SHA 25th Annual Membership Meeting  
April 5, 2023  
Mary Roebling Building, Trenton NJ  

Diane welcomed everyone. Everyone introduced themselves around the room by name and affiliation. 55 people were in attendance representing housing developers, supportive services providers, advocates, government representatives, corporate vendors, and families.

1. Diane thanked new or returning members: TdBank, Dimension Renewable Energy, HABcore, Giant Development & Contracting, Housing Authority of Gloucester County, iStrive Community, Rappaport Development, St Peter’s Residence, TaUrt’s Village, and Woods Services. All membership renewals went out in January/February. Thank you to those members who renewed promptly. Please renew as soon as you can or reach out to discuss.

A call for approval of the minutes which are posted on the website: [https://www.shanj.org/past-sha-membership-meetings/](https://www.shanj.org/past-sha-membership-meetings/) was requested. Minutes of the February 1, 2023 meeting were approved.

Motion: Barbara Coppens motioned; Krystal Odell seconded.

As a reminder, Diane thanked everyone for participating in and attending the successful conference this past November. This year’s 25th year anniversary conference will be held at the Palace at Somerset Park on November 3rd so please save the date. Programs from the 2022 conference were available at the meeting.

2. Harry Reyes, [harry.reyes@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:harry.reyes@dhs.nj.gov) Assistant Division Director for the NJ Division of Mental Health Services, was introduced to give an update.

   - Increases to the proposed budget which would begin in July and Line item for increases of salaries to help address the issue of finding staff. The need for staff is a large issue in CSS and for Mental Health and Substance Use departments across the state.

   Waivers are being received for staffing but there is a limit of how much to allow a waiver (of a waiver to allow?), waivers are reviewed, and agencies are asked more questions of specific supervision provided to an individual within an agency before accepted.

   - DCA’s Section 8 FMR’s from October and DMHAS aligned in November which increased from previous FMRs. A grid is
available with each county, their rates and ones that have to go by zip code for your information. They are matching the difference dollar for dollar as HUD instead of the 90% difference. DMHAS also covers deposits and cover furniture up to $3,000 for individuals.

- A decrease in individuals being placed in state hospitals has increased the request for individuals in the community to receive a subsidy. Beyond CSS, they look to PACT and PATH for helping individuals who are homeless or have a severe mental illness and homeless individuals within outpatient programs which is an expansion in use of their subsidies, DMHAS is considering these clients. There is an expansion to how DMHAS is using subsidies. They can be contacted to assist with homeless individuals or at risk of homelessness with an SMI, Substance abuse/Opioid homeless individuals (co-recurring included) with subsidies.

- The Division works with the DCA’s Supportive Housing Connection and navigators are being hired to help provide a list by request of apartments to guide those on their apartment search. It is still difficult to find apartments. DMHAS will work with SHC and the new Housing Navigators at DCA.

- Harry answered questions about: lender contracts, CEPP (Conditional Exception Pending Placement-no longer unstable but in need of housing) placement in the community. CEPP has two types: former state institution individuals that are stable and need housing placement and Their Division helps about 160 CEPP placement subsidies not being used by the hospitals to be used by individuals in the community or they provide a subsidy to an individual leaving the hospital in need of one. 200 subsidies yearly and 160 is targeted to state hospitals, 90 are CEPP specific and the rest are general discharges or subsidies with no service needed.

- Harry explained that a portion of apartments from a development are set aside for special needs, and they are required to have a service provider submit a service plan that is approved by them and then they are informed of openings based on agreements between the service provider and developer. Individuals a part of the Mental Health System within their Division are given opportunities to apply to these openings. Service contracts can be renewed every year.

- CSS subsidies are single occupancy subsidies. Boarding houses or
rooming houses are not allowed. However, shared up to no more than 3 bedroom apartments are considered for immediate housing placement after hospital discharge. Each person receives their own lease and proportional rent subsidy. This is also considered for Project-Based apartments, but they are still working on the best course to resolve this issue. They are willing to place individuals in areas close to where their services are administered temporarily until their area has availability.

