



CoC MEMBER MEETING MEETING MINUTES

February 27, 2025

9:30-11:00am

Facilitator:	Elizabeth Stoddard
Meeting Attendees:	Members: • Elizabeth Stoddard - Fair Housing Center of West Michigan • Brenda Brame - Heart of West Michigan United Way • Alyssas Bryan - Heart of West Michigan United Way • Amy Lloyd - YWCA • Angela Rincones - The Source • Bill Weld-Wallis - Individual Member • Brooklynn Yahsha - YAB • Brian Bruce - Dwelling Place • Bryan Holt - Pine Rest • Carolyn Allen - Covenant House • Casey Gordon - Kent ISD • Catherine Landers - North Kent Connect • Chris Palusky - Mel Trotter Ministries • Dave Gantz - Genesis Non Profit Housing • Eileen McKeever - YWCA • Emily Schichtel - Heart of West Michigan United Way • Elizabeth Penning - The Other Way Ministries • Erin Banchoff - City of Grand Rapids • Felicia Clay - Grand Rapids Housing Commission • Hanna Visser - Family Promise • Heather Nyenhuis - Arbor Circle • Hilary Bowens - Health Net of West Michigan • Jacob Doorn - Disability Advocates • Jinnifer Ortquist - MSU Extension • John Wynbeek - Genesis Non Profit Housing • Kate Berens - City of Grand Rapids • Kelsey McFarland - ICCF • Kimberly Brown - 61st District Court • LoRae Robinson - Covenant House • Linda Otterbridge - Senior Neighbors • Mackenzie Vilmont - Family Promise • Maranda VanZegeren - Community Rebuilders • Marissa Lee - Degage • Miracle Watkins - YAB • Nydra Moore - VA • Paula Alvarez - ICCF • Alisha Pennington - MDHHS Housing & Homeless Services • Regina Bradley - Dwelling Place



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	• Ryann Lee - Individual Member • Stacy Datena - Covenant House • Tenisa Frye - Family Promise • Thelma Ensink - Degage • Veronica Arvizu - ICCF • Veteran Action Board • Wanda Couch - GR Housing Commission • Wende Randall - ENTF • Zenaída Jimenez - Safe Haven • Zienab Fahs - MSHDA • Monique Carter - Arbor Circle • Katherine Besaw - Genesis Non Profit Housing • Sam Westhouse - The Salvation Army • Shannon Trout - Dwelling Place • Lauren VanKeulen - AYA • Angela King - The Source • Molly Perez - Kent County Health Department Community members: • Brad Miller – Fountain Street Church • Brandon Lofton - Volunteers of America • Christopher Frederick - VOAMI • Eleanor Kolansinski • Gwen Kelliher - Muskegon County Emergency Management • Jenna Andrews • Jim Lozer - St. Mark's Episcopal Church • Jordan Brinker - VA Medical Center • Kate Hultquist - In the Image • Maria Williams - Battle Creek VA Medical Center • Monica Light - Flat River Outreach Ministries • Tay Jones - Renaissance Church Neighborhood Wellness Center • Jodi Smith - Well House • Frieda Campos - The Other Way Ministries Staff: Courtney Myers-Keaton, Craig Heerema, Brianne Robach, Evan Hile, Ronan Parmenter
Time Convened:	9:35am Time Adjourned: 11:00am

