



KEEPING BOSTON HOUSED



FRONT DOOR COLLABORATIVE

Threshold

The Front Door Collaborative Newsletter

MARCH, 2009

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Communicate, collaborate, innovate — ending homelessness by preventing it.

Front Door Collaborative UPDATES

City of Boston's Leading the Way Home III: On March 3, Mayor Menino kicked off the third part of his administration's plan to address the housing needs of Boston's residents. As they have for almost a decade, city departments like the Department of Neighborhood Development (DND), the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), the Boston Housing Authority (BHA), and the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) will partner with Boston-based homeless and housing service providers to focus on four key areas of need in Boston's housing market: addressing the foreclosure crisis, reversing the rise in homelessness, preserving and stabilizing Boston's rental housing, and housing Boston's workforce. Front Door will help to inform and implement Leading the Way III's homelessness prevention strategies. Read the Leading the Way Home III plan on the City's website at www.cityofboston.gov.

MA ICHH's Boston Regional Network: Using Leading the Way Home III as one of its tools for developing strategies and approaches for streamlining homeless and housing service provision, the MA ICHH Boston Regional Network has begun convening meetings of its Leadership Council and City of Boston ICHH. Last month, the Leadership Council (which includes Front Door's executive director Leah Camhi, who represents prevention providers and programs) established six Working Groups that will identify services, providers, and consumer barriers; identify gaps and duplication in services; establish goals for streamlining services; and contemplate system changes that will facilitate streamlining. The Working Groups and Leadership Council, which are made up of representatives from government agencies, homeless and housing service providers, non-profit organizations, for-profit businesses, faith-based organizations, and local residents, will also be responsible for determining how to allocate \$20,668,036 in McKinney-Vento funding to the providers and programs that are a part of the Boston Continuum of Care. They will also decide how to disburse the \$8.2 million in homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing funding the City of Boston will receive as a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Just as the spring rain falls from the sky, many Boston households will unfortunately continue to fall into homelessness. Front Door is confident that our network of prevention and stabilization agencies will continue to provide the programs and services that will help Boston residents weather the storm.

SISTER MARGARET AND PROJECT HOPE

Project Hope is a cornerstone in the Uphams Corner community where it's based, and for good reason: last year, the social service agency served more than 1,000 Roxbury and Dorchester residents with programs that can help them move up and out of poverty, and the organization's careful attention to keeping clients actively involved in their own economic and housing stability is undoubtedly a major part of why Project Hope is one of the most trusted names in human service work in Boston.

"For the past 25 years, the programs and services we offer at Project Hope were created based on the stated needs of the families we serve," says Sister Margaret. "We've always engaged families served in evaluating current programs or launching new ones." She believes social service agencies can be more impactful if they work with clients to "understand the causes and forces behind the situation and to act with us as advocates for change at the level of cause," so that providers and clients can "move our focus from who needs to be changed to what needs to be changed in our society." She acknowledges that significant steps are being taken to make those crucial changes: "Today, even in the midst of the serious economic crises, there is a commitment at the state and city levels to address in a coordinated and targeted way the solutions to individual and family homelessness. I find hope in the people and the new structures that embody this commitment," Sister Margaret says.

"I strongly support the Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness' Regional Network initiative," she says, and she's similarly supportive of the recent passing of Article 87, saying, "Engaging DHCD in a significant way is a very positive move. Integrating the supports of DTA will be a critical step -- benefits, child care, education, and jobs are critical pieces of the solutions." She and the Project Hope staff constantly strive to practice what they preach, continuously taking steps to fully and seamlessly integrate their homelessness prevention services with the other services the agency offers, which include intensive case management, workforce development training, educational programs, and childcare.