- CSS Work group (Large/Small group) renewal/revision is going to be revisited in discussion with their new Assistant Commissioner Lisa Asare in April/May. Diane will reach out.
- CSS has flexible plans which can be adjusted to provide intensified services, however adequate staffing is still the biggest problem. DMHAS put out a $150,000 in RFP’s for Licensed Clinical staff (which is higher $75,000 level) need to help provide more services to individuals. They have reached out to Medicaid and Licensing to address all concerns pertaining to staff needs and paperwork processes.
- Diane Riley added details about the Division’s proposed budget: $13 million towards the Development of Housing from the budget making it possible for them to go up with HUD’s FMR increase in October in order to stay up with the DCA. Diane thanked Harry for coming and sharing his updates.

3. Diane introduced Steve Schoch, chair of the Board of Trustees and Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee. SHA’s members are very diverse in their mission (service, affordable housing developers, vendors etc.). The board draws from the diverse membership however we need to hear directly from our members. Therefore, the Strategic Planning Committee is here to frame the conversation and offer opportunities for the members to participate in the conversation. The topic discussed in this portion of the conversation is SHA’s Annual Conference. The questions posed are what are you most looking forward to and what is important? Networking, encouraging mixing more so to facilitate the networking (speed dating networking). Topics that are physical environment impacts wellness i.e., dog parks build into design, case studies for developers on the components on supportive housing, including mixing and matching funding, nuances of the capital stack, the desires on needs with people who lived experience. Some topics discussed could be presented at a member meeting or special lunch and
learn especially for specific verticals of members (mental health service, Medicaid, funding).


The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) has launched the New Jersey Community Solar Project Finder. This online tool allows New Jersey residents to search by zip code for community solar projects serving their community. NJBPU is partnering with Sustainable Jersey on this initiative, and they will host the Community Solar Project Finder on their website. The New Jersey’s Community Solar Program allows those who rent, lack control of their roof, live in an apartment or multi-family building, or cannot afford the cost of a solar installation to benefit from the cost savings and reduced carbon footprint of solar power. To date there are 24 community solar projects that have come online and are in operation. Join us for this presentation that will include a demonstration of the New Jersey Community Solar Project Finder and an overview of community solar resources and some highlights from SHA Solar member organizations. The speakers were: Sawyer Morgan, New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, Research Scientist Sawyer.Morgan@bpu.nj.gov, and two SHA members Yvette Viasus, Engagement Manager, Solar Landscape, Yvette@solarlandscape.com, and Josh Nislick, VP Business Development, Dimension Renewable Energy, jnislick@dimension-energy.com.

Highlights:
- Sawyer Morgan began the presentation reviewing Community Solar program basics such as providing benefits of solar to those who are not able to install solar (renter, shade, cost), each subscriber receives billing credits for section of larger solar array. The program expands access to solar, provides energy savings for subscribers, supplies local generation of clean energy, while providing local job creation.
- Steps for subscribing to a project were reviewed as well as the expected cost savings. Most community solar subscriptions are structured to result in 10 - 25% savings.
- A interactive project map of projects throughout the state of NJ was provided along with the link SustainableJersey.com/communitysolar
- The Project Finder is a new tool developed that can help find a local project. The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities partnered with Sustainable Jersey to develop the New Jersey Community
Solar Project Finder. A live demo of the project finder allowed participants to understand its ease of use.

- Other resources available on the Sustainable Jersey website includes: Solar How-To Guide, Certification Program action-Municipally Supported Community Solar, Community Solar Factsheet, Subscriber Tip Sheet

- Yvette Viasus, Engagement Manager, Solar Landscape provided statistics about Solar Landscape: 150 current projects, supporting 35,000 NJ residents and how much carbon dioxide that will be prevented (200,000 metric tons) from entering the NJ atmosphere each year by projects built through the first two years of New Jersey’s Community Solar program. The projects serve 17 counties.

- Josh Nislick, VP Business Development, Dimension Renewable Energy emphasized that their partnerships serve as catalysts for workforce development, education, and non-profit programs. For example, Dimensions partnership with Solar One, The Ironbound Community Corporation, and Pfister Energy, Dimension delivered solar jobs training to Newark residents that will lead to internships and job opportunities in New Jersey’s growing solar energy economy.

