

Cambridge Human Services Commission
Minutes of Meeting 12/8/11
5:30 – 7:30pm
3rd Floor Resource Room
51 Inman Street

Commissioners present: Ayse Atasoylu, Nan Stone, Khari Milner, Superintendent Steven Williams

Regrets: Lori Likis, Claudia Hill, Kati LaBraico, Rev Lorraine Thornhill, Christopher Hall

Presenter: Wilfred Labiosa, Executive Director at CASPAR

DHSP staff: Ellen Semonoff, Jose Soares (recorder)

Ellen introduced Police Department Superintendent Steven Williams who attended the meeting as an observer since Deputy Superintendent Christine Elow, our new Police Department Liaison, was on vacation.

Wilfred Labiosa started the presentation by giving an overview of CASPAR and its history. CASPAR was founded in 1970 to meet the needs of individuals with substance abuse. Over the years, CASPAR has evolved into a full service agency by providing services to people whatever their stage in recovery. CASPAR has partnered with various community entities including the Cambridge Police Department, the Cambridge Health Alliance, the courts, and MIT among others. (Please refer to agency brochures and fact sheet).

CASPAR provides comprehensive prevention, emergency, residential support and after care services, including the Employment Program and Drop in Center. Caspar serves over 2,500 men, women, and adolescents through the following programs:

First Step Outreach offers life saving alternatives for unsheltered individuals. For this CASPAR utilizes a van in service from 8am to 12am and its staff are trained in First Aid, mental health and substance abuse, and street interventions. CASPAR works with Spaulding Rehabilitation in Cambridge to train physicians on screening at intake and provides intervention at Youville Hospital. Over 350 men and women were provided services in the last year; 96% were disabled and 80% were chronically homeless.

Emergency Service Shelter provides 110 beds to homeless individuals who are actively using alcohol and drugs. Clients receive medical and mental health care, food, personal hygiene supplies, clean clothes, counseling and treatment referrals.

ACCESS is a twelve bed transitional program for individuals in early recovery who are often waiting for a bed in a residential treatment program. Stays vary from three days to three months and clients participate in treatment groups, case management, and counseling.

Youth Services provides prevention services to area junior and high schools, the alternative high school in Medford and youth referred from the courts. Recently CASPAR has enhanced services to meet the growing number of homeless youth between the ages of 16 to 26 actively using drugs and alcohol.

The Phoenix Center is a sober drop- in day program where clients receive counseling, anger management training, and participate in alcoholic and narcotic anonymous groups. 1,300 clients receive services annually.

The Employment Services Program offers pre-employment training to individuals in recovery from substance abuse including assessment, counseling, educational and skills workshops, resume development, and support groups. It also works with individuals with criminal records and works with employers to accept this population. Over 50% of clients enrolled in program found jobs last year.

CASPAR also provides an array of residential treatment programs for men and women including: Men's Residential Program includes two houses with 42 beds offering a six month residential program for men experiencing the struggles of early sobriety.

New Day is a residential treatment program for pregnant and parenting women with substance abuse issues. More than 400 healthy babies have been born to New Day clients since its inception.

Womanplace is a 20 bed residential program for women in need of six months gender specific treatment. In addition to substance abuse many women have serious trauma and abuse histories. Of the 102 clients last year, 54% were under the age of 29.

GROW is an 8 bed transitional housing program for women who have graduated from residential treatment programs. 100% of the clients have maintained their sobriety, found a job and secured permanent housing.

Hagan Manor is a 6 bed congregate living suite for men with disabilities in addition to their substance abuse history. This partnership with the Somerville Housing Authority began as a pilot program and has been replicated statewide.

Given the economic climate and the diminishing federal funding for homeless services, Wilfred Labiosa stated that the concept of a wet shelter (for active alcohol and drug users) will likely disappear and in its place will be a housing first model which will require a sober experience, extensive supportive services and the challenge of integration in the communities.

As a final note, Wilfred stated that the average cost per shelter bed including services and feeding programs is about \$1,500 while the average emergency room intervention costs about \$5,000 per visit.

At the next Human Services Commission meeting scheduled for January 12th, Carole Sousa from the Cambridge Engagement Team will present on their efforts at reaching out to the linguistic communities in Cambridge.

Meeting adjourned.