Just as important as client input and systems changes are the partnerships and collaborations that help to streamline and enhance service delivery. Sister Margaret has made sure that collaboration remains the hallmark of Project Hope. "Partnerships are written into every page of our history and are a cause of our success," she states. The agency has strong ties to organizations like Homes for Families and the MA Coalition for the Homeless, just recently took part in the Dudley Diversion Pilot Project, and is in the midst of yet another pilot, the Eviction Prevention Initiative, with HomeStart. Sister Margaret's extensive experience with and passion for working with low-income families ("It has informed the whole of her adult life," she proclaims) make it easy to heed the wise words of advice she offers to homeless and housing stakeholders about how to make collaborations effective and mutually beneficial for everyone involved. "Probably the most critical factor for an effective partnership is that people are looking together in the same direction. Partnerships really work when we look beyond what our agency is going to get out of it. She suggests that providers, agencies, and organizations contemplate "what skills and resources can we bring to this collective process, continually evaluate [a program's] effectiveness, and be constantly willing to change what is not working."

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Agency SPOTLIGHT



RESOURCE of the MONTH



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

CRITTENTON WOMEN'S UNION'S WOMAN TO WOMAN

Low-income women who are motivated to learn marketable skills that will help them find a job with a living wage can head to Crittenton Women's Union, 1 Washington Mall, 2nd Floor, Boston on Thursdays at 2 pm to learn more about **Woman to Woman**, a 12-week workforce development program that covers topics such as communication and organization skills, time and stress management, financial literacy, interviewing and resume building, office culture, and dressing for success. Upon successful completion of the program, participants will be mentored by a Greater Boston area business woman who will offer them encouragement, advice, and introduce them to broader professional networks. For more information about the program and its eligibility guidelines, contact **Troy Heggie** at [617.259.2940](tel:617.259.2940) or theggie@liveworkthrive.org or www.liveworkthrive.org/womantowoman.php

ST. MARY'S WOMEN & CHILDREN'S CENTER'S WOMEN @ WORK

Women @ Work is an intensive, immersive 8-month job-readiness program geared towards low-income women who are currently receiving DTA cash assistance and are seeking employment but lack the skills to find and retain a job. During the first four months, participants will learn about computer applications, internet use, typing, communication and customer service skills, professional development opportunities, and resume writing. The training aspect is followed by a month-long internship, and in the 90 days after the internship ends, participants will be given one-on-one support and guidance to conduct a job search. Learn more about **Women @ Work** by calling **Belinda Mercado** at [617.436.8600](tel:617.436.8600), [x444](tel:617.436.8600). www.smwcc.org

PROJECT HOPE'S EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS

In a collaborative effort to introduce low-income residents with a range of skills and experience levels to employment opportunities in the healthcare industry, Project Hope has teamed up with Partners HealthCare, Spaulding Rehabilitation, Brigham and Women's Hospital, and Massachusetts General Hospital to offer the **Employer Partnerships** training program. For six to eight weeks, participants engage in classroom learning, internships, and computer skill capacity building that will prepare them for an entry-level position with one of the aforementioned healthcare organizations. Boston residents interested in applying for the program must attend an open house held on the 1st and 3rd Friday of every month from 9:30 am – 1:30 pm at Project Hope, 550 Dudley Street, Roxbury. Call [617.442.1880](tel:617.442.1880) [x218](tel:617.442.1880) to learn more about the program (including eligibility criteria), and to register for an upcoming open house.



FRONT DOOR COLLABORATIVE AND HOMESTART HELP UNSUSTAINABLE FAMILIES "F.A.S.T."

Many of Front Door's partner agencies have noticed a lack of programs designed to address the needs of unsustainable populations. In an attempt to try to fill that void, Front Door Collaborative is teaming up with HomeStart to establish the Families Achieving Self-Sufficient Tenancies (F.A.S.T.), a one-year pilot initiative that will help households previously deemed unsustainable by combining flexible funding with ongoing, intensive case management, stabilization, and support services to keep the families housed both now and in the future.

Though the exact amount of funding available to each household will be dependent upon its needs (as assessed by HomeStart's experienced and knowledgeable advocates), the flexible assistance can be used for a variety of purposes related to stabilizing and sustaining the household's tenancy, including rental stipends, clearing rental arrearages, security deposits and first and last month's rent, and work/life supports such as furniture, transportation costs (including car repairs), tuition, child care costs, and other resources that the household and HomeStart staff decide are necessary.