5. Karen Fluharty, Founder, Parents with a Plan, karen@parentswithaplan.org Was introduced to present on the topic: “Neuro-Inclusive Housing”. Since 2019 Parents with a Plan has been committed to expanding the quality and options for supportive environments for neurodiverse adults. Founded by two parents of children with special needs they went about the challenge systemically by building strong best in class partnerships and doing the research. In October 2022, they released, “Market Analysis for Neuro-Inclusive Apartment Building” a first of its’ kind private market study that captures the need and preferences for a New Jersey property located in Red Bank. Karen will discuss the research which led to the development plans currently under way.

- The findings: More than 200,000 in NJ have are neuro-diverse or have an I/DD – twice the capacity of MET Life stadium, 2.73% of neuro-diverse individuals in NJ are currently living with aging family, 74.8% fear loneliness or isolation in the future, Lack of
transportation was the #1 barrier to access and engagement in their communities, and top concern of individuals seeking an independent living situation was finding assistance to connect with people and places
- Fears among people with disabilities include loneliness, staffing, falling through the cracks, not being able to meet my goals, becoming homeless and more.
- Barriers include anxiety, lack of skills to meet people, lack of understanding and opportunities to engage,
- A review of the proposed project in Red Bank was presented. The project will not be a licensed care facility. The project is for people who want to be independent and can perform activities of daily living.
- RENT -- Private capital and social impact funds for development construction of purpose built neuro inclusive, market rate 32 unit supported apartment building, AMENITIES -- Rutgers Adult Autism Services Center innovative partnership for delivery of amenities and standards, SERVICES -- Residents tap DDD budgets for LTSS via provider of their choice.
- For more information: visit www.parentswithaplan.org
7. Diane Riley introduced the panel participants for the topic discussion entitled “Homeless Diversion Pilot Program”. In 2021, DCA provided grant funding to pilot the first Homeless Assistance Diversion Program. The program provides flexible financial assistance to families and individuals at imminent risk of homelessness who may not be eligible for other assistance programs or when time is critical. Funds are used to quickly retain or obtain a safe stable living situation. The program was renewed in 2022 and is currently operating in 8 counties and helping people with the first month’s rent, security deposits, moving costs and more. The presenters: Kate Leahy, Project Manager SHA, Kate.Leahy@shanj.org, Family Promise of Warren County, Bob Frankenfield, Co-Executive Director and Rachel Opdyke of Family Promise of Warren Countybobf@wcihn.org and Laura Rodgers, lrogers@jfsatlantic.org Chief Impact Officer of Jewish Family Services of Atlantic and Cape May.
- Kate Leahy, SHA Housing Navigation Program Manager, kicked off the presentation and reported on the SHA Housing Navigation Program. This DCA grant funded program started a year and a half
ago, to look at Navigation programs Nationally and throughout New Jersey. This program developed a collaborative of organizations around the state, working on Housing Navigation programs, to meet and share best practices in conjunction with SHA's research reports (produced last Summer into early Fall), challenges in their navigation program experience and advocate for needed changes and increase funding. One of the gaps has been flexible funding that would help a family fill the need for short term funding for services or needs that could help them remain stably housed. One solution is the Diversion Program through DCA and the Office of Homeless Prevention. This program started 2 years ago (Summer 2021) as a Pilot Program modeled after a Diversion program in Connecticut and expanded Fall 2022 including a broader range of agencies. Homelessness Diversion is recognized as a best practice in homelessness prevention nationwide: a Housing problem solving technique integrating into homelessness prevention work and rapid exit programs to quickly establish safe, stable housing options and reduce time and trauma associated with housing instability and homelessness.

- Benefits of Homelessness Diversion include: reduces inflow to and demand of emergency shelter, lessening placement in shelters, leveraging community based housing outside of Homelessness Response System: preventing trauma possibly associated with homelessness and finding shelter, empowering goals, strengths, and preferences for individuals households, offering an equitable approach not subject to traditional programs, funding sources and vouchers.

