

**Overview of Strategic Planning Process**

IHN @ Alpha House

Board of Director’s Meeting

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**Highlights from Board & Staff Retreat,** June 24, 2017

**I.** **National Trends & Leading Practices:**

* Snapshot of homelessness (national, Michigan, families)
* National Leading Practices:
  + 5 Keys
  + Housing First (Rapid Re-Housing & Permanent Supportive Housing)
  + Rapid Re-Housing (find housing fast, help pay for housing, and connect to jobs & services)
  + Performance Benchmarks:
    - Emergency Shelter Agency Self-Assessments
* Funding Uncertainty:
  + Proposed Federal Budget Cuts
  + Impact by State

***Board/Staff Conclusions:***

* How has Alpha House incorporated national trends? Housing First and RRH approach; demographic/outcome reporting; 92% housing retention after 1 year; incorporating “low barrier access”; building landlord relationships

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**II. Regional Partnerships:**

* Washtenaw County Snapshot of Homelessness
* Washtenaw Housing Alliance
* Housing Access for Washtenaw County (HAWC)
* Housing Coordinators Network

***Board/Staff Conclusions:***

* How can Alpha House strengthen partnerships? Engage volunteers more effectively; increased education, outreach, & awareness in the community; one-stop shop for clients; transportation partnerships; engage landlords; share positions & services with other agencies; increase business partnerships (fund development & employment)

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1. **Alpha House – Our Current Reality (Data, Opinion Surveys, Focus Groups):**

* **Vision, Mission, Values** (Drafted by Board in 2017)
* **Alpha House Organization Chart**
* **Budgets & Revenue Detail (by funding source)**
* **Data/Demographics on Families Served (**Emergency Shelter & RRH)
* **Emergency Shelter Metrics**
* **Surveys, Focus Groups:**

**Community Key Stakeholder Survey (April 2016, 62 respondents):**

* In your opinion, what are the most important services that IHN currently provides to its clients (#1 = most important):
  + Emergency Shelter = 1
  + Rapid Re-housing = 2
  + Housing Location & Placement Assistance = 3

**Emergency Shelter Client Feedback** (Exit Interviews for 2008 through June 2016):

* ***“Good”, “Very Good”, or “Excellent” for every category*** including: facility, family services specialist, help/assistance/quality of care, shelter aides, nurse case management, all other staff, help/assistance (employment, savings, household budget, benefits assistance, finding housing, transportation, healthcare, legal issues, childcare, school**),** Client Accomplishments (increased or maintained income, employment, childcare/kids school, money management/budgeting, found permanent housing, use of our services, increase in support systems)
* ***Overall Experience with Volunteers: 4.3 (Very Good to Excellent)***
* ***Overall Stay at Alpha House: 3.9 (Good to Very Good)***

**Rapid Re-Housing Focus Group (April 2017, 8 families who completed RRH):**

* **Positives:** Getting housed; staff resourcefulness and compassion; advocacy with landlords; willingness to give back.
* **Concerns:** Confusion about the permanence of rental assistance and link between RRH and HCV; cost of rent; pressure to rent something unaffordable.

**Board & Staff Conclusions: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT)**

1. ***Strengths:*** Organization (longevity, passion); Board (involved); Staff (commitment, embrace change, diversity, compassionate, teamwork); Volunteers & Partners (successful relationships); Programs (85% stably housed after 1 year in RRH; shelter space; #1 in state for service delivery); Operations (effective operations/procedures)
2. ***Weaknesses:*** Organization (perception; “best kept secret”; change is messy); Board (meeting structure; lack of donor info.); Volunteers & Partners (broaden reach, lack of affordable housing); Programs (lack of metrics, current location in Ann Arbor is limiting to clients/transportation, lack of job training, number of families we can shelter); Funding (uncertain future funding, potential federal budget cuts)
3. ***Opportunities:*** Collaboration with Community Partners (increased awareness and opportunities); Programs (decline in unsheltered, advocacy); Funding (Increase revenue from sources outside government?)
4. ***Threats:*** Programs (Ability of families to sustain housing, RRH not enough support, lack of affordable housing, increase in homelessness due to funding cuts, opposition to shelters); Operations (long-term decision on building); Funding (potential federal budget cuts; funding uncertain)

