Hunger Council of Chittenden County Meeting Minutes  
Meeting Date: September 19, 2016

**Present:** Sarah Adams-Kollitz (Burlington Children’s Space), Mary Beth Barritt (Vermont Interfaith Action), Justin Barton (Committee on Temporary Shelter), Sarah Bhimani (City Market Co-op), Eric and Karen Corbman (Ohavi Zedek Synagogue / Vermont Interfaith Action), Heather Danis (Vermont Department of Health), Sarah DeSilvey (Northwestern Medical Center), Michael Fraley (Committee on Temporary Shelter), Lylie Harvey (Prevent Child Abuse Vermont) Emily Heaslip (Community Health Centers of Burlington), Penrose Jackson (UVM Medical Center), Lisa Jensen (Working Bridges, United Way of Northwest Vermont), Michael Latreille (UVM Medical Center), Richard Munkelwitz (Vermont Interfaith Action), Mike Papariello (Vermont National Guard), Jim Sanders (Vermont Veterans Outreach), Andrea Solazzo (Vermont Foodbank), Beth Steckel (UVM Medical Center), Marie Thomas (Our Community Cares Camp), Ken White (College Street Congregational Church), Jason Williams (UVM Medical Center)

**Co-Chairs:** Amy Carmola (United Way of Northwest Vermont), Travis Poulin (Chittenden Community Action / CVOEO)

**Hunger Free Vermont Staff:** Katy Davis and Jenna Banning

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<th><strong>Welcome &amp; Introductions:</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Announcements from Members:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Handout:</strong> UVM Medical Center’s CNHA website: <a href="https://www.uvmhealth.org/medcenter/pages/About-UVM-Medical-Center/The-Community/Needs-Assessment.aspx">https://www.uvmhealth.org/medcenter/pages/About-UVM-Medical-Center/The-Community/Needs-Assessment.aspx</a></td>
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<td>- Marie Thomas (Our Community Cares Camp) - Our Community Cares Camp served over 7,000 summer meals over 4 weeks, including 6,368 meals to children. The program was able to expand to a new site in Jericho this year, and Marie is looking forward to increasing the duration of the Jericho site next year to 7 weeks. The camp hired 36 employees and 25 interns this year, including 3 former campers who worked as counselors. Marie is very proud to have been able to hire these former campers, and to have offered intern coaching for the staff.</td>
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<td>- Jim Sanders (Vermont Veterans Outreach) - This is Jim’s first Hunger Council meeting. Jim provides assistance at the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf and the Burlington Lake Side Clinic. Both Jim and Mike Papariello work out of the Williston Armory.</td>
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<td>- Penrose Jackson (UVM Medical Center) - Penrose shared the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) short form. The CHNA is conducted every three years by the Medical Center, and this year, access to healthy food was identified as one of top 10 priorities. Penrose has been doing a lot of presentations in the community on the CHNA, and shared that many people are surprised to hear about the high incidence of childhood hunger.</td>
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<td>- Sarah DeSilvey (UVM and Northwest Regional Medical Center) - Sarah shared a number of updates on her work in many venues:</td>
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<td>- At the state level, Sarah presented to the Accountable Care Organization in early July on the 2-item food insecurity screen, which was met with great interest. Sarah will be presenting the 2-item screen to the Vermont Association of Pediatrics, and is hopeful that Vermont will become the second state in the country to implement the screen. When framing the</td>
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issue, Sarah shared that it’s been helpful to “blend” the issues of “hunger” and “food insecurity” to address the total scope of food insecurity.

- Sarah is part of an interdisciplinary group that meets quarterly to focus on getting the screens for the social determinants of health implemented nationally. The group will be presenting to the American Medical Association soon, although Sarah is not optimistic that it will be passed. Sarah finds it interesting that uncontrolled diabetes is screened for on Medicare assessments, but poverty and food insecurity are not being considered.

- A research paper on the 3-item housing insecurity screen will be going to the press within the next month.

