



Michigan's Campaign to End  
**HOMELESSNESS**

## Community Building and Communications Statewide Workgroup Convening Breakout Session May 7, 2009

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### *Items Relevant to Other Workgroups*

- All workgroups:
  - All items in this workgroup summary reflect discussion of the content and formulation of the Campaign to End Homeless External Communications Plan, which is relevant to all workgroups.
  - See “Report back of communications survey research” for results of CTEH-wide survey on communications.
  - See “Paul Beiring visit” for information shared with all workgroups on regional cooperation and ideas for structuring reporting by workgroup members to their regions. Especially, see “Improving report-outs” for a request to the Training Workgroup.
  - See “Conclusions” section for important conclusions discussed.
  - See “Questions for Full Group” for questions posed in the afternoon full group session of this convening.

### *Attendance*

#### **Members Present**

*Erin Skene-Pratt, Chair*

*Jeff Bickert*

*Jennae Brower*

*Lisa Crumley, Pace*

*Jerrie Lynn Gibbs*

*Connie Hackney*

*Deb Horak, Pace*

*Christina Jackson, Pace*

*Mary Lou Keenon*

*Judy Kell*

*Kimberlee Reinking*

*Kathy Swantek*

*Nicole Waters*

*Jason Weller*

#### **Staff Present**

*Jeff Padden, PPA*

*Joe Quick, PPA*

*Mike Nolan, Pace*

*Dennis Pace, Pace*

### *Discussion Items*

#### **Goals of this Communications Planning Breakout Session**

- Furthering the CTEH external communications plan, and providing Pace and Partners with material to write this plan.
- Generating ideas and content for the external communication plan, which will be presented in draft form by Pace and Partners at the regular monthly CBC workgroup meeting on May 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Discuss communications efforts within the Campaign and be prepared to discuss this at the full-group sessions in the afternoon.

- Formulate three key discussion questions to pose to other workgroups.

### **Intro to External Communications Planning Session Goals**

- Lisa Crumley (who led the communications planning discussion) introduced the goals and challenges of today's discussion.
  - The main challenge would be to simplify everything.
  - A big part of the discussion would be about finding some focus.

### **Report Back of Communications Survey Research**

- Survey was fielded to all five workgroups.
- Goals of the survey:
  - Wanted to understand communications goals/what the Campaign wants to accomplish
  - What are the priorities of the audience(s)?
  - Potential messages and content
  - Start collecting stories
- 60 people responded. 18 were from HA&M group. Otherwise pretty well balanced.
- Goals of the communications plan (ranked order from survey). Note: money and politics/policy change seem to be big priorities.
  - Increase financial resources
  - Raise public/political support
  - Educate general public
  - Inform key audiences about supportive housing
  - Change attitudes
  - Attract volunteers
- Audiences that should be targeted (ranked order from survey). Note: the real emphasis, again, was on funders and political leaders.
  - Funders
  - Local elected officials
  - Statewide elected officials
  - Federal elected officials
  - Service providers
  - Donors
  - General public
  - Business community
  - Other opinion leaders
- Important/effective content and messages (ranked order from survey). Again, number one deals with the economic costs of homelessness, which took precedent over the human costs of homelessness.
  - Economic cost of homelessness
  - Human cost of homelessness
  - Recent successes... ending homelessness
  - Characteristics of the homeless
  - Causes of homelessness
  - Addressing NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard)
- What do you want these audiences to think, feel or do (from survey)?
  - It should be understood that homelessness is an economic problem in the state, etc.
  - The public, and those within the Campaign, should have empathy for homelessness.

- The communications plan should promote the message that the CTEH can succeed.
- In order for CTEH to have an effective communications plan, the team needs to focus on what the workgroups really need people to do. These “do” action items are what Pace needs from the team for the plan. The plan needs to be very clear about what steps require action, and about how people can be involved.
- Preconceptions, attitudes and assumptions (ranked order from survey).
  - Homeless by choice myth
  - Cannot succeed in ending homelessness
  - NIMBY
  - Somebody else’s problem/responsibility (being passed back and forth at local, state, and federal levels)
- Other big goals:
  - Gain symbolic endorsement from political leaders.
  - Concentrate on resources needed to end homelessness, not just manage it.