- Homelessness Diversion services provide a last resort after all other resources to end prevent homelessness have been exhausted, helps incorporate housing for trauma reduction, trauma enforced service delivery, racial equity practices and creates a plan meeting all needs for quick stability and permanent housing solutions. This Diversion approach holistically can provide problem solving conversations of needs, resolve crisis and avoiding homelessness, focus of what is needed to resolve crisis within quickly.

- Program allowable costs are: Securing sustainable housing (security deposits, 1st months’ rent, temporary assistance with rent for up to 4 months, landlord and realtor incentives, transportation
and moving costs, utility, cable financial payments to secure or maintain a double up situation for up to 4 months, car repairs, maintaining employment costs, storage costs, hotel/motel stays).

- Outcomes of Diversion programs: Avoiding homelessness, maintaining temporary housing arrangements and relocation.

- Laura Rogers from Jewish Family Services of Atlantic and Cape May spoke first of JFS program (started in 2021) being in the first pilot group as state involved and DCA added Atlantic Care as a second organization servicing Atlantic County. Diversion programs have helped enhance their work through a coordinated entry process and a HUD best practice of Diversion within the coordinated entry flow sited at the Atlantic Homelessness Alliance in Atlantic County (sited at the Board of Social Services). Laura Rogers program has the opportunity to have staff spend more time with individuals already equipped with problem solving skills and solutions to help from and have learning communities to interact with other colleagues across the state to further best practices knowledge.

- Rachel Opdyke then spoke about Family Promise of Warren County starting at the end of 2022 and has continued to develop in this current year. Rachel explained the Diversion programs have helped their program because it is low barrier. The challenges of fair market rent limits and the diversion program provides no limits of required specific documentation needed for other programs. Rachel added that more Diversion funds and funding for data collection in HMIS is important because these programs rely heavily on data collected since it is a new program as compared to HPP and HPRP. Family Promises goal is to show how Diversion is utilized beyond other programs to prove its need. Case management and data collection should go hand and hand.

- Bob Frankenfield explained the Diversion program meshes well with HPP (Homelessness Prevention Program), HPRP (Homeless Prevention Rapid Re-Housing Program), EFSP monies and augments other existing programs. Diversion program augments programs that already exist. The Diversion Program helps Family Promise with quick resolutions when an individual is unable to receive help from other programs and shortens the process. Bob Frankenfield described the difference of HPP’s state operated/funded program: 3 months back rent to prevent
someone’s eviction, clearance of received or unreceived help from other programs from the state and of court agreements that can hinder the program process. The panelists described a challenge in Warren is numerous hardships of an individual are hard to document which is required by programs. HPP is not that easy to access.

- Trends of populations of both HPP and Diversion program funds: mostly single mom families, low income families unable to show a sustainability plan made difficulties to develop ready solutions for (not enough income for rent), more older adults experiencing homelessness, new mothers’ on leave and temporary disability recipients.

- The panelists would like to see more funding for data collection to show the impact of the flexibility of the program which makes it so successful.

- Broader changes are needed. Laura Rogers stated the latest National Low Income Housing Coalition report shows: New Jersey is short over 200,000 or 250,000 Affordable Units; there are incidences of people without living wages, minimum wage increases, rent increases and those with vouchers in the marketplace are unable to use vouchers so organizations working together can make the changes needed.

- Kate Leahy added that there are only 12 counties with organizations that received these funds due to most need, some counties have flexibility to share these funds out of county (public information of the counties with these funds is available).

- Office of eviction prevention are now resource navigators in all 15 vicinages of the state creating additional resources for eviction diversion.

8. Presentations and other very important updates can be found: [https://www.shanj.org/past-sha-membership-meetings/](https://www.shanj.org/past-sha-membership-meetings/)

9. The meeting concluded at 1 pm. The meeting concluded at 1 PM. The next meeting of the SHA membership is scheduled for Wed, June 7, 2023. Which will be in person at the Roebling Center.

The SHA Advocacy and Policy Committee met following the formal meeting. Next Advocacy Policy Meeting will be by phone on December 3rd.

Submitted by Diane Riley, Executive Director