- **Amy Carmola (United Way of Northwest Vermont)** - Amy saw the Good Food Truck at a concert in Montpelier. Emmet Mosely, the Good Food Truck’s manager, presented to the Council in spring 2016, and Amy was happy to see that the truck was hugely popular at the event. The United Way of Northwest Vermont has been working on a yearlong process of assessing community needs. Currently, the United Way is now prioritizing top focus areas over next 6 - 10 years. Amy shared that the County Fact Sheets produced by Hunger Free Vermont on Chittenden, Franklin, and Grand Isle Counties were very helpful during the process, and encouraged Council members to use these sheets in order to start conversations. (See attached)

- **Mary Beth Barritt and Richard Munkelwitz (Vermont Interfaith Action)** - Vermont Interfaith is a faith-based community organizing group working on social justice issues. VIA includes 44 congregations across the state, with different issues being targeted in different regions. VIA doesn’t seek to be involved at the direct-service level, but instead researches the issues and then targets work to be impactful at the systemic level. Mary Beth shared two examples of VIA’s work regionally, including supporting a community center’s creation in the New North End neighborhood of Burlington and supporting transportation to medical services off of Tilley Drive in South Burlington. Mary Beth and Richard are part of “The Gleaners” group, which is focusing on food insecurity. As part of its research on food insecurity in the region, the group learned about City Market’s Rally for Change program, which allows shoppers to donate money to the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf and other local organizations. (See [http://www.citymarket.coop/community/rally-for-change](http://www.citymarket.coop/community/rally-for-change) for more information on City Market’s Rally for Change program.) After talking with Alison Weinhagen (City Market’s Director of Member Services and Community Engagement), who agreed to help with marketing, the group is building a similar program to be used in restaurants, and looking for partners to help with visibility and logistics.

The group strongly believes that this program should be promoted and implemented across the entire state. There has been some initial interest from restaurants (e.g. Leunig’s in Burlington), and the Vermont Fresh Network is interested, although they don’t have the capacity to run the program.

The group has run some initial tests of the program, and believe that it could generate roughly $5,000 per year per restaurant, with only 1 person working part-time to help promote the program and keep track of the money.
The Council discussed some of the logistical aspects of the idea. Council members interested in learning more and/or partnering with the Vermont Interfaith Action group were invited to stay after the Council meeting.

Planning for the Coming Year
Council members reviewed the results from the summer member survey and discussed the general strategic direction for the year.

All Chairs Meeting Highlights - Travis Poulin and Amy Carmola - Travis and Amy met with the other Council Co-Chairs across the state for an All Chairs meeting on August 31st.

The group discussed how the statewide network of Hunger Councils has great leverage and potential impact, and Amy emphasized the advocacy power of the nearly 900 Hunger Council members.

In planning for this year, the Council Chairs were interested in having a presence in the growing conversation regarding the social determinants of health, which connects with this meeting’s topic on housing.

Amy also noted

Summer Member Survey Review – Jenna Banning – Jenna led the Council through a quick review of the Summer Member Survey Summary (attached), which highlighted certain topics of interest for the group, as well as areas of interest for new Action Groups. Jenna explained that these new Action Groups will be forming gradually (one new per meeting), with time after each Council meeting for interested Council members to gather. The agendas for this year have also been updated to include reports from the Action Groups at each Council meeting so that all members are aware of the Groups’ work and so Groups can get feedback or support.

Council members reviewed the results of the survey and agreed with the findings. Amy Carmola reflected back on the conversation at the All Chairs meeting on the importance of balancing time for networking and sharing information in addition to group education and action. Amy looks forward to having homework from Council meetings and Action Groups over the coming year.

Housing and Hunger
The Council heard from a panel of experts working to provide supports and services for people dealing with housing challenges, and discussed how to ensure that access to food is included.

Amy Carmola – There is growing recognition that the issues of health and food insecurity are related, and part of the complex and horrible problem of poverty. Amy reminded the Council that people and households are stressed with overwhelming issues like housing, deciding how to eat well with limited resources is a low priority.

Amy introduced the panel speakers. Travis shared regrets from Erin Ahearn of Safe Harbor Warming Shelter and the Chittenden Homeless Alliance that she was unable to make the meeting – Travis shared an update from Erin later in the section.

Penrose Jackson (UVM Medical Center) – Penrose shared the 2016 CHNA Summary (attached). The 2016 CHNA found that access to healthy food and affordable housing are two of the top 10 issues facing Chittenden and Grand Isle Counties. Affordable housing also came up on the 2013 CHNA, but the hospital didn’t take it on as a priority for action.
Recently, the Champlain Housing Trust (CHT) approached UVM Medical Center with a proposal to help house individuals who were in the hospital for long periods. Penrose described the hospital’s decision to work with CHT as “enlightened self-interest,” allowing the hospital to do the right thing and save an enormous amount of health care money.

Jason Williams (UVM Medical Center) – Jason Williams is the head of Government Relations, and has been involved in the “Housing is Healthcare” initiative at the hospital, partly because of the State’s role and stance on this issue. Jason shared that he is a relatively recent convert on this issue, having argued in the past that the housing was not an appropriate use of healthcare money. He now sees this work as very important, and the right thing to do.

