

**Nashville-Davidson County Continuum of Care
Equity & Diversity Committee
Draft Meeting Minutes**

June 3rd, 2024 | 2:30 – 4pm

National Health Care for the Homeless Council, 604 Gallatin Ave # 106, Nashville, TN

Introduction

- ❖ **Members Present:** Bobby Watts (NHCHC), Alyssa Fernandez (Oasis Center), April Burns-Norris (Community Bridges Inc.), Kennetha Patterson (Innovative Job Solutions LLC), Alex Smith, Raven Nye (The Contributor)
- ❖ **Guests:** Bradley Boyce, Dennis Tanner, Brittney Morris
- ❖ **Staff Present:** Raquel de la Huerga (OHS), Allison Cantway (OHS)

Reading of Anti Racism Pledge

Read aloud by all attendees.

Racial Disparities Research

Chair Watts provided a summary of the May meeting discussion and shared the overview document of what data is collected in HMIS. The committee brainstormed additional research topics to explore:

- ❖ **Domestic Violence.** Committee members were interested in better understanding potential racial disparities among people experiencing homelessness who are also fleeing domestic violence. OHS clarified that many people experiencing domestic violence are captured in the Domestic Violence Coordinated Entry System and not HMIS. Committee members asked OHS to reach out to the Mary Parrish Center to understand what data is available.
- ❖ **Sexual Orientation.** Committee members discussed national statistics that indicate people who identify as LGBTQ+ are at a greater risk for experiencing homelessness. Committee members expressed a desire to look into potential disparities for gender identity and sexual orientation. OHS will look into potential disparities based on gender identity. Sexual orientation is not currently captured in HMIS since many people might not feel comfortable to answer this question when completing the CE intake assessment. The only exception are youth programs who capture this data just for their own programs.
- ❖ **Foster Youth.** Committee members expressed a desire to better understand how many people experiencing homelessness are coming out of foster care or group homes. A committee member suggested adding a question that specifically focuses on those who might be eligible for vouchers that are specifically for former foster youth (e.g. youth in foster care after the age of 16).
- ❖ **Parents experiencing homelessness with children in foster care.** Committee members discussed wanting to better understand how many people experiencing homelessness are parents who do not currently have custody of their children. Attendees shared that this data might be difficult to track since HMIS focuses on the current household size.
- ❖ **Incarceration.** Committee members emphasized that intersection of race and incarceration and encouraged OHS to consider adding this question in HMIS. Committee members also wondered if other data could be pulled to understand how many people are exiting incarceration into homelessness.
- ❖ **Family Size.** Committee members hypothesized that the gap in how long it takes Black families to get housed might be related to family size or other factors that make it more difficult to find appropriate housing. Committee members asked OHS to reach out to the MNPS HERO program to learn about the data they collect and explore opportunities to utilize HERO program to understand how many families are at risk of homelessness.

Committee members discussed the need to capture more information in HMIS and other data systems to ensure that adequate research can be conducted to ensure Nashville has an accurate representation of disparities in how people enter and exit homelessness. Additionally, the committee discussed needing to work on additional efforts to provide oversight and accountability to prevent discrimination among service providers.

Racial Equity Resources Page

The committee reviewed the draft Racial Equity Resources Page that was prepared by the Office of Homeless Services. Chair Watts noted that OHS primarily changed the first two paragraphs. The committee approved updated content for the Resource Page with an amendment to remove the phrase *“these resources serve as a foundation for understanding racism as something beyond a list of bad words.”*

Scoring Equity Section of Applications

Last year, the Equity & Diversity Committee worked with the Performance Evaluation Committee to test out adding an Equity section to the CoC Funding Applications. This will be the first year that responses to equity questions will count towards the scoring of applications. Equity & Diversity Committee members who are not affiliated with organizations applying for funding will be able to participate in the scoring process. The Office of Homeless Services has updated the entire renewal application and added additional equity questions to understand how organizations engage with people with lived experience, disabilities, and those who identify as LGBTQ+. OHS will send out the equity scoring rubric that was created last year by PEC member D’Yuanna Allen-Robb.

A committee member asked if the question related to staff with lived experience of homelessness could be narrowed to focus on those who have experienced homelessness recently in Nashville. Another committee member encouraged being careful of creating overly restrictive questions. Another committee member suggested that the PEC consider fairness concerns for new organizations who might be struggling to apply for grant funding. One suggestion was to offer training to help new agencies understand the application process.

Racial Equity Trainings

Chair Watts shared that the Continuum of Care has hosted a few Racial Equity trainings in the past few years. One training was focused on front line workers and program managers. Another training was geared towards CEOs and Executive Directors. Last September, the CoC hosted a general racial equity training that had a range of attendees was intended to be a series, but subsequent trainings were not scheduled. Chair Watts asked committee members what kind of training would be most beneficial for the Continuum of Care. Chair Watts shared that the feedback shared in the follow up survey for the September 2023 training had varying responses with no common themes. Committee members suggested that a new survey be generated and sent out to the Continuum of Care listserv to understand potential training needs. Committee members asked OHS to pull the list of HUD approved racial equity trainers for next month’s discussion.

Other Business

- ❖ **New Meeting Location.** Chair Watts shared that the National Health Care for the Homeless Council is moving out of their office space. Chair Watts encouraged committee members to reach out if they had ideas for spaces that could host the July meeting. Committee members agreed to meet on July 8th instead of July 1st to avoid coinciding with a holiday week.
- ❖ **New Chair.** Chair Watts notified committee members that he intends to step down from the Chair role and encouraged committee members to reach out if they are interested in serving as the chair.

Adjourn: 4:00pm