### **Where to Begin in Formulating the Plan**

- Lisa started with secondary research with communications stuff, public attitude polling experience, etc.
- The more the workgroup understands about the audience, the better the team can do as communicators.
- Start with where there has been success and build on that. Feedback here was sparse.
- Persistence with staying in contact with the media

### **Discussion and Generation of Ideas for Plan**

- Topics of discussion
  - Educate and inform:
    - ◆ Legislative/Policy Audiences
    - ◆ Funders
    - ◆ General Audiences
  - Communication within Advocacy/COC community
  - Embracing technology/social media
  - Key: “How do we get people to care?”
- Legislative/Policy Audience
  - Questions to address
    - ◆ What does the Campaign want them to do?
    - ◆ What partnership opportunities exist?
    - ◆ Are there successes that can be built upon?
    - ◆ What is the simple economic story (that you can tell a term-limited politician)?
- Sally Harrison’s input and outlook/discussion of that is important right now:
  - She reported that the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act has passed, providing a combination of shelter plus care and other programs under one roof. Emergency shelter grants turn into emergency solution grants. This creates an opportunity for the Campaign to modify the uses for funding from the federal government.
  - Used mental health deinstitutionalization story as a cautionary tale to illustrate importance of going from just sheltering people to creating a system that is needed to not

just temporary housing, but to prevention and more permanent maintenance of housing options.

- Need to have clear messages and coordinated efforts directed at different audiences. Need to know who is in charge of dollars at each level and how to direct the message to each of them. While funds may be distributed at a higher level, through the government, it is often the COCs that determine how the money is actually distributed.
- A whole new class of people is emerging as part of this community, especially with job loss.
- Michigan is still dealing with the people who have been homeless for years and now have an opportunity to target a different group dealing with homelessness.
- Most important messages:
  - ◆ People should not be allowed to be forgotten.
  - ◆ Need to form alliances with other departments and programs and initiatives. Similar messages from different perspectives.
- Lisa mentioned that, from her research, public attitudes about homelessness really change during recession. Recognition of circumstance goes way up during recession. This presents new opportunities for support.
- Mental health discussion:
  - Sally talked about how MSHDA does not feel like just a bank, as it once did. Instead, it is interested in a wider range of issues, including mental health.
  - Judy Kell discussed current state of mental health in government. Explained that funding and support goes only to those that are considered “high priority,” and there is rarely money in the general fund.
  - Executive orders yesterday may decimate resources homelessness funding.
- Who, specifically, to engage:
  - Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow as voices at the federal level.
  - Bart Stupak from the UP
  - Pat Babcock (works with PPA and in Pere Marquette Building)
  - Developers: Getting developers to set aside units for vouchers/living programs.
  - Federal and local leaders: Mental health system leaders, Michael Head and Mark Reinstein.
  - Often hard to know who to target, with CMH directors and other directors changing so often.
  - Hospital personnel, sheriffs, etc.: Workgroups need to learn to collaborate and link with these people.
- Framing of messages/questions/requests is important.
  - *Example:* Mental health system and housing. The mental health community does not necessarily understand necessity for housing, but there is a way to word things to make a situation fit a medical necessity. “I can make anybody homeless and anybody service-available”(Judy Kell), it just depends on how you frame the situation.
- Success in Grand Rapids:
  - Janay Brower discussed studies around “affordable housing,” and how people react to these words. They have found that when you speak to the housing component, regardless of the other challenges surrounding public opinion surrounding homelessness, the wording/framing resonates with people.

- Janay also discussed how those in the homelessness community might shift funds allocated to emergency, temporary shelters, to providing those people with permanent, stable and affordable housing. Grand Rapids has flipped the system to focus on housing instead of shelters.
- Local fundraisers in Grand Rapids have put together \$2 million with the goal to demonstrate that affordable housing policies can actually work.
- New opportunities to protect those losing homes in the subprime mortgage crisis, those renting from landlords who experience foreclosure, etc.
- This success has come from donor funding and support, expanding what was already being done, being strategic about their system/communication map, changing centralized intake, etc.
- How to communicate with the public:
  - How do the workgroups share what is being done and what is being learned with everyone else (the public)?
  - How does the Campaign communicate that money for missions might more appropriately be used for putting people in more permanent housing?
- In Lansing, there is a lot of money available to address the problem, but it is not being used to solve and prevent the problem, just maintain it.
- Land banks should also be used.
  - Judy Kell's local land bank has taken the approach that when they take tax properties, they would let those people buy properties on land contract.
  - Land banks draw on the "warm and fuzzy feelings" that realtors and bankers get when inspired to get involved with revitalize neighborhoods.
  - Not every community has a land bank.
- The Campaign is connected to lawmakers.
  - Legislators have been in contact with people at MSHDA.
  - Communication with them needs to be clear and simple.
- Characteristics of the communication plan
  - The communications plan will need to be nuanced.
  - It should be targeted at different levels: federal, state, local. Messages to each of these groups might differ, or delivered in different ways.
  - Some communications will be targeted not at the general public, but will be focused messages to specific audiences.
  - Need to look at who the Campaign is connected to, pass the message along to those who can bring the message forward, and prioritize the issues.
- How to make the case:
  - The economic case for the Campaign's goals needs to be made.
  - Either the Governor latches on and moves it forward, or the business community picks it up (even though businesses were ranked low on the workgroup's survey research).
  - Point to economic benefits of ending homelessness (Judy Kell mentioned a fact sheet that describes what costs can be saved).
- Identifying and establishing what the Campaign really wants people to do.
  - Identify goals first, then decide who the best audience is for targeting help in achieving those goals.
  - Define who to communicate with and who is being asked to complete tasks and reach goals.