In going into this work, there was a lot of thought put into how best to partner with local agencies and use existing resources to build and adapt to the needs. There has been no increase in staffing at UVM Medical Center as a result of this work; the hospital is instead working with CHT and the Community Health Centers of Burlington (which includes Harbor Place). As of this meeting, the hospital has helped work with 80 patients and invested $50,000. By the end of September, UVM Medical Center will have formally committed $3 million to CHT for affordable housing targeted at “vulnerable patients” – this will allow CHCB and CHT to help provide up to 6 months of enhanced supports for clients.

Jason shared that there are concerns about patients being referred to Harbor Place but showing up without food or clothing. UVM Medical Center is not able to pay for meals to be provided at Harbor Place due to licensing challenges, but there is working being done so that Harbor Place can have a food shelf, with opportunity for growth to get meals. Penrose and Jason encouraged Council members to watch the “Housing is Healthcare” video (attached). The hospital is now working on a “Food is Healthcare” series of videos and other components. Both stressed that UVM Medical Center is looking to work with partners in their community work.

Lisa Jensen (Working Bridges, United Way of Northwest Vermont) – Lisa is a Resource Coordinator for Working Bridges. The Working Bridges program is almost 10 years old, and began when a group of employers went through a training focused on economic diversity in the workplace and what supports and strategies would be needed in order to support their entry-level employees. As a result, there are now Working Bridges Coordinators within a number of businesses to offer resources and counseling for the issues preventing employees from being effective.

Lisa shared that she had anticipated childcare or transportation to be the biggest challenges facing employees, but instead, housing and financial difficulties are consistently the top two issues. Lisa recognized COTS as an important local resource with which she can connect employees struggling with affordable housing. In terms of financial instability, Lisa helps employees look at all of their expenses and see if there are opportunities for income supports, such as 3SquaresVT, WIC, or heating assistance.

Lisa shared a phrase heard commonly by Resource Coordinators that “Groceries come last,” and described a recent challenge faced by an employee who couldn’t access the local food shelf because the hours conflicted with their work schedule. Some employers are starting to focus on food access and nutrition offering meals for the employees, discounts on CSA shares, or access to the business’ garden for produce.
Michael Fraley (Committee on Temporary Shelter) – Michael is the Housing Resource Center Coordinator for COTS. COTS offers several shelters for singles and families, some transitional housing sites, a day site, and case management.

Michael stressed that housing alone is not the key to ending homelessness, which is why COTS helps with financial literacy and budgeting resources. He shared that many clients are unaware of the resources available, largely because it can be so hard and time-intensive to meet even basic needs, but once clients are in housing, they are able to get out of “survival mode” and able to cook meals and live with dignity.

In terms of food, the day station offers lunches and the way station gets donated food. The Salvation Army is usually able to offer dinner, but if they don’t, there are no other options for many homeless clients.

COTS was able to secure funds to get a full time employee to help with housing searches. COTS has great relationships with Champlain Housing Trust, multiple landlords, and other organizations, and is able to place clients into secure housing frequently. The Housing Resource Center will soon be open to the general public.

Once in housing, there are a lot of requirements for follow-ups, but not much funding available for this work. Michael is trying to address this, and a strong supporter of the value and impact of case managers in helping people learn how to function in housing, get out of “crisis mode,” and budget long-term.

Lisa Jensen strongly agreed that case managers are very valuable resources. Sarah DeSilvey asked if case managers in clinical settings are focusing on housing when working with clients, and suggested a regional workshop or in-service. Michael Fraley shared that the State is beginning to recognize the importance of case management, and helping to support case management for chronically homeless families. In Chittenden, this is handled by the Howard Center, and other systems are in place in 6 other counties, with the goal of having statewide case management focused on housing soon. Michael feels that the Howard Center does a very good job of managing emotional and other issues beyond housing, and the new case manager there is a great resource.

Emily Heaslip (Community Health Centers of Burlington) – CHCB is trying to look at long-term care with their policy that anyone who is homeless can be a patient at CHCB for up to a year after finding housing.

Marie Thomas shared information on the Project Vision initiative in Rutland, which recognized that approximately 50 families were at the center of a majority of challenges in the community. In response, Project Vision is structuring care around these families, which is turning out to be very effective.

Travis Poulin (Chittenden Community Action) – Travis is the director of Chittenden Community Action. He shared his frustration that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has changed their priorities and no longer supporting funds to pay for personnel like they used to, which connects with the discussion on the importance of case management support. Travis described the Home Heating Fuel and Utility Assistance program run by the State through the CAP agencies. There are three primary programs for relief for fuel costs: seasonal fuel assistance, crisis fuel assistance, and the warmth program.

