

Philadelphia HIV Integrated Planning Council
Positive Committee
Meeting Minutes
July 10, 2017
12:00-2:00p.m.

Office of HIV Planning, 340 N. 12th Street, Suite 320, Philadelphia, PA 19107

Present: PH (12), PA (2)

Guests: Jessica Biggert (BenePhilly), Amy Hueber (AACO)

Staff: Antonio Boone, Jennifer Hayes

Call to Order/Moment of Silence/Introductions: K. Carter called the meeting to order at 12:07p.m. He read the mission statement.¹ A moment of silence followed. Those present then introduced themselves and participated in an icebreaker activity.

Approval of Agenda: K. Carter presented the agenda for approval. **Motion: M.W. moved, L.W. seconded to approve the agenda. Motion passed: All in favor.**

Approval of Minutes (June 12, 2017): K. Carter presented the minutes for approval. **Motion: M.W. moved, L.W. seconded to approve the minutes. Motion passed: All in favor.**

Report of Chair: K. Carter noted that the annual allocations meetings would be held on Tuesday, July 18 (Pennsylvania suburban counties), Thursday, July 20 (Philadelphia), and Tuesday, July 25 (NJ). M.C. asked if members could call in to vote if they were not present at the meetings. K. Carter replied that they could not. K. Carter stated that anyone could come to the meeting, even if they were not a member. He noted that no lunch would be served, but there would be snacks.

Report of Staff: A. Boone encouraged everyone to attend the HIPC meeting on Thursday, along with the Prevention Committee later this month.

M.W. asked about the difference between PA and Philadelphia allocations meetings. A. Boone stated that the PA allocations meetings focused on the PA suburban counties, whereas the Philadelphia meeting focused on just Philadelphia. D.G. stated that Planning Council members could vote in all allocations meetings.

Discussion Items:

- **BenePhilly Programs** – *Jessica Biggert*

J. Biggert said she was the BenePhilly program coordinator. She stated that the program had been active for 10 years to help people access 21 public benefits.

J. Biggert explained that BenePhilly was part of the Benefits Data Trust (BDT), a national organization. She stated that BDT partnered with diverse organizations to provide help with benefits.

¹ Mission statement: The Positive Committee supports and enhances the role of people living with HIV/AIDS to empower their participation in the decision-making process of the Ryan White Part A Planning Council and the HIV Prevention Planning Group.

She explained that BDT wanted to have an individual, systems, and social impact. K. Carter asked if there were limitations for the benefits programs. J. Biggert stated that individual benefits programs had different requirements, but some were not very restrictive.

J. Biggert reported that BDT increased household income by 12% on average through programs like food stamps and property tax rebates. She added that assistance through BenePhilly saved time for case managers. She noted that the programs were free. J.W. asked if people who moved had to reapply for public benefits programs. J. Biggert stated that they did.

J. Biggert noted that BDT had infused \$12 billion in economic activity into local economies. She reviewed their service delivery model. She said it involved targeted identification, outreach, and application assistance. She noted that potential clients were identified through state agencies. She added that a toll free number was available for interested individuals, who were interviewed to assess their availability for different benefits. She added that the programs underwent continual evaluation, strategic systems change, and proactive thought leadership.

J. Biggert reviewed a sample client experience for BDT. K. Carter asked how long the interview took. J. Biggert said it would take about 30 minutes. She explained that clients were given the option of document support, which involved mailing them forms to fill out. She said that some people were eligible for expedited food stamps and other programs. She added that most programs had about a 30-day turnaround time. She noted that in-person assistance was available at some locations in Philadelphia.

J. Biggert noted that, while BDT was a national organization, BenePhilly was a Philadelphia-specific program. She said that the program partnered with many entities in the community. She stated that it served as a single point of access for multiple benefits and streamlined the application process. She noted that the program offered a comprehensive benefits access program. She reviewed locations where in-person benefits assistance was available. J.M. asked how social service agencies partnered with BenePhilly. J. Biggert replied that different locations coordinated with each other to share information.

J. Biggert reviewed many of the benefits that BenePhilly helped with. She explained that PACE was the PA State Pharmaceutical Assistance Program for people 65 and over. She said it worked alongside Medicare but not Medicaid. She reviewed the eligibility criteria for the program. She explained that the program was funded by the PA Lottery.

J. Biggert continued to Medicare Extra Help, which was a Medicare subsidy. She noted that it lowered Medicare Part D costs and was administered by the Social Security Administration. She reviewed eligibility requirements for the program. She noted that it was only for people with Medicare Part D plans.

J. Biggert explained the Property Tax and Rental Rebate (PTRR). She noted that it was for people 65 and over or who met other specific criteria. She said it was a rebate for property taxes and rent paid in the previous year. She noted that the application process happened annually. She reviewed income requirements and eligibility criteria.

J. Biggert stated that the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helped pay for heating costs. She said the service was paid to utility providers as a cash grant. She reviewed the eligibility criteria. She noted that all clients had to apply as households.

J. Biggert reviewed the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps. She said that SNAP benefits for one person could range from \$16-189 per month. J.W. stated that her benefits were recently reduced. J. Biggert suggested that anyone whose benefits were reduced ensure their documents were properly submitted for recertification. She added that the program had received some cuts recently. She reviewed eligibility criteria, which she noted were complicated. She added that deductions were available for shelter expenses, utilities, and medical expenses. She explained that all Department of Human Services (DHS) benefits required citizenship or certain types of permanent residence status (with an exception for children).