- The goals might be the same regardless of who is being reached, but the message might change to reflect what is important to each target audience.
- Engaging the business community:
  - The business community has not historically been included, because there are not strong relationships with the homelessness community,
  - The business community is a great resource for donation dollars/funding and volunteer resources.
  - Possible contacts: Jim Epolito and Pat Gillespie, who have, together, been supporting the Volunteers of America and collaborating with other business leaders.
  - The messaging used in Grand Rapids was “You don’t want to have a business in a community that allows this [homelessness] to happen.”
- Framing and focusing the message
  - Might the message be “Homelessness is your issue”? This is not just an issue for the homeless themselves. But then, if homelessness is the issue, what does the Campaign want its audience to do about it?
  - Focus on one big issue. What is the single biggest issue for the Campaign to present to the Michigan Legislature?
    - ◆ Housing First:
      - What does this say to a legislator? Does it encompass everything?
      - Must be very specific and include the important bullet points under the main focus.
      - ALCOA Foundation (Judy Kell) has already used this issue/messaging.
  - Next message is addressed after the first message is engrained. This message should deal with the economic costs of homelessness.
- The need for a story:
  - While personal stories are nice to highlight, they cannot be the entire message.
  - Concentrate on the system, not personal instances.
- Public perceptions:
  - Donna Beagle, when speaking at a recent conference, had people list what they thought about the homeless and describe who they are. These perceptions were much different when asked about the same people by referring to them as “people without housing.”
- Permanency and sustainability. Eliminating homelessness is systematically possible, however, there are several who are not visible as homeless, and/or would refuse services for certain reasons.
  - ◆ What else might they have to give up in order to receive aid?
  - ◆ Might show resistance to do what government asks of them in return for services.

## Conclusions

- The only way to obtain essential resources is to realign them through public and political support. It is not just adding more resources and funding, but about realignment and reallocation.
- Public and political support are not the same thing. If the public is mobilized and asking for support in a loud voice, policy-makers will pay attention.
  - If you raise public support, political support will follow, but they are very different. Opinion leaders have influence on elected officials.

- Support should be elicited from key community leaders and champions, perhaps, rather than striving for general community awareness. People who can move the cause, gain additional support, and influence and gain political support.
- The Campaign currently has the wherewithal to move an already interested and committed base of people to take specific actions. Those people need to be identified and mobilized.
- There is great opportunity to engage the business community for both donation dollars and volunteer work.
- People have different sets of assumptions about homelessness when approached about it. Housing first is more of an action; if they embrace that, the belief in CTEH will follow. Success in the business community comes from starting with the action and getting the belief to follow.
- Perhaps the word “homelessness” carries negative connotation and the framing of the campaign should shift to a housing first approach to help “people without housing.”

### **Paul Beiring Visit**

- Paul Beiring spoke to the group about how the statewide workgroups interact with the regions and how they relate to the regions priorities.
- Paul’s new role as statewide coordinator and his major goals:
  - So far, Paul has been able to listen in on regional meetings and be involved with each region. His goal is to find out what is and is not working in each region, develop solutions, and communicate best practices to regions that need improvement.
  - Two major aspects of Paul’s agenda:
    - ◆ Turn the focus to the client.
    - ◆ Get regions to recognize their power and use them as a mechanism for advocating change.
- Each region is in a different phase of growth and they could help each other to succeed.
- Examples of what has been done already/what is currently being done:
  - In Region 5, cost analysis was discussed.
  - In Region 6, discharge policy has been discussed .
  - Regions 1 and 4 have been looking at regional policy and coordinating care for clients in the best way they can.
- Workgroups as advocacy groups:
  - There has traditionally been a disconnect between the local and state level policy.
  - Workgroups are a direct voice from the field to the state and thus provide a direct link from those at the regional level to those that actually make policy decisions.
  - Direction of regions from Paul’s point of view is that they should work together to advocate the issues most important to the Campaign.
- How can communication improve at the regional level?
  - There is a disconnect about what the workgroups are actually doing and what is reported at the regional level.
    - ◆ Janay reported that the statewide workgroups were something of an abstract idea at the regional level; those at the regional level were not real sure what was being done at the state level with the Campaign. Nothing really resonated. A meaningful report-out is essential.
  - Improving report-outs:

