

Cochise Coalition to End Homelessness

Meeting Minutes

March 16, 2022, 2pm

Present:

Helen Sanchez, Community Partners
Jay Matchett, Cochise Housing Connection
Terrance Watkins, Community Partners
Keith Dennis, SEAGO
Jocelyn Muzzin, Southern Arizona VA
Kayla McGhee, Banner University
Carlos Moreno, Community bridges
Cathie Goodman, Warrior Healing Center
Tim Kirk, Warrior Healing Center
Xenia Gonzalez, City of Douglas
Sally Holcomb, Arizona Complete Health
Patricia Scott-Lopez, Arizona Complete Health

Mr. Dennis called the meeting to order.

Mr. Matchett reported on their first event, Sierra Vista Community Connect, on March 1, 2022, at the Ethel Berger Center. There were 20 agencies present and about 90 people present. The agencies, according to their exit survey, said it was valuable and that they hope to participate again. The feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive, and almost everyone, except one person that was looking for DES, said that they got what they needed.

Mr. Matchett thanked all the agencies that participated because it was a leap of faith. They are the new guy, it was a new event, and they came out and did their thing. It was great to see, and it was really a fun event. There was a lot of socializing that went on and communication between the agencies. They gave away 100 box lunches and a little over 100 care kits that were provided by Arizona Complete Health and the Good Neighbor Alliance. Also given out were 79 Better Buck Booklets, which were well received. Between all the agencies, according to the data collected, over 545 points of contact were made, 40 follow up appointments and 8 completed applications for services that ranged anywhere from 14 to 100 points of contact for each agency.

The next event is on April 5, 2022, and they already have 15 agencies signed up. If they are a recurring agency, it is a much shorter process because there is a form on the website that they have available. They had a few new agencies including the hospital and Chiricahua that are going to bring some health services. The County Health Department is going to be there doing several services.

They served 15 homeless people that identified themselves as homeless, overwhelmingly women, 86%, one trans person, and only one man. In terms of the demographics, seniors, people on fixed income, the average age was 57.

There were a lot of questions about social security. More people rented than owned, but about 45% said they were struggling to pay their rent or mortgage. There were several veterans that were grateful for the Warrior Healing Center and the Cochise Serving Veterans organization. Most people that came were from Sierra Vista, over 70%. People came as far away as Whetstone, but generally it was Sierra Vista through and through. They are going to work on transportation to get some of the people that might have a hard time getting to the event.

Mr. Matchett thanked the City of Sierra Vista for taking a chance and noted that Mr. McLachlan was great, as well as Scott Borgstadt from the Police Department. People know people that might want to volunteer to run the event, and it is probably going to grow.

The box lunches were from Jersey Mikes, which ran out very quickly; therefore, they are going to tweak that and work out something different, and because they want to keep it COVID friendly, they gave people the option to take it with them.

The people at the event had a lot of questions about housing and Section 8, and hopefully they can have the Housing Authority present next time. There were questions about ES, and that was also a group that he is going to try to have there as well. This event will be on the first Tuesday of the month going forward through September at the Ethel Berger Center.

Mr. Matchett stated that someone posted in the chat if there was a flyer for the next event and there is. He will send the flyer out to everyone on the list. A Coalition Member noted that there is an updated flyer, but he wanted to talk to Jay about the data sheet with all the compilation of the information. He noted that it is so helpful, and it can be used in so many ways.

Xenia Gonzales also thanked Jay and asked if there are any plans to do something in Douglas for the folks that cannot drive to Sierra Vista. Mr. Matchett stated that it is a great question, and it has come up a few times. They may be willing to do some more events, and this is something that he wants to explore because the transportation issue is so big. Sierra Vista funded the event and that is why it took place in Sierra Vista, but he would love to work with some of the other cities, via satellite, or a traveling event. It is hard to get all the agencies together, but there is value to be had to get to a place like Douglas, and maybe in Benson.

