the end of October.

Topic for next meeting

How can we help our community know about available resources