- ◆ Kathy suggested that the Campaign needs to establish what this means, what it entails, and make sure report-outs are a standing agenda item at Regional Council meetings. Region 5 does this.
- ◆ Report-outs from the workgroups at regional meetings should be a bulleted summary and briefing of pertinent actions of the groups, not an overly-detailed accounting for and update on the entire action plan, for example.
- ◆ It was suggested that a “how-to” training on report-outs to the regional councils might be a good opportunity (perhaps for the “how-to” materials tasks outlined in the Action Plan). This could be organized by the Statewide Workgroup on Training.
- Other challenges at the regional level:
  - Attendance is not consistent at the regional meetings; people frequently send alternates. There is some history lost between meetings with this turnover.
  - Regional councils do not have a good understanding of what is being done at the State level or what they are being asked to do by the State.
- Solutions to challenges:
  - Post bullet points on the regional Web sites to update regional council members, especially for those who miss meetings.
  - Make sure there is a secretary at every meeting taking minutes and that minutes are available to members (this should already be happening).
  - Paul will make sure agendas, minutes, and action plans from the statewide workgroups are posted in the regional council Web sites.
  - Workgroup and regional council representatives must be reminded to refer to and read these materials.
  - Need to have clear “do” messages that are explicit in what the tasks and expectations are at the regional level.
    - ◆ These need to be incorporated into the report-outs from workgroup members at regional meetings.
    - ◆ Consistency and follow-thru are important to these “do” messages.
    - ◆ Draw more attention to these “do” messages and tasks at the top of the workgroup meeting minutes.
  - Follow up with regional reps after/during each workgroup meeting to be sure they are reporting out to their regional councils the important bullet points and tasks.

### **Questions for Full Group**

- Does the Housing First framing make sense as an approach to engage communities and the public?
  - Field this question to all workgroups.
  - Test this concept as an overall framework/approach for the Campaign.
- How can PIMIT help this workgroup know how its communication plans are working?

### ***Tasks Completed***

- Ongoing external communications planning, including generation of ideas and writing of plan in collaboration with Pace and Partners.
- Completed a survey of statewide workgroup members with regard to external communications plan.

### ***Tasks Assigned***

- Lisa Crumley, Pace and Partners will present a draft of the external communications plan at the regular monthly CBC meeting on May 14.
- For others, see assignments in the minutes for meetings of April 9, 2009 and May 14, 2009.

### ***Next Meetings/Upcoming Events***

- Thursday, May 14, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
- Thursday, June 11, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

### ***Meeting Assessment***

Meeting assessment forms were received by ten members. The findings are summarized below.

<b>Question 1: Using the scale provided, please rate your agreement with each of the following statements about today's workgroup meeting.</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>
SubQ1a: The tasks for the meeting were clear.	4.40
SubQ1b: We used our meeting time effectively.	4.50
SubQ1c: I had sufficient opportunity to contribute my ideas.	4.50
SubQ1d: Face-to-face interaction is important to cohesiveness and effectiveness.	4.60
SubQ1e: We made significant progress in furthering the tasks outlined in our Action Plan.	4.40
SubQ1f: I think the ideas shared for communication among the workgroups, MSHDA and the regions will be effective.	4.20

<b>Question 2: Using the scale provided, please rate your agreement with each of the following statements about the workgroup in general.</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>
SubQ2a: The leadership of the group is effective.	4.60
SubQ2b: The group facilitation is of high quality.	4.70
SubQ2c: The voices heard in this group represent my perspectives well.	4.10
SubQ2d: The goals and action steps of the workgroup are clear to me.	4.30
SubQ2e: The activities of the group are likely to yield positive outcomes for the Campaign.	4.20

<b>Question 3: Have you communicated with others outside the workgroup, such as your Regional Council, about the activities of the workgroup? Please explain.</b>	<b>Number Responding</b>
No	2
Yes	4

<b>Question 4: How many meetings of the workgroup have you missed, if any?</b>
Six members who responded to this question (8) have missed one or more meetings.

<b>Question 5: Is the group meeting your expectations? Why or why not?</b>	<b>Number Responding</b>
No	0
Yes	5

Three respondents noted that the in-person meetings were preferred over the conference calls.

<b>Question 6: What might be done to improve the way the group functions?</b>
Did not support all "Obama" references... Some of us are not on his team. I understand when it comes from the participants, but I'm uncomfortable when it begins with the facilitation.
Meet face to face more often.
Consider holding some workgroup meetings at different location, i.e. Detroit/Flint.
Take inventory of people who no longer wish to be a part & invite others with interest to join.
More people involved on a regular basis. Get the right people on the workgroup.