**Meeting Minutes: Greater NE CN Partners Call**

**4/15/2021 @ 10am**

Intro: Jennifer Skala

Agenda & Meeting Kickoff: Mary Pinker

**Suzanne Shore:**

* Welcome
* American Rescue Plan Update:
* Federal government is working with governors across the US to put in the rules around how the dollars are supposed to be used. Goal is to finalize rules by May 10th
* Estimate NE will receive 980 million
* Only distribute half the dollars this year
* Reassess and utilize the rest down the road
* Playbooks
* First Lady so appreciative – has shared these with people across the nation
* Shift into looking into the long term issues, while continuing to address the short term needs
* Long term issues will require new and creative solutions
* Specifically mental health gaps and needs
* From today
* Help to figure out what we know and how we know it
* What data are we using, what data do we need, what are specific stories around this?
* What don’t we know, what do we need to know?
* What is the goal?
* What’s a universal problem and what’s a community-specific problem

**FOOD INSECURITY:**

**Zach Nelson:**

 **Economic Disparities in Nebraska (Federal Reserve Data):** https://www.kansascityfed.org/omaha/nebraska-economist/Economic-Disparities-in-Nebraska/**Consumer Price Index - Midwest Region (BLS):** https://www.bls.gov/regions/mountain-plains/news-release/consumerpriceindex\_midwest.htm

CDBG-CV (Federal MOU) information for communities

Susan Nickerson can be reached to discuss CDBG-CV projects to purchase food. Her contact information is:Susan Nickerson, APRDisaster Recovery CoordinatorNebraska Department of Economic Development315 W. 18th St. I Grand Island, NE 68801308-850-0595

**Denise Zweiner:** Food insecurity issues (there is a protein need within food insecurities), working with State meat producers to see how we can feed our own and work together.

**Kayte Partch:** Food resources for summer:

**Kayte Chat**: The Nebraska Department of Education has info that will be helpful to the food security discussion today. Nebraska has about 135 sponsors (many more sites, we just don't have those numbers yet) operating Summer Meals (aka SFSP) sites across the state. In mid-May our data will populate the USDA site finder map. People can access that resource here: https://www.fns.usda.gov/meals4kids or they can text "FOOD" or "COMIDA" to 877-877 where they can enter their zip code and receive text messages with information about meal service near them. Please share these site finder resources far and wide! Again, the most current summer meals site information will be available through those resources in mid-May. Please contact me by email with your summer meals questions: Kayte.partch@nebraska.gov

**HOUSING**

**Jason Feldhaus:** Housing Opportunities in the State of Nebraska

One of the most unique within Housing efforts. COVID immediately followed COVID. We have multiple players to provide the need of Nebraskans to have access to affordable housing.

Biggest need: Rental assistance

Emergency Assistance Program: Up and running in Omaha and city of Lincoln

There is also a real need for mortgage assistance (prevention) and utilities.

There has been a new dialogue opened with energy companies. Utility companies have been very pro-active in connecting customers with resources. Looking ahead to long-term partnerships with utilities.

41% of renters and 20% of homeowners are spending over 30% of income on housing and utilities cost. This is the sector that needs the most assistance to stay in their homes.

Long-term relationship with Legal Aid: income volatility, credit repair, debt reduction, etc.

Looking at financial stability as means to long-term housing stability.

jfeldhaus@nebraskachildren.org

**Martha Marfileno:** Sarpy county

**Tanya Gifford**: Transitional housing will be more important going forward. Increased amount of calls of single people needing to be removed from homes (domestic abuse and/or mental health reasons).

**MENTAL HEALTH**

**Gay McTate:** We know there has been difficulty for folks in recovery as week as increases in substance misuse/inappropriate use.

Many communities are providing payment to pay for therapy for individuals, as well as started campaigns around normalizing mental health help. A common issue is that people are not able to get in to see a therapist because they are ‘booked up’. Parents aren’t able to focus on children due to managing stress of everything previously mentioned.

Trying to bring in the grandparents and community collabs who are bringing in faith communities.

We are trying to build long-term solutions by including community.

Telehealth services have really helped individuals get mental health help needed, we are hoping that the Would like to see the State encourage insurance companies to continue covering telehealth for these reasons.

**Julie Nash**: There is a shortage of LMHP and are not able to meet the need of the growing demand. Telehealth has helped eliminate these barriers.

Leonor: Focusing on mental health information being available in other languages.

There is little to no resources for undocumented individuals to get help in these areas. Organization who do help our undocumented individuals, there aren’t any available.

I know that finding translators in communities is hard, I can be a resource, should anyone need help in that area.

**BREAKOUTS:**

What might we have not covered? Ideas?

**Jenny Skala:**

NAM sending survey to all nonprofit leaders to see what all nonprofits are needing.

Lori dropped pertinent bills into chat.

Ann Herman is going to send out email with information about school grants.