It's Front Door and HomeStart's hope that after the pilot will result in 65% of the participating households will have increased their expendable income and will be paying less than 50% of their gross income towards rent, and that 75% of the participants will have increased their matrix evaluation score. With the help of One Family, Inc. the Arizona self-sufficiency matrix was tailored to fit the parameters of the F.A.S.T. program and program advocates will use the matrix to evaluate households' progress every three months for one year. When the pilot ends, FDC and HomeStart will point to best practices that could enhance other homeless and housing service providers' prevention efforts.

Front Door Collaborative and HomeStart are currently seeking applicants for the F.A.S.T. pilot. To be eligible, households must meet the following criteria:

1. Rent an unsubsidized (private market rate) apartment in the city of Boston
2. Be unsustainable at the time of enrollment (paying 51% or more of gross income to rent)
3. Have at least one household member under 18
4. Meet Front Door's household income eligibility requirements
5. Have a strong employment history
6. Have a desire to sustain a tenancy in the Greater Boston area
7. Agree to actively engage with HomeStart staff to work on achieving a self-sufficient tenancy

If you know of a household at risk of homelessness that meets the aforementioned criteria, please contact **Allegra Clark** at **617.542.0338, ext. 265** or **clark@homestart.org** to discuss whether the household is eligible for the pilot.



Harm Reduction

**3/24/09, 9:30 AM - 3:30 PM • Hosted by: Community Health Education Center (CHEC)
Location: 35 Northampton Street, 5th Floor, Boston**

*A training session that will teach attendees how to meet clients "where they're at" and provide an understanding of the philosophy and principles of harm reduction, as well as strategies to effectively apply these techniques with clients. For information or to register, contact **Luisa Tavares** at **617.534.2432**.*

Housing & Benefits Committee Meeting

**3/27/09, 9:30 - 11:30 AM • Hosted by: MA Coalition for the Homeless
Location: Church on a Hill, 140 Bowdoin Street, Boston**

*Topics include the current status of the proposed regulation changes to the Emergency Assistance program; the passage of the Patrick Administration's Article 87 reorganization plan and actions to improve the plan before implementation; and updates on the Legislature's FY'10 budget process. For more information or to RSVP, contact **Kelly Turley** at **781.595.7570, x17** or **kelly@mahomeless.org**.*

Immigrants and Public Benefits

**4/02/09, 9:30 AM - 1 PM • Hosted by: Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Location: Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education, 10 Winter Place, Milstein Hall, Boston**

Learn the federal and state health, food, and cash benefits that are available to Massachusetts immigrants and refugees; how to identify immigration status for public benefits purposes; the "public charge" impact of receipt of benefits on immigration status; and changes during 2008 and 2009 in Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) policy on immigrant eligibility. The training will also discuss sponsor deeming rules and options. For more information or to register, visit http://www.mclre.org/program-calendar/program-catalog.cfm?product_code=2090262P01.

Understanding the System & Effectively Advocating for Change

**04/08/09, 9 AM - 12 PM • Hosted by: Front Door Collaborative, Kelly Turley (MA Coalition for the Homeless), and Diane Sullivan (Homes for Families)
Location: MBHP, 125 Lincoln Street, 5th Floor, Boston**

*A training that will provide an overview of the social service system and how to effectively advocate. After learning the relevant players and how they all work together, the training will cover how to successfully advocate for systems change and increase consumer involvement. Registration requests will be accepted **03/18/09** through **03/25/09**; to register, contact **Caitlin Dolan** at **617.425.6628** or **caitlin.dolan@mbhp.org**.*

Housing Advocacy: Strategies for a Successful Housing Search

**4/14/09, 9 AM - 4 PM • Hosted by: AIDS Housing Corporation (AHC)
Location: JRI Center for Training and Professional Development, 25 West St. 3rd Floor, Boston**

*A training that covers the important details that all direct service providers need to know when helping a client through a housing search. The session will address practical approaches for assisting with and responding to crises in housing search, housing stabilization, eviction prevention, and appealing housing application denials. This training is a basic overview and is not for providers with extensive housing search or advocacy experience. For more information or to register, contact **Jennifer Jonay** at Ad Care Educational Institute at **508.752.7313** or **jenn@adcare-educational.org**.*

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