

**Human Services Coordinating Council (HSCC) Minutes
Community FIRST Conversations – CRCOG/United Way
Thursday, August 31, 2023
9:00 a.m. EST**

Council Members and Attendees

Keren Paquette	West Hartford, CT Social Services
Maureen McIntyre	NCAAA - North Central Area Agency on Aging
Dawn Cooper-Grodger	Bloomfield, CT Social and Youth Service
Matthew Morgan	Journey Home CT
Lesley Beland	Amplify, Regional Mobility Manager
Vannessa Dorantes	DCF Commissioner
Ken Mysogland	DCF, Chief Administrator of External Affairs
Michael Williams	DCF - Deputy Director
Joey Listro	NB Roots, ED
Elsa Pleasant	Helping Hand Pantry (Hartford)
Erica Texeira	Wethersfield, CT, Assistant Director – Social, Youth, & Senior Services
Sarah Gibson	State of CT, Program Director,
Maritza Velez	DCF - Region 4
Maria Hernandez-Young	DCF, Program Manager

CRCOG Staff

Matt Hart	Executive Director
Robyn Nichols	Principal Program Manager, Municipal and Admin. Services
Maureen Goulet	Principal Program Manager – Regional Planning & Development
Kyle Shiel	Principal Planner – Regional Planning & Development
Caitlyn Palmer	Director of Regional Planning & Development

Guests

Rebekah Castagno	United Way, Director of Health Initiatives, Central & Northeastern CT
Leah Fuhs	United Way, Manager, Workforce Solutions, Central & Northeastern CT
Jennifer Gifford	United Way, Senior Vice-President, Central & Northeastern CT

1. The in-person meeting was called to order by Robyn Nichols, CRCOG Principal Program Manager, at 9:14 a.m. ET.
2. Round table Welcome and Introductions were done.
3. Rebekah Castagno, United Way, provided a background of United Way, an organization with a rich, diverse, and long-standing history of service – celebrating 100 yrs. United Way, Central and Northeastern CT, serves 52 CT towns, including many CRCOG communities. Purpose of Community FIRST Conversations is a candid discussion with

community leaders of thoughts, concerns, barriers, and potential solutions to health, human, and social service issues impacting our communities and how United Way can assist through its Strategic Plan over next 5 yrs.

4. Group discussion included:

- a. A Six-Word Story – using 6 words to create a story that begins with “In five years, central and northeastern CT will be...”
- b. Community challenges that most affect your community, neighbors, family
 - i. Housing – affordability/lack of/safety concerns/evictions and tenant vulnerability/limited shelter bed space, including those with pets
 - ii. Food – lack of/access to healthy – nutritious food/lack of educational resources and services/lack of food pantry space
 - iii. Transportation – esp. to medical and mental health appts. for low income and elderly; access to transportation sources
 - iv. Health – suicide, fentanyl/opioid/vaping/cannabis and mental health
 - v. Homelessness – no help for those struggling or prevention; lack of rental assistance and increasing mental health issues
- c. Changes needed to support community going forward
 - i. Basic needs – staffing and programming to deliver services
 - ii. Access to affordable/accessible early childhood education programs/services
 - iii. Early intervention and support systems to avoid escalation of mental health, legal intervention, etc. – proactive vs. reactive
 - iv. Redefine ALICE to assist working poor
 - iv. Increase funding, programs, services for mental health (incl. hoarding cases)
 - v. Policy change at legislative/municipal level – drive change to eliminate poverty and create healthy, safer communities through guaranteed income
 - vi. Change of outdated zoning laws and structural racism
 - vii. Include voice and input of those who are impacted by the systems and services
 - viii. Increase in home ownership, esp. in Hartford through affordable housing & Hartford Land Bank
- c. Strengths of your community
 - i. Pride in community/neighborhoods
 - ii. Diversity and blended communities
 - iii. Collaboration with other agencies (e.g., not duplicate programs/services) and work together through coalition to promote access and small NFP
 - iv. Arts/Culture (e.g., murals)
 - v. Train the Trainer programs, incl. QPR
 - vi. Education, including pre-K thru 12 and higher education, community colleges
 - vii. Boys and Girls Clubs
 - viii. Parks and recreational services, including open spaces/trails

- d. How can United Way play a role in these changes over the next 5 years?
- i. Workforce development - connect training/development with staffing gaps
 - a. Connect training/development with staffing gaps
 - b. Increase incentives (economic and career advancement, benefits, insurance, competitive wages) to work in service jobs (e.g., elder home care, childcare, public safety, healthcare)
 - c. Increase staff retention (e.g., internships, career paths)
 - d. Better work/life balance – less staff and more services required equal more work for same pay
 - iii. Increase access/affordability/funding to onsite programs/services for most in need
 - iv. COVID pandemic changed the world forever – life will never be same as was and need to adjust
 - v. Change stigma of asking for help
 - vi. Assistance for veterans and homelessness prevention
 - vii. Housing advocacy
 - viii. Reduce compartmentalization of programs/services – less siloed work – create wrap-around services
 - ix. Navigate people out of generational poverty - act proactively not reactively
 - x. Encourage municipal leaders to participate/listen to those who are impacted by programs/services

5. Next Steps

- i. Complete CRCOG's Community Survey – Regional Plan of Conversation and Development – What is the future of your region?
- ii. Regroup to discuss United Way's Strategic Planning
- iii. Next HSCC Meeting – September 19, 2023 @ 10:00 a.m. ET (Virtual) – Food Systems/Food Insecurity

6. The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m. ET.

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To będzie zebranie zdalne. O informacji o odpowiednim linku internetowym poprosimy kontaktować Karen Stewartson na adres e-mail kstewartson@crcog.org lub pod numerem telefonu 860-724-4293