



Rusty Bennett and Jennifer Clarke, Co-Chairs

LIHCA Members Present: Cynthia Bisbee (NAMI), Ruth Crosby (First Light, Inc.), Angela Eddings (YWCA), Mande Ellison-Weed (Unity Wellness Center), Renee Goodwin (Family Sunshine Center), Christi Haustein (AIDS Action Coalition), Robin Hunter (JBS Mental Health Authority), Adrienne Hurgeton (JBS Mental Health), Lisa Isay (Bridge Ministries), Susan Johnston (Family Connection), Jeff Leach (JBS Mental Health), Debra Lilly (Salvation Army), Tammy Middleton (Volunteer Information Center), Jennifer Mitchell (Health Services Center), Mary Jane Oakley (Legal Services Alabama), Annie Osbourne (Lighthouse Counseling Center), Trinitius Pickett (Salvation Army), Amy Ramos (AIDS Alabama), Faye Richards-Williams (AIDS Action Coalition), Danny Seymour (South Alabama Cares), Ronald Smith (Friendship Mission), Marilyn Swyers (Unity Wellness Center), Patricia Todd (AIDS Alabama), Kathy Wells (Safehouse of Shelby County), Tiffany Woods (JBS Mental Health Authority)

LIHCA Board Members Present: Rusty Bennett, Jennifer Clarke, Acquanetta Knight, Diedra Lemons, Bill Tilly

Collaborative Solutions, Inc. Staff: Ashley Kerr

ALAEH Introduction

Jennifer Clarke introduced the Alabama Alliance to End Homelessness (ALAEH) to the group as a continuum that is working to address, abate, and eliminate homelessness in all forms. She shared that at ALAEH's annual meeting last year, the group talked about what it wanted to do in 2010. As an organization with no professional staff, all activities are volunteer-driven and the board has worked to increase its capacity over the past year. One accomplishment was that ALAEH formally established a mission.

ALAEH is focused on ensuring statewide representation in the organization. One thing that Jennifer pointed out was that one can't talk about homelessness without talking about housing – the two topics are intertwined.

Jennifer identified ALAEH's priorities for 2011, including the following:

- Support housing trust fund legislation
- Support the need for a statewide needs assessment
- Be a part of macro solution/system interventions (i.e., being an integral piece of a much bigger picture)
- Reach out to the new state administration (i.e., introductory letters to Governor Bentley and new legislators)
- Support the Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Pursue funding sources to sustain the organization
- Maintain a Web presence with available resources
- Publish proactive as well as reactive statewide press releases

- Maintain appropriate business responsibilities
 - Present an annual conference, possibly in combination with LIHCA
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LIHCA Introduction

Rusty Bennett introduced LIHCA to those in the room who were unaware of our mission and our activities supporting comprehensive affordable housing policy in Alabama.

LIHCA's work involves education and advocacy to increase housing opportunities for Alabamians with the greatest financial need. In doing so, LIHCA focuses on the housing need at the very lowest levels of affordability. Our ongoing work supports our mission and LIHCA also seeks to increase its membership, as it is important for the organization to represent (and be represented by) all areas of the state. Rusty reiterated that everyone needs to be a part of the coalition, as it takes all of us to provide the voice for affordable housing needs in the state.

One of LIHCA's activities has been to travel around the state discussing housing needs and hearing stories about the need for different types of affordable housing in Alabama. It is important for LIHCA to hear stories from its members, as these often translate into policy issues. One critical issue is the lack of affordable housing units for people with extremely low incomes in Alabama. While 8,500 units of affordable housing have been created in Alabama since 1992, only 20% of these have targeted the lowest levels of income (30% and below of AMI). A housing trust fund, which is one of LIHCA's policy priorities, would provide the mechanism for funding to create more affordable housing units in Alabama for individuals living at or below 60% of AMI.

Rusty asked the group why bring LIHCA and ALAEH together? He reiterated Jennifer's comment that one can't talk about affordable housing without talking about homelessness. The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that Alabama lacks over 44,000 units of affordable housing for individuals living at or below 30% AMI. Alabama is in the midst of a housing crisis, and has been this way for many years. LIHCA wants to be the go-to organization to talk about affordable housing and we need to be able to articulate a plan to address these needs.

A housing trust fund is not LIHCA's only need, however it is our main policy priority for 2011. LIHCA has been working with the Center for Community Change (a housing trust fund technical assistance provider) to develop our strategy.

There is a benefit to these 2 organizations working together – so let's talk about how we can work together.

LIHCA plans to adopt the policy priorities introduced by ALAEH at the beginning of this meeting.

Motion to Adopt the Policy Priorities for LIHCA and ALAEH.

1st: Ronald Smith

2nd: Amy Ramos

Yes: All

No/Abstention: 0

Ideas from the Membership

One member suggested that both organizations learn more about the Alabama Library Association, specifically to educate library workers on resources for individuals experiencing homelessness.

One member suggested that ALAEH work with homeless youth service providers – this is an oft-forgotten group and all coalitions need to know what services are available for homeless youth. In response to this comment, another member suggested that participants network with one another at this conference to learn more about the services offered around the state.

One member pointed out that his organization has seen an influx in individuals with mental health issues that have been released from psychiatric hospitals but have little to no discharge planning. As coalitions, we need to work with the hospitals for better discharge planning and communication.

As there was no other business, there was a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

1st: Jennifer Clarke

2nd: Rusty Bennett

Yes: All

No/Abstention: 0