Keith Dennis thanked everybody that participated in the point in time count. Santa Cruz County did well that is no longer a part of the coalition, but they participated for the first time ever. The Department of Housing found 17 questionnaires turned in. They had teams of people in Douglas from Amistades, the Bisbee Coalition for the Homeless, the Good Neighbor Alliance, and Community Partners.

Dennis stated that he was not sure which participants in the PIT count were on this call, but due to COVID he missed the whole thing. Dennis shared that there is an article in the news from last week about a tent city in Phoenix that has well over 1,000 people living in it. The Phoenix area has a count of about a 30 percent plus increase in homelessness. This is outside of the area of concern, but it is something to mention. The United States has always had a problem with homelessness, and that problem is getting worse. Doing the PIT count is important because the numbers demonstrate the kind of need for services that they may be eligible for, which is very important.

Mr. Watkins asked about the January minutes. There was no response.

Dennis stated that he'd attended a meeting at Premier Alliances and met with some folks from the Tombstone and Wilcox food banks. Sally was there along with some of the folks with U of A and Cochise Leadership Academy. There was discussion about people living in their cars that were maybe ashamed to be counted or to let anybody know what they are going through. They talked about the issues around hunger and how much food they distribute out of the food banks that really illustrates what a problem there is with hunger, which goes right along with the whole homeless issue in the region.

Mr. Kirk stated that the Warrior Healing Center does both the food piece with a food pantry and then the homelessness assistance. They have also seen the same type of surge in the first two months of this year. They have seen demand equal then or greater to all the demand for homelessness assistance and food assistance that they saw for all of 2021. The surge is remarkable, and it is present. Lastly, he gave a shout out to Good Neighbor Alliance.

Mr. Kirk added that the timing and maneuver of the increase in demand to resources available is less than ideal. They are seeing it on the ground with the veteran population and currently they are managing 25 homeless veteran cases.

Mr. Watkins made a motion to approve the January minutes and asked that the last page under adjournment be corrected to January 19, 2022. Miss Gonzalez seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried.

Mr. Dennis stated that Mr. Kirk from the Warrior Healing Center was going to be talking with Mr. Matchett and Miss Baca about making some adjustments to some of those proposed policies.

Mr. Kirk stated that he completed the homework assignment that was given to him by going through the presentation with some suggested edits with respect to two things that were talked about last time. Number one, trying to provide some measurability to the goals so that they have a specific objective that comes with something that is measurable. That reinforces the achievement of the goal so that one can know whether the person has made progress toward it or achieved the goal. The second thing is adjusting the language as discussed to reflect more the values of the broader community in Cochise County. However, not a lot of changes were necessary. Targeted changes that are recommended for the purpose of not using terms that are charged or loaded from broader national debates or perspectives that do not reflect the value set of the broader community in Cochise County, which could incur resistance to efforts instead of being more productive to the work done.

Adjustment to the goal being 100% of members complete. This training is for an approach use to objective means and ends. The objective clearly stated the means that are intended to be used to bring about that objective and then the desired end state for that goal so that the end may be defined at the end of the period whether it is achieved by matching the in state to reality. Every member must understand the applicable laws and regulations and the current social issues regarding housing assistance. There are multiple sources as means available, including the example that was provided about the legacy Foundations Grant that supports the organizations. Gaining this training and then the desired end state is a fully informed team, meaning 100% of our members have achieved that and that they are sensitive to all sides of a difficult social issue within the community served.

Mr. Kirk stated that he has not had the opportunity to share this with Anita or Jay; therefore, he is sharing this equally with everyone. However, he is more than happy to discuss any of this

methodology, but once again this is not intended to be a replacement, it is simply just suggestions based upon follow up on what was discussed last time as ideas going forward. These are practical examples from what was discussed last time and how those might be applied.

Mr. Kirk stated that for Goal 2, since there was discussion about increasing points of entry, he added 20% because he did not have information about how many entry points, they currently have, and it is important in terms of defining a goal. If there are 10 entry points, then they may want to increase that by 12% to 15%, or 20%. It is important to define the number of entry points and by how much to increase it so that way there can data to see if they have been successful or not. The addition of the resource center is also important. He also added the Warrior Healing Center as a one stop shop resource center. He further stated that he does not think that there are potentials to use agencies like healing centers as a one stop shop resource center; however, if the Coalition wants this, it may be used as an example to build a separate entity. This can be discussed in more in detail, but in defining goals, he is always thinking about looking at benchmarks.