**Board & Staff Subcommittee Meeting** (July 24, 2017):

1. **Current Programs & Services Overview with Definitions & Supporting   
   Sociological / Social Work**
2. **Funding by Program & Current Annual Budget / Expenditures Year to Date**
3. **Performance Metrics:**
   1. **Emergency Shelter**
   2. **Rapid Re-Housing** (Performance Benchmarks & Program Standards)
   3. **Draft of Rapid Rehousing Participant Survey** (to be used in 2018)

**Performance Metrics, Rapid Re-Housing** (Comments from Sub-Committee):

* The metrics in the right hand column are suggestions that the staff is working to finalize.
* Many of these are process metrics rather than outcome metrics.
* Which metrics can we actually influence versus those that are reflections of Alpha House making a referral to another agency and we can not influence the outcome?
  + Do they have a job?
  + Do they have a checking account?
  + Employment: Yes or No?
  + Budgeting work is important, but delete “Personal Financial Counseling” since this is provided through a referral to the Financial Empowerment Coordinators at United Way and not within Alpha House’s scope of control.
    - Could do this:
      * Budget counseling provided: Yes or No
      * Referral provided for employment: Yes or No
      * Referral provided for personal financial counseling: Yes or No
      * However, if “referral” is the standard practice, then don’t track it.
      * Not a core part of Alpha House’s services/business; staff not trained to do employment or financial counseling.
      * Could add to exit interview.
* Make sure metrics provide valuable information and are worth the amount of time and energy required to collect.

**Performance Metrics, Emergency Shelter** (Comments from Sub-Committee):

* The metrics in the right hand column are suggestions that the staff is working to finalize.
* What type of information on employment would be helpful to collect?
  + Job obtained? Yes or No? (currently collected)
  + Place of employment (not currently collected)
* Concerns about collecting employment information:
  + Client gets a job here to get housing, but moves to Ypsilanti and has to change employment and can’t easily transfer to a different employment location.
  + Transportation issues without a car.
* How can we partner with more local employers as a resource pool (by housing location; major employers: home health, temp. agencies, WalMart, etc.)?
  + Add a question to the exit survey: Where are they employed?
* Board members: Thank employers and develop relationships with them so Board can act as a conduit between employers and clients.

**Rapid Re-Housing Focus Group (June 2016, 8 families who completed RRH):**

* **Positives:** Getting housed quickly; advocacy with landlords; rental assistance; budgeting support & building independence; staff very helpful; good resources (kitchen equipment, child care, furniture, food stamps, etc.)
* **Concerns:** Confusion about housing vouchers, Section 8; confusion about amount of support providing in locating housing; more good landlords more time to receive rental assistance; fear of employment instability; program follow up.

**Emergency Shelter Self-Assessment** (Completed by Staff, July 2017)

* + - 1. The Role of Emergency Shelter
      2. Adoption of Housing First Approach
      3. Diversion
      4. Immediate & Low-Barrier Access to Shelter
      5. Housing- focused and Rapid Exit Services
      6. Using Our Data to Measure Outcomes and Improve Performance

***Staff results:***

Overall, the vast majority of staff agree that IHN/Alpha House has aligned its policies and procedures with the Housing First approach. However, a few staff “don’t know.” Questions without a majority consensus: “Our mission statement reflects a Housing First philosophical approach to provide shelter, services, and housing.” “We provide training for board, staff, donors, and community members on the effective use of a Housing First approach as a solution to homelessness and training on why a low-barrier model is a more effective way to serve people who are experiencing homelessness.” “Shelter participants are not required to participate in services or do chores to stay in shelter.” “We do not permanently ban people for anything other than violence or theft.”   
  
Section Three: Diversion (This section reflects some confusion on the part of staff of the fact that IHN/Alpha House does not provide diversion directly as this is the responsibility of HAWC.)  
  
