

## Notes: Resetting our Path Forward: Resident Services MVM 7.27.20

### Mental/Physical/Behavioral Health Support

#### **Sofia Barbato, Foundation Communities (Austin, TX)**

- Foundation Communities has grown its medical case management significantly over the past few years, adding a registered nurse on staff who has been teaching property staff to coordinate care between residents and primary care physicians, hospitals, skilled nursing facilities and home health aides. During COVID-19, Foundation Communities (FC) leveraged this expertise and relationships to provide early education to residents on symptoms and symptom reporting. Within 24 hours if a resident has symptoms, FC gets them a thermometer and cell phone to call for help, as well as food and other supplies to help them stay at home and recover. FC is also monitoring symptoms through telehealth calls.
- Testing has been challenging in Austin. FC had a preexisting partnership with Travis County paramedics and have had them come do onsite testing for people with symptoms. Another challenge is that a lot of third party service parties are only operating remotely. For example, adult protective services can no longer come on site and meet with folks who might not be able to care for themselves any longer and the local Mental Health Authority can't come provide injectables or psychotropic medication. This has put a lot of stress on staff.
- To support staff, FC is encouraging them to work from home two days a week to catch up on administrative work and rest more easily. FC has contracted with a private therapist for staff to access weekly and during work hours to help with mental health.
- FC has augmented staff with volunteers. 100 volunteers pair with 145 residents to do wellness calls – 2000/month – to check in and provide companionship. This takes some of the workload off staff.
- FC has a telehealth station at each property. They purchased a laptop which folks can reserve and use. FC also purchased tablets which they will lend out to residents to use on a more long term bases. FC has property-wide Wi-Fi and has been providing some smartphones to residents when needed.

### Digital Access

#### **Sofia Barbato, Foundation Communities (Austin, TX)**

- FC has brought Wi-Fi to properties in different ways and is trying to figure out the best method. They have used their organizational technology provider who installed remote access points throughout buildings. This is challenging because Wi-Fi isn't equally distributed throughout the property and some units don't have good reception. For new properties, FC is trying to get WI-FI integrated into the infrastructure of the property. This is very expensive to do (\$1,000/month). FC feels access to Wi-Fi is an equity issue and would rather pre-wire new buildings than go back and put remote access points in. In some cases HUD will allow them to pay for building Wi-Fi through reserves.

### **Anna Gwyn Simpson, Eden Housing (Hayward, CA)**

- Eden has received several rounds of the CPUC grants and has managed to wire the whole building/units at some properties. A challenge is the ongoing operating costs. Wiring is expensive, but keeping up the monthly servicing can also be very expensive. Another challenge has been providing enough bandwidth to support families in the way they want. For example, too many devices/streaming makes internet really slow for the building and many residents don't want slow internet even if it is free. This is exacerbated with video conferencing and the need for students to work remotely due to COVID-19. Hotspots are challenging as well, the upfront cost isn't bad but ongoing expenses add up. A couple years ago Eden did a campaign where they provided residents with hotspots, and many were returned because of limited bandwidth.
- Eden is about to launch a technology survey with residents to determine levels of digital access. Digital access is a major equity issue and Eden wants to determine residents' technology needs and get them access/training. They will use Survey Monkey, but also conduct the survey via phone and provide a print version. Eden is incentivizing staff to get a high response rate.
- Eden has been lending out their Chromebooks for families with kids enrolled in Eden's after school program. They have an agreement in place where residents can be held responsible for loss or damages, but Eden has not charged for damages and this hasn't become a major issue.
- School districts in California will be 100% virtual at the beginning of the school year. Eden is waiting to see how districts deal with digital access to see where they can fill the gaps.
- Eden is using 'technology tutor' volunteers. They had this position pre-COVID for people to work with seniors in-person. Now they are in the process of recruiting more volunteers who will have to do the training virtually. Eden will need paper instructions to distribute as well. In some cases Eden has translators on the phone to assist with technology training as well.

### **Noele Kostelic, EAH Housing**

- Noele is in a rural part of California and while these properties have Wi-Fi, it goes down often because they are serviced by a small company. Residents blame the property, but outages are community-wide. How can we communicate this challenge to residents?
  - **Brenda Petry, CommonBond Communities** – CommonBond hasn't had this specific issue, but has faced broader community issues that are not connected to a site. CommonBond has tried to connect residents to community organizing around the topic. For example, residents may be willing to organize around getting federal money to pay for broadband access.

### **Donna Thurmond, Volunteers of America (National)**

- VOA has a partnership with AARP Foundation through the Connected Communities program, which helps seniors with social isolation. The program uses Alexa to provide residents with information and help with maintaining medication schedules, providing doctor appointment reminders, etc. VOA launched the program at four communities in Colorado, two of the properties had building-wide Wi-Fi and two did not. VOA also experienced problems with hot spots not providing reliable internet. The most successful Connected Community programs were at the properties that VOA had wired and paid for the devices. AARP provided training and came on-site with a professional group that trained residents, all property staff, and the regional

services director over 3 days. The training centered on how the program could be most useful to residents. VOA had a PACE representative attend to figure out how to use the Alexa to communicate healthcare related information to residents. Costs to wire buildings vary from community to community based on regional factors and building materials (e.g. one community cost \$5,000 and another cost \$15,000).

- VOA has to spend a lot of time on training residents on how to use tools (especially during COVID-19)

## Member Diversity and Racial Equity Initiatives

### **Sofia Barbato, Foundation Communities (Austin, TX)**

- FC's antiracism work is being done at multiple levels: 1) through an agency-wide DEI committee, and 2) within smaller working group within the resident services department. Working groups sets goals like looking at case management files to determine the demographics of those they are meeting with and those who they are not meeting with. This caused the resident services team to do more outreach to residents of color whom may be more reluctant to engage with services. One of FC's departmental goals is to work closely with property management and desk support staff to decrease phone calls to local police around mental health and noise complaints. As an agency, FC is looking at pay equity and making changes to their tenant selection criteria.

### **Rose Mabwa, The Community Builders (Chicago, IL)**

- TCB has a safe platform online where staff can share thoughts and experiences and support one another. TCB also provided DEI training to all staff and staff wanted virtual break out meetings where they could connect and discuss racial equity. TCB is being purposeful with residents by providing zoom meetings for them to listen to and support each other and providing access to a private therapist. TCB also has a therapist for staff. TCB had provided forums for residents and staff to communicate prior to COVID-19 as part as their trauma informed approach, but COVID-19 intensified the need for additional mental health resources.

## Virtual After School Programing

### **Tara McCarthy, Jamboree Housing**

- Jamboree has learned a lot and been somewhat successful in running a virtual afterschool program (many technology challenges). Jamboree is recruiting tutors through Volunteer Match and has partnerships with local Universities (UCI and UC Santa Barbara, possibly UC Riverside in the future). University grad students have wanted to be virtual guest teachers within Jamboree's after school program. Jamboree supports these teachers by mailing out/distributing class materials.

### **Rose Mabwa, The Community Builders**

- TCB partners with Illinois State University to have professors teach residents STEM courses. Residents are engaged so long as TCB can help organize and distribute class materials.

**Jaylene Westfall, Century**

- Century is shifting its after school program to be during the day time vs. after school so youth staff can work 1x1 with families within Century's computer labs. This addresses the challenge of parents not being able to help kids log on or kids not being able to access the program on their own. Century's computer labs are open by appointment only with case managers.

**Future Topics**

- Supporting youth and families with distance learning and running after school programs virtually