Goal for exploring alternatives to the VI-SPDAT – Mr. Kirk talked about quantifiable, success alternatives because before remarks focused on the flaws and the SPDAT. Racial identity and so forth are certainly parts of those codes that have been cracked and they are out there. Researching who those people are, what is available and how they have cracked those codes will be much more definable. Incorporated are five alternatives to the SPDAT. Three best practices that will incorporate their art into the piece to expand the toolkit. The key piece is to research, whether it is researched by themselves or seek funding to charter research by someone else who does this for a living, finding the proper tool to ascertain what sources of success alternatives are available and then provide those potential sources for expanding the toolkit. The possibilities, or maybe lack thereof around replacing VI SPDAT was a discussion and Mr. Watkins had some opinions about that. However, his takeaway from it is that they are stuck with VI SPDAT. At the same time, if there is a way to use some other success proven tools in conjunction with VI SPDAT, to get better results, running both of those in parallel, sounds like more paperwork.

Mr. Watkins stated that if they are looking at this goal to explore proven success alternatives to a SPDAT, he has lists on how that works. Right now, all the communities that he serves, have not found nor have they identified an alternative means of assessing individuals who are homeless. Everyone agrees that it needs to be replaced.

Dennis stated this does not mean that it is not out there. Most of the country was using the VI for that one form or another, so it was like the continuum of care assessment tool, part of coordinated entry mandates that have a universal assessment that everyone can be assessed with, so until somebody comes out with any other alternative that meets the DEI requirements. Pima County right now is selected and one of like 10 communities to work with HUD and their technical assistance in developing a new local assessment. They are in the process of going through the process of developing something. Chicago is using their own assessment, but he has not heard of many others. It is happening, people are heading in that direction.

Mr. Kirk stated that the stringent requirements to meet standards are a functional role as well in terms of how it is used in HMIS that is important as well. The primal function is cataloguing exactly who is doing what in the country. This anecdote about what is being done in Chicago or

Pima County is all important to catalog, and maybe doing some cursory research with the other states on what they know and going on in their communities, and basically making an inventory of what improvement initiatives are going on and what state they are in. Are they nascent or are they advanced? Are they in final and basically having a sense and respond piece of research to know exactly what is going on out there so that the wheel is not reinvented in considering alternatives that might work? This would be step 1 that would fit within goal three and its scope. This is simply a definable goal to catalog, as many alternative developments throughout the country as we can, and then monitor and track what state of advancement through and for example.

Goal 4 talked about shaping the membership of the group to a different set of demographics that had almost like a quota approach to establishing a membership that was reflective of the population and that is the type of thing that is something that people will be resistant to within the community from a cultural value standpoint.

Mr. Kirk suggested that this goal be more about instituting a culture and that culture being that the membership of the group reflects the values of the community served, as opposed to reflecting the demographics of the community reserve. IE is getting away from the idea that the only people that can represent a community is the people who look like the community. Rather, the people who can represent and serve a community are those that share the communities' values regardless of skin color, ethnicity, or national origin.