**Mary Pinker:** Wrap Up

**BREAK OUT NOTES:**

Room 1:

Room 2:

**What did you take away from this conversation as most important?**

* Resources to train, hire and access bilingual therapists, would be great, virtual can be difficult for many families.
* Continuum of care --feedback was helpful hadn’t heard that some of the programs weren’t working. Interesting that there is 158 million with more coming and we haven’t distributed more that 2 Million so far .We are burning though our rental dollars quickly in Douglas County – if the balance of state can’t use their funding by the deadline could we consider redistributing unused dollars rather than sending resources back to the FEDS?
* We (Sarpy) spent 850K in Dec/Jan to help with rental – now we see that landlords are not renewing leases – and people have to move, even though rent is paid up – it costs more to move in Sarpy County, cost is high and housing stock is minimal. How can we prevent this by working with landlords? We have a process, we know what we are doing, we can spend it, or use it more creatively, (ie. down payments.) Please don’t return dollars – redistribute it first.
* Information on shared screens are extra beneficial for visual learners.
* First Lady Susanne Shore sharing the importance of data collection was beneficial. There needs to be furthering understanding that data is needed to attack the issues most efficiently.

**What was missing from the large group conversation?**

* + Need for rental and mortgage assistance is huge, but there are lots of homeless individuals as a result of the pandemic who need permanents housing; we need more conversation on how to address the needs for homeless population, there were not as many resources from the FEDS for this problem, could local funders champion this population’s needs?
	+ Volunteer fatigue – between floods and COVID, people are so tired. Wellness group is trying to work through those issues. Goal is to share the strategies to address this statewide. Are the volunteers and workforce able to take care of themselves and their own space.
	+ Housing assistance and programs can be confusing for those who work outside of the housing field.

**What needs to be funded and supported – continued efforts, new efforts?**

* We are seeing a lot of individuals without documentation looking for resources to move into the process for securing citizenship status, however, lawyers and coaches in our area do not exist, so could there be funding/increased resources for expanding legal aide in our rural communities?(Buffalo Cty)
* We were providing mortgage assistance in back OCT we provided current rent but not back rent, so I think a lot of landlords were still left holding the bag, we need some incentives going forward to help keep them in the game, need supportive services for landlords or incentives to continue to rent vs sell their properties. It was a rough year for lots of them.
* Maybe if landlords maintain their commitments to families that have been with them for 6-12 months– could they receive a financial incentive –perhaps funding to make repairs or upgrades to properties and this could provide some new way to spend the $ for communities that are struggling to allocate their full funding.
* What needs to be funded – community schools, hubs of neighborhoods, more local, grassroots groups of people able to come together on solutions. How do we make sure we are connecting everyone to vaccination clinics – how do we take what we learn from everything around COVID and utilize with other programs.
* There needs to be more targeted education on what housing supports are in an effort to target populations that are in need of them.
* There are still gaps in service to address food, housing needs, nifa approvals, rent/utilities being shut off.
* Important – helping people connect to resources and programs (this is working)
* Important (going well) – communities and counties working together, braiding services, collaboration (did not see this in the past)
* Going well – mountains have been moved with this collaborative effort
* Mental Health Services planning
* School meal opportunities from last summer—Will that be an opportunity this summer? How permanent is that support?
* Free and reduced meal data would be very useful

**What can we support now that will help with the long haul impact of this pandemic?**

* Expand the ways communities can use the housing dollars; beyond rent, perhaps incentives, down payments, homeless supports.
* Gaps in assistance for medical bills. One family had a huge medical bill and they connected them to the supports from the medical center, but it didn’t bring the bill down sufficiently. Have $5,000 to pay off. Three requests for infants needing helmets that are $3,000 and Medicaid appeals process isn’t working. Parents can’t afford these high bills in these times.
* Funding --- extra funding comes with all the extra work but without the admin dollars to support the need of staff capacity to administer and fully utilize those dollars. More flexible funding needs to be available statewide to address the gaps in staffing.
* There needs to a system developed with NCFF and CR on how to target middle class populations that don't fit eligibility criteria and don't qualify for assistance. There are hosuing funds available for undocumented individuals.
* Appreciated the first lady mentioning the need to look for long term solutions. Need that balance between immediate and long term solutions. The group shared some things happening to address food insecurities (community agencies doing drive ups; agencies partnering together; personal shoppers; refrigerator units to support food distribution, elec. signs)
* Homeless need to have wrap around support/services to get people into houses.  Hotels are a challenge.
* Missing - Where do we need to have the larger, long-term conversations?
* Missing - Need help connecting in the community, getting people together 🡪 to impact the social norms
* Missing - Helping frontline people in the community is a goal
* Missing/Important - Start building mental health supports from the ground-up
	+ Informal supports
	+ Connect to agencies
	+ Support networks via parents
	+ Make other arrangements since MH provides are not available
	+ More coaching
* Missing – families are not always qualified for housing support due to past evictions 🡪 need some grace and understanding that circumstances change, and people change, so they should be able to be eligible later on
* Missing – start thinking outside of the box for long-term solutions to the problems and needs
* Missing – need more CR coaches and lived experience voices (x2)
* Missing – even more collaboration and working together in a practical way (warm handoffs)