M.W. asked if general assistance was still available. J. Biggert said it wasn't. She noted that Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) was only available to households with children.

J.M. asked if benefits differed from state to state. J. Biggert stated that they did. J.M. asked if food stamp amounts and requirements also varied from state to state. J. Biggert replied that she was uncertain about differences in benefit amounts across state lines. However, she noted that BDT programs were available in many states.

M.C. noted that some people did not want to apply for SNAP benefits if they were only eligible for a very small amount. J. Biggert stated that clients interested in SNAP could call in to BenePhilly to check on their eligibility. She noted that SNAP benefits could be rolled over for up to 6 months. J.W. asked if taxes were taken out of entitlements. J. Biggert explained that entitlements were funded by government programs.

J. Biggert reviewed Medical Assistance (MA), or Medicaid. She said that, since the Affordable Care Act (ACA), many more people qualified for Medicaid. She noted that there were many ways to qualify, and clients could call in to BenePhilly to clarify what programs they were eligible for. K. Carter pointed out that Ryan White was not considered medical insurance. J. Biggert stated that Medical Assistance for Disabled Workers (MAWD) was available for some people who may not be eligible for Medicaid. She added that BenePhilly could support enrollment in the ACA health insurance marketplace.

J.M. said he had thought that the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) was only for low-income families, but it was not. He stated that people with high incomes could apply for CHIP as well. J. Biggert explained that free, reduced cost, and full cost CHIP were available. She said that CHIP provided health insurance for children, regardless of income, at varying costs.

J. Biggert noted that TANF was the only cash assistance program available, and it was only available for families with children. She stated that the availability criteria were difficult to meet. She added that there was a lifetime limit to TANF benefits. M.C. asked for more information about programs for women. K. Carter replied that there were programs in the community like Dress for Success, which provided professional clothing. J. Biggert said that the Career Wardrobe program was located nearby.

J. Biggert stated that Philly Pre-K was funded through Philadelphia's sugary beverage tax. She noted that there were currently slots available with no income or asset limits.

J. Biggert moved forward to the Child Care Subsidy (CCIS). She explained that it was available for teen parents and people who received TANF. She reviewed further eligibility criteria.

J. Biggert stated that the Special Pharmaceutical Benefits Program (SPBP) provided pharmaceutical assistance and lab services to low to moderate income individuals living with HIV/AIDS who weren't eligible for pharmacy services under the MA program. D.G. noted that the income requirements for the program were 400% of the federal poverty level (FPL).

J. Biggert said that BenePhilly also helped with Philadelphia-specific benefits programs, including the homestead exemption, Senior Citizen Property Tax Freeze, and Senior Citizen Water Discount. She added that additional utility benefits included the Customer Assistance Program (CAP) rate, a discounted rate for low-income PECO customers, and the Customer Responsibility Program (CRP) for income-eligible Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW) customers who qualified to receive a discounted bill each month.

J. Biggert stated that benefits assistance was additionally available for the Federal Application For Student Aid (FAFSA) and other financial aid forms. She stated that referrals were available for Women Infants and Children (WIC), Social Security and Social Security Disability (SSI/SSD), and unemployment. She stated that many in-person BenePhilly centers also provided financial counseling. She added that BenePhilly partnered with Community Legal Services (CLS) for assistance with denial of benefits.

J. Biggert summarized that BenePhilly provided benefits education, help completing applications, follow-ups with administering agencies, and scheduling of in-person appointments. She noted that the hotline could be reached at 844-848-4376. She stated that people could be referred to BenePhilly using the hotline or in person. She suggested calling before coming in to a center in person because each location had different walk-in hours.

- **HIV/HCV Focus Groups** -- *Amy Hueber, AIDS Activities Coordinating Office (AACO)*

A. Hueber said that AACO was doing an anonymous focus group on Wednesday, July 12th. She noted that the focus group would be from 10am-12pm. She said that participants would receive CVS gift cards. She said the focus group would be held at the OHP. M.W. asked if participants could be compensated if they couldn't stay the whole time. A. Hueber replied that some limited incentives were available, depending on timing. She said that people who arrived late could also participate by filling out a survey. Several participants expressed interest in the focus group. H.B. asked who would conduct the focus group. A. Hueber replied that she would. She noted that the focus group would concern Hepatitis C, but participants were not required to have Hepatitis C. A participant asked if lunch would be provided. A. Hueber replied that it would not. She noted that she'd be present at 9:30am for anyone who got to the office early. J.M. asked how many participants would be accepted. A. Hueber stated that participation would be limited to 15 people. She said the focus group would be first-come first-serve. She added that people over the cap could take a short survey and receive a \$20 gift card. She noted that she'd collect information on demographics but no names.

Old Business: D.G. asked for an update on the Positive Committee newsletter. A. Boone said he'd send out a draft of the newsletter in the next week. He asked anyone with suggestions to contact him. He noted that he'd get the newsletter approved and present it at the next Positive Committee meeting.

New Business: None.

Announcements: None.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by general consensus at 1:25p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jennifer Hayes, Staff

Handouts distributed at the meeting:

- Meeting Agenda
- June 12, 2017 Meeting Minutes
- OHP Calendar