An approach to expand, demonstrate, and reinforce was suggested to include different sectors from the community that serve and work in this dimension and then demonstrate the value added of participation and assisting new members to see the importance of reflecting the values of the communities served. Meaning that while they all serve in various capacities, it is important to understand that each of the members need to properly represent the values of the community, and that includes underserved members of the community, under privileged members of the community, underrepresented members of the community, etc. so that they can better understand their role in that sense and then reinforce all role as representatives of the total community when it comes to those in need. They will need to make sure that the membership reflects those values through a self-reinforcing effort to keep everyone mindful and focused on those in need. Where do they come from? What will make them feel separated from the sources of assistance versus what will make them feel welcome with sources of assistance? How do members of the community, reflect those values to connect those people with the resources that needed? What are those values? They would need to have the statement of values to go through this or to go along with this so that they can then agree on what those are and propagate, or institute doing the work rather than creating a change in culture. Without the values that technical function is heartless, human less and it does not connect with people, where they are, which is ultimately a human based problem. That is the set by human-based issues, addiction, relationship problems, broken lives, and the things that lead to homelessness, the things that lead to broken lives are not technical. They are decidedly emotional, relational, human based issues, and so values ultimately must be proximate to all our technical efforts. Ethnicity and skin color are technical dimensions. They do not necessarily reflect values, but more appropriately values are not dependent upon those factors either, or we can have people that reflect values independent of those technical variables.

Mr. Watkins stated that in Pima County it is easy. They have agencies that specialize in providing services to all populations and there are agencies that focus mainly on providing

services to any genre. There are few that focus on veteran, but not by race or ethnicity. He added that he is absolutely for expanding the COCC membership because he wanted to reflect the community that they are working in, and to reflect every person in that community. He then asked how it can currently be done and who can they reach out to, and if there is any direction where they can go? He added that they really must think about how they may want to include people with lived experience in this process. There may not be anyone on the board, or in LCH.

Dennis noted that he does not know everyone's story, but he would like to know how they involve folks who have lived experience. He shared that he is a lived experience guy as he has been homeless, but that is not to say that they cannot add more additional membership. He/she added that they can speak as a homeless veteran, former homeless veteran, and he gets it because he/she was couch surfing when he/she moved to Bisbee. He/she was right there on the edge.

Dennis stated that he can really tell that Mr. Kirk put a lot of thought into this. He also knows that Jay and Anita had as well and, he think that this is a good thing. He also thinks that they need to hurry up and get these policies and goals set so that they can just check a box with the Department of Housing. Ultimately, they do this, but they are requiring this because it is important. These are being developed at the local level because it is important and a requirement. However, there is nothing stopping the Coalition from getting it right and tailored to the local coalition. Therefore, he/she does not see a problem with this being a discussion and some wordsmithing that continues into the next meeting. Lastly, he/she stated that he/she is not saying that this is not an action item where the coalition must figure it out today.

Goal #5 suggested modifications – Mr. Kirk stated that he will be the first to admit that he has no insight into the broader state and political requirements, ramifications, etc. He added that he is adding the dimension of representing the voice of the community and how they work. The definable goals are important that are reflected in Goal 5. It was simply created for implementing mobile point of entry operations where they can say that the goal is to make this happen, it is the breakdown of the barrier, transportation of services and then being able to hand out whether it is information, solutions, water bottles with resources printed on them, whatever it is to be able to break down transportation issues and distribute important information.

Dennis stated that to build off what was previously stated, this is his interpretation of what HUD mandated. They are asking for local implementation of this stuff for a reason. The Coalition has been writing about different things with some diversity inclusion, equity, and inclusion issues. The drill down to each culture of each separate community is a unique service situation. They each have a drilled down culture. Some folks in the homeless communities or people who are selecting which community, if they have that option, are consciously selecting a community that they want to be in. This has become obvious over the years.

Dennis stated that it might be hard to nail down what is Cochise County's culture, when in fact each community can be wildly different than the next in terms of their individual makeup, needs and values. Those who live here further understand how uniquely different it is and how they must service it differently. There is an understanding of that and how those services are implemented or what resources are needed. There are only two shelters that are available. The communities that do not have a shelter looks completely different and they know how to get services, or there might be churches that are a lot more active than giving services. They are socioeconomically and know of jobs that might be available in one community over another. It is

very different in what homelessness looks like on the I-10 corridor, Benson, and Willcox. They all have different concerns from all aspects, from security to food, to water, to education. There is no correlation between the challenges faced by veterans in Sierra Vista compared to Douglas and Wilcox.