Section Six: Using our Data to Measure Outcomes & Improve Performance (This section indicates that some staff members don’t know or disagree with whether data is collected and how data is being used.)

**IV. Programs & Services:**

**What programs and services should we be offering or should we enhance to meet the needs of our families now and into the future?** (Comments from Sub-Committee):|

* + ***2 Years:***
    - Create a volunteer database and an Advisory Board position with members from each congregation (40 members/ambassadors) to offer an “adopt a family” program and provide workshops on healthy food, cooking, home repair, conflict resolution, etc. How can we partner with agencies to provide these services?
    - Summer camps (scholarships from camps or donations)
    - Affordable housing
    - Need for temporary shelter
    - On-site services (DHHS, CCN, Legal Services, MI Works, Mental Health, Dental)
    - Strengthen ties with schools: after school programs, summer programs, tutoring
    - Explore job training resources and strategic partnerships with employers, local businesses, hospitals, Washtenaw Community College, & universities to develop job skills/opportunities (Career counseling, employment services, education for career advancement & G.E.D., resume help)
* ***5 Years:***
  + Collaborative location for partnering agencies (ex. United Way, Mental Health, Childcare Network)
  + Relationships with employers
* ***10 Years:***
  + Accessory Dwelling Units (shelter BnBs)
  + Funds to pay for educational opportunities and training
  + Location change
  + Very structured program with paths for education, employment, etc.

**Highlights of Consultant Review of Programs, People, Processes, Philanthropy/Funding, & Politics, Discussed by BOD, October 24, 2017 (Ellen Schulmeister):**

1. **Programs/Services: Are we offering the right programs and services for our families now and in the future?**

* Homeless families need immediate short-term shelter, rapid re-housing, and help to stabilize.
* We work within a system, not as a stand-alone organization.
* Ending homelessness for a family means housing them. Ending homelessness means addressing poverty.

1. **People: Are we able to deliver the high quality programs/services that our families need now and into the future?**

* IHN has a strong professional staff under the direction of the program director.
* Shelter operations staff members are dedicated to the success of the organization.
* Both groups need support and resources to accomplish their work (Shelter Director, additional Case Manager, improved policies & procedures, and training).

1. **Processes: Are we efficient and effective in how we deliver programs/services to our families?**

* Efficiency=Time in Shelter to housing: Goal 30 days or less
* Effectiveness=Recidivism after leaving shelter or RRH: Goal = never (rare, brief and non-reoccurring)
* Achievement depends largely on outside influences: Availability of affordable housing; employment opportunities; addressing poverty in our society

1. **Philanthropy/Funding: Are we delivering our programs in the most cost effective way possible?**

* Homelessness best practices:
  + Diversion, zero shelter stay or short shelter stay preferred
  + Housing First, first obtain re-housing, then address issues
  + Rapid re-housing, move to housing as soon as possible, short term support
  + Permanent Supported Housing, for those with severe life issues.
* Cost of physical shelter will not go down; must be generated every year through development.
* Is congregate shelter a viable option going forward? No longer best practice or a place to centralize behavioral services. Options:
  + Option 1: Remain and keep building until it is no longer affordable
  + Option 2: Find or build a new shelter space closer to the East side
  + Option 3: Stop providing shelter, move into offices and provide RRH services to families.
  + Option 4: Move sheltering to apartments rented by IHN, in the SOS model
  + Option 5: Merge with SOS, combine RRH And Shelter in apartments and streamline both using best practice models.
* We will need to find money to fund shelter and services, how do you want to spend that money? Efficiently, based on outcomes and best practice, or to continue the tradition of the agency. Spend on housing and support staff or building and nighttime care takers?

1. **Politics:** Mission is to “End Homelessness for Families in Washtenaw County”

* To accomplish this goal, we must address poverty in our society. Congregations, non-profit boards, and others concerned about social justice can help by being politically active, be part of the solution, which can have a powerful impact locally and at state and federal levels.
* Show up at public hearings, email, phone calls, write, be an interfaith group.