

**ALICE and Our Local Community
Meeting Notes
October 23, 2014, 8-10 a.m.
Family Health Center of Battle Creek**

PROJECT 2020
Informing & Engaging the Battle Creek Area



Attendees: Kim Andrews-Bingham-KCC/NPA; Tim Allard – Calhoun Community High School (CCHS); Jim Baldwin- CCHS; Jeff Jones- CCHS; Drue Holladay – CCHS; Tanner Wilson – CCHS; Briana Spears – CCHS; Christine Garfield – Wraparound; Talia Champlin – Re/Max Perrett; Victoria Reese-Health Equity Alliance; Chris Sargent-United Way; Kathy Szenda Wilson- BC Pulse; Helen Guzzo-City of Battle Creek; Diane Thompson – Binder Park Zoo; Jorge Zeballos – Center for Diversity & Innovation at KCC; Tim White – Re/Max Perrett/BCAAR; Jennifer Nottingham – United Way; Noris Lindsey – Harrington Realty; Maryann Taylor-NIBC; Nancy Walker-NIBC; Carline Starr Rocho – Project Starfish CCHS; John Clement-Summit Pointe; Alyssa Stewart- United Way; Karen Lynn Todd – Miller College; Adam Dingwall – YMCA; Jessica Schmidt – Chemical Bank; Barnaby Pung – Miller College; Scott Cubberly-Edge program/BCPS; Marylou Bax – Family Enrichment Center; Melinda Weaver – Calhoun County Treasurer Office; Brenda Jones – BC Habitat for Humanity; Amy Slagle – Safe Place; Doreen Harrison – Boys and Girls Club; Susan Thomas – Alternatives of Battle Creek; ; Mike Grider- Pills Anonymous/Alano Club; Michelle Williamson-Community Action; Raymond Higbea - GVSU; Yvonne Powell- Neighborhoods Inc; Diane Marquess – Family and Children Services; Charles Cherney – Cherney & Associates; Danyelle Maitland – Substance Abuse Council; Bill Ticknor – Junior Achievement; Laura Otte- United Way; Matt Lynn-United Way; Sue Hovanec-Wraparound; Andrea Davis – Wraparound; Sue Hovanec – Wraparound; Lisa Westbrook – Employment Group; Catherine LaValley – Project 20/20; Marcia Starkey - United Way; Ashley Jones – Juvenile Probation; Leah Clark- Wraparound; Phil Amsterburg – Juvenile Probation; Jim Haadsma- Calhoun County; Michael McCullough-BC Enquirer; Melissa DeDie- Wraparound; Omar Alston-MDOC; Beckie Brinks – Family Enrichment Center; Mark Crawford – Bronson Battle Creek; Chad Kyger – CTI Mechanical; Holly McKee – Kellogg Community College; Melanie Gardner – Family Health Center; Rod Auton – CentraCare; Amanda Lanker-Project 20/20; Linn Mahabir-TCC; Anji Phillips-TCC;

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. ALICE and Our Local Community – Group discussion/report out (see page 2)

A facilitated panel discussion took place with representatives from healthcare, higher education, business and non-profit agencies. Panelists shared their perspectives about what's working, the gaps that prevent families from navigating/accessing needed supports and the struggles families face in working to gain financial stability. Panelists included: Scott Cubberly, Director of the EDGE Program at Goodwill Industries; Melissa DeDie, Clinician from the Calhoun County Wraparound program; Melanie Gardner, Healthcare Advocate at the Family Health Center of Battle Creek; Chad Kyger, owner of CTI Mechanical Contractors, Inc.; Holly McKee, Director of Student Services at KCC

III. Formal Adjournment: Next meeting – Holiday Breakfast on December 6, 2014 from 8 – 10 a.m. at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