Goal 6 – The big difference seen here is in term of bipacks. It changed to people because ultimately, they are trying to be sensitive with terms like bipacks because it is alienating. This was tried out with a few of our veterans and asked them how they feel about being referred to as a bipack, and it did not go well. Overall, our values in general here are overly sensitive to the introduction of these new terms. It is being suggested to avoid those terms that tend to be divisive, alienating and reduce the accuracy of the sentence. There are certainly some objectives there within underserved, underprivileged and underrepresented communities.

Dennis stated that he likes the measurability part of it and appreciates the thought that went into each, the broadening of the language and believe that it is beneficial. The only thought that came to mind is that it is a social, racial, justice social justice subcommittee that does not really mention race or diversity.

Dennis stated that the first goal does not mention the type of training because this feels a little sanitized in the sense that removed is every mention of race. He/she suggested using the words race and diversity when talking about race and diversity. There are no new terms, they have just been erased.

Dennis stated that he/she understands. It probably is racial, but it is racial considerations that are driving some of this. Invited the three for a policy legislative subcommittee on diversity, equity, and inclusion to be brought back at the next meeting in May with synthesis.

Tim Kirk stated that the critical piece is on how to attack this issue without saying these words. That is the intellectual difficulty that has been rendered. He added that at the national level there are people that use these terms for their own aggrandizement and for their own existence, as political interest groups for their own business, which has tainted these words in the minds of so many people. He added that he is not sure that it is about Cochise County being conservative as much as it is reflecting people who are rural in nature and that do not have the same experiences as a metropolitan society. Experience life as the function of those people who live on the coasts because life is much simpler to them. There is the connotative definition of the word and for those people, the connotation is poisonous. Lastly, he stated that he intentionally kept that diversity equity, inclusion of picture there because he understands that that is the goal, the intention, but at the same time, if we throw bipac at people, regardless of their ethnicity, if they have a connotative definition in their mind, that is a landmine.

Dennis stated that he agrees and appreciates it but does not want to shut down discussion before it begins. He does not want people to hear the words and shut down before the Coalition can talk about the goal because they are reacting to the buzzwords.

Dennis thanked everybody for the broader discussion because the goal is to get to a difficult document like this and have discussion.

Ms. Holcomb stated that the County Health Department is doing a diversity, equity, and inclusion training. There are going to be 40 openings and they are going to repeat it several

times. They bring in national speakers and a lot of great discussion. They are moving forward with the community health assessments and those conversations.

Item 7 HMIS updates – A proposal was drafted for the Arizona Balance of State Governance Advisory Board. It was sent to them, and they approved it at the time. The focus was in getting people moved from permanent supported housing into ETH. The second component to it was to include a process for individuals who are in rapid rehousing and to be able to transfer into permanent supported housing, which is not something that was pursued. It was also a big issue for the CBI. Currently there is a much bigger issue that they have been made aware of and that is that they are currently not receiving a binding list. This is something the HMIS Committee can work on, but the individual who was receiving it from Solari is no longer at Good Neighbor Alliance. Referrals are not being received, which is a super huge problem because 10 are needed for one program and there is a need for more for rapid rehousing.

Dennis stated that the next name list HMIS case coordination meeting is held once a month. There is one coming up in the next couple of weeks and he will talk with Brad as well because they are going to have to reorganize that whole thing because of the turnover.

Mr. Watkins stated that he has an invitation at 2:00 PM for tomorrow for Cochise by name list.

Ms. Scott-Lopez asked if there was an agency that Arizona Complete Health could partner with to do a fundraiser internally to provide summer sun products for the homeless. They need a homeless agency who will be the go-to people that receive the donations and then purchase with the donations water to give out to the homeless. They will also be sending in ChapSticks and sunscreen to be distributed as well.

Dennis stated that they sent emails for Brad with Good Neighbor Alliance regarding Healthy Bisbee, which do stuff with homeless people in Bisbee.

Dennis announced that the next meeting is scheduled to be at 2:00 PM on May 18, 2022 and noted that there is a job announcement for a Community Coordinator that would provide staff support for this continuum of care as well as the others that they are building around the SEAGO region

Adjourn