Approval of Minutes

December 19, 2024



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9:30-11:00am

Motion by:	Felicia Clay	Support from:	Maranda VanZegeren
Discussion			
Amendments			
Conclusion	All in favor, motion carries		
Community Partner Update – VITA Program			
Discussion			
Brenda Brame presented on the VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) program, offered through the Heart of West Michigan United Way.			
100 in 100			
Discussion			
As of February 27: 69 housed, 58 in process, 189 on the by-name list.			
Learnings – Courtney noted the significant collaboration and coordination to make this initiative work, and recognized our partners’ efforts above and beyond their job descriptions. Partners continue to meet weekly to discuss and solve issues in real time. Additional infrastructure is needed to keep the efforts ongoing and scaling up.			
Support – Households in this initiative have been paired with Housing Choice Vouchers through the Grand Rapids Housing Commission, as well as persistent/intensive case management services with a low client ratio. Courtney noted this model has been successful in solving issues in landlord/tenant mediation and finding suitable housing for individuals with more challenging situations especially. Flexible funding has helped incentivize landlords to set aside units, and a landlord liaison will be critical to scaling this up.			
Next Steps – MSHDA vouchers are anticipated to be released in our community, with some prioritized for chronically homeless households. We continue to review and refine the processes that are pain-points in the system, particularly the long length of time from referral to housed. Courtney again noted the success of the case management model in this initiative and shared an upcoming training cohort opportunity for case managers through the CoC.			
PIT Count			
Discussion			
Courtney shared an overview of the annual Point in Time (PIT) Count, noting it is a helpful snapshot to give us a sense of trends year over year, but does not give us the full picture. She recognized the work of our outreach workers who planned for and conducted the PIT Count this year.			
2024 PIT Count Review – Provided in comparison only			
2025 PIT Count Preliminary Analysis – Preliminary data was reviewed, noting increases from 2024. Brian Bruce noted these preliminary numbers follow national trends documented through other community PIT counts. Next steps include reviewing outcomes for areas of improvement.			
Federal Updates			
Discussion			



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What We Know and Don't Know

- HUD TA contracts were terminated effective 2/26/25; this leaves our CoC without access to any federal Technical Assistance.
- HUD announced CoC awards on January 17, with Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increases. Shortly after the new administration started, HUD announcements and award notices for CoC Programs were removed from their website; there has been no news about grant agreements or word from HUD staff. CoC programs and staff across the country are concerned about delays or cuts, and there is a lot unknown.
- No grant agreements or guarantee of reimbursement at this time, and programs across the country are making decisions about how to proceed. We are identifying how to advocate with partners at the national level.

What We Can Do – Courtney encouraged advocacy, recommending community members contact their legislators regularly and keep them updated on the concerns we have around funding.

What the Coalition is Doing – The CoC has been working with legislators and national partners to elevate local concerns, with an upcoming survey to help understand the potential challenges our community may face. The CoC continues DEI practices and policies and encourages agencies to do the same. Courtney noted our community's resilience and reiterated that the CoC is here to provide support.

What Are You and Your Agency Doing? – Breakout groups took 8 minutes to discuss how they are taking care of themselves, and Courtney invited anyone to email CoC staff if there is anything needed to support individuals, agencies, or staff. Some recommendations from the breakout groups included speaking with board members about advocacy, maintaining a balance of transparency with staff and clients, and keeping each other informed.

Community Partner Updates and Announcements

Discussion

- Wende Randall shared that the Kent County Food Policy Council released a new countywide plan, and she noted excitement about aspects that will start to bring about significant changes to how our food system operates. If anyone has questions or would like to get involved, please reach out to Wende.
- Carolyn Allen thanked Courtney and others in the room for their information and expertise. She also noted Covenant House is hosting a Dine to Donate fundraiser event on March 10.
- Tay Jones shared about CHW services at Renaissance Church of God in Christ at 1001 33rd Street SE. Services include free blood pressure testing, free glucose and A1C testing, telehealth, and referrals for housing, food, and transportation.
- Kim Brown shared that the 61st District Court Eviction Program is hosting another job fair and is looking for individual community partners to set up resource tables. The date will likely be in April; anyone interested should contact Kim.



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- Elizabeth Stoddard noted that Source of Income is now protected under Michigan's civil rights laws, taking effect April 2. She also shared about the Fair Housing Center's annual event on April 24.
- Brooklynn Yahsha noted that transportation is an issue for many experiencing instability, and shared about a limited resource for bus passes through The Salvation Army. Courtney noted Wende Randall/ENTF may be a good connection for this, and Paul Alvarez shared a link in the chat to <https://ridewheelstowork.com/>, another transportation resource.

Adjournment	
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