IV. GROUP DISCUSSION NOTES

1. What's working to help ALICE families gain financial stability in our community?
 - Financial Opportunity Center at Goodwill – make sure people know program is available
 - United Way Reading Program
 - After school program that nurtures/develops
 - ABC Kids Club
 - Neighborhoods, Inc.
 - Wraparound – 8 workers in County, 20-33 case load, 6 mos-1 year typical relationship (although doesn't increase financial stability)
 - Our 200 nonprofits provide services to BC families/residents – Area Agency on Aging, Family Health Center, Financial Opportunity Center, subsidized preschools
 - Tremendous energy and group in community to support ALICE families – community wants to help (hence this meeting...)
 - More agencies are looking at ALICE guidelines to expand services to more families
 - Financial Opportunity Center
 - Habitat for Humanity, provide budgeting and counseling in addition to home ownership opportunities
 - Charitable Union, EDGE, fresh produce resources – a plethora of programs designed to close the gap between want and self-sustainability. The problem is that we have a problem scaling these programs, either because of limited resources or lack of communication (also, many of these services are targeted to families in poverty, not "ALICE" households)
 - Credit unions offering financial literacy classes – a good step
 - The wraparound support is vital and should be expanded.
 - Solid educational systems
 - EDGE Program through Goodwill Industries – 6 week program, 15-20 people, job skills and employment training, potential program growth, works with people that have felonies
 - Neighborhoods Inc. – Homes Plus program, down payment assistance, works with people with poor financial histories
 - Pills Anonymous – long-term solutions, 80% unable to pass drug test
 - SAC – stop the problem between adulthood, strengthening families, address transportation
 - Family and Children Services – works with families when kids get kicked out of daycare or school
 - A lot of effective programs but disconnected to "access" programs (transportation, computer access, emotional/mental/physical access, technology)

- Companies like CTI – they “get it” but we need more
 - United Way is expanding focus on ALICE
2. At the last meeting, we talked about systems that create challenges for ALICE families to navigate and access needed systems of support. What policies are you or your organization/group working to address (or what would you like to address)? What support do you need?
- We support people who aren’t trying, but cut off financial support to those that are trying
 - We train people to justify behaviors by using short-term finances as the measuring stick
 - Rules/laws – standards that inhibit/prohibit success, some have unintended consequences
 - Too much doing for, not enough training to do
 - Values are different – budgeting is not a value in the poverty population; coupons, budgeting, saving are not valued and don’t have the skills to do these things
 - We need to think of people in terms of “are they trainable?” instead of “what are they trained for?”
 - Entitlement, broken system – we put out so much help, it creates a helpless society
 - Too busy to make good choices
 - Need to educate people about how to manage things like utilities, close the windows and turn down the thermostat
 - No home economics in school
 - We need to have life skills training attached to any public assistance
 - Pride/fear/shame prevents action
 - There is a 6 week wait to get childcare at DHS
 - Need to advocate for more flexibility in Michigan Merit Curriculum; the one-size-fits-all is not work for students
 - Lack of decision makers in discussion about realities (policy makers, CEOs, orgs, etc.)
 - 2/3 of jobs in Michigan pay less than \$20/hr.
 - We need to do a power analysis – who has decision making authority?
 - TCC as an organized membership group – using its advocacy influence to address transportation and childcare; create an environment that is exclusive and advocacy focused, TCC membership may be too exclusive
 - How do we communicate availability of services to residents/families? Students at table were not aware of many of the services
 - Trying to increase capacity for affordable, quality housing – NIBC offers housing at rates below HUD costs, trying to get more affordable housing in BC

- CLC exploring the creation of a fund to support one of the GED tests – developing parameters to access money – working with YMCA and other organizations to develop a GED prep class to help
- Childcare – Transportation – Employment : all intertwined
- Transportation
- No childcare in Fort Custer – get companies to pull together
- Holly McKee spoke about the parole and probation problem, most companies will not hire felons
- Some people are employed but without furniture
- Extend office hours at DHS and other needed services
- Sliding scale for assessing eligibility – Treasurer’s Office looking at guidelines
- Not many of us are in policy work, but individually many are working to build community in the neighborhoods
- We need to frame these issues as POLICY PROBLEMS, rather than challenges to be addresses by individuals or nonprofit programs. We need people who can influence public policy to engage and pursue systemic solutions.
- Transportation – Adult Outcome group - \$1 million to expand the bus route, need easier access to car ownership and insurance
- More access to GED testing sites – YMCA will be a testing site

3. Who else should know about the ALICE report? Who else could you share this information with?

- City Commissioners
- County Commissioners
- Employers
- BCU
- Superintendents
- Board of Realtors
- Need to get more employers involved to develop more empathy for employee circumstances; what are some option for small companies with fewer resources?
- Recognize the challenge of sharing info about services – billboards, ads, door-to-door – still tough to reach families
- Policy makers (mentioned twice in conversations) – legislators, executive branch, state department heads, locally elected representatives
- Business owners – business organizations help inform employers about the cost of living relative to income opportunities in their companies/businesses
- Teachers, educators, administrators
- Business community
- ALICE families
- It’s all about how you market your product
- Need a comprehensive list of who is working on ALICE and what they are doing