People can apply for seasonal fuel assistance at any point during the year, and can receive assistance starting in November. This program is primarily funded by federal LIHEAP money, but...
the State of Vermont has also been contributing funding in response to ‘horrific’ cuts to the LIHEAP program over the past few years. Applications are very simple, and recipients receive a letter in mid-November stating how much money was sent to their primary home heating fuel vendor, which they can then draw down over season. However, Travis reminded the Council that this money is sent to only one home heating fuel vendor, and thus doesn’t cover the costs of other utilities. If an applicant only burns wood for heat, the benefit is sent directly to them.

Travis reminded the Council of the increasing difficulty of finding quality fuel wood in Vermont.

Crisis fuel assistance is available if someone has applied for and successfully received seasonal fuel assistance. In that case, they can receive crisis fuel assistance once over the winter. If someone was denied seasonal fuel assistance, and if they are income-eligible, they can receive crisis fuel assistance twice. This program is administered by CAP agencies on behalf of the State.

The warmth program is entirely privately funded through the orange envelopes sent with electric bills or Vermont Gas bills, as well as through most public and privately metered utility companies. Donations stay within the local region. The warmth program starts on October 17th, which is important for two reasons: The earlier start date covers the gap in time until seasonal fuel assistance can start (usually not until mid-November), and it extends into May, which is longer than the seasonal or crisis fuel programs.

Travis described a few other discounts and programs, which are largely operated by Green Mountain Power and Vermont Gas. He strongly encouraged Council members and anyone in their networks to contact Community Action with any questions. Travis has been working with Community Action for over 25 years, and is seeing an increasing need year-round as well as increasing pressures. He shared that people are already worried about heating their homes this winter.

Travis corrected the popular but false belief that people cannot be evicted or have their fuel shut off at any point in the winter. There are some limits based on temperatures and household composition. There is also an option to get a doctor’s note with the specific wording that having the fuel shut off poses “an immediate and serious health hazard” – this is available 3 times per year, and prevents utilities from cutting service for up to 30 days. However, this does not affect the amount of money owed to the utility, and only applies to metered services.

Travis also shared an update from Erin Ahearn from Safe Harbor: The warming shelter will be running this winter at 179 South Winooski Avenue in Burlington. The 35-bed shelter will be run primarily through Community Health Centers of Burlington with lots of local support, and volunteers will be organized by ANEW Place (http://anewplacevt.org/warmingshelter/).

Currently, the plan is for the shelter to go through some minor renovations in October and open on November 1st, staying open through March, and possibly through April.

Amy thanked the presenters, and asked for their recommendations on one thing that can be done to make a difference.

Lisa Jensen and Michael Fraley – Case management.

Lisa Jensen – Lisa encouraged the Council to keep building relationships with other providers to help them make the connections and start preventative programs.

Travis Poulin and Michael Fraley – No one thinks that shelters are the answer to homelessness, yet COTS is always full, with demand for more shelter space.

Jason Williams – Making a difference would require systems change, and looking to address the real causes of the issues instead of just the symptoms.
The Council discussed the importance of livable wages in preventing and addressing issues. Amy Carmola proposed that this could be an advocacy item for the Hunger Council of Chittenden County, and potentially for all 10 of the Hunger Councils across the state to take on.

**Action Groups Updates**

As the Council develops its Action Groups over the coming year, each will have time to report out and gather feedback during Council meetings.

Beth Steckel – The Messaging Action Group was formally recognized by the Council a few meetings ago, and has been working for the past few years on a monthly basis on a number of different issues, including creating the Messaging documents that were shared with the Council in the past year. (See attached)

There is an opportunity coming up from UVM Medical Center for funding that could be used to support the conversation on food access and security. The hospital is working on the Implementation Plan to address the concerns highlighted in the Community Health Needs Assessment – this plan will include non-hospital partners. As part of this, UVM Medical Center’s Community Health Investment Committee (of which Penrose and Beth are a part) is offering $800,000 in total to support community needs, with up to $100,000 for work on the top 5 priority areas in the CHNA.

The LOI is due on October 24th, and the Messaging Action Group will be working to pull together a group based on the Collective Impact model to apply. Beth hopes to have draft of the LOI available for review at the next Messaging Action Group meeting on October 20th.

*Council members interested in working on the Community Health Investment Committee grant and/or on the Vermont Interfaith Action’s Restaurant Rally Up initiative were invited to stay after the meeting.*

**Wrapping Up**

Amy and Travis thanked Council members for coming. The next meeting will be on November 14th.

**Meeting Adjourned**

*Next Meeting: November 14th, 2016*