

Long Branch Partners (LBP) Meeting Minutes (5/19)

❖ Meeting Scheduled Start (3:30)

➤ Agenda

- Update on Needs
 - Are there any new or emerging needs you have seen arising in the community?
 - Are there any helps or resources that you or community members need help with that are not currently being addressed?
- Update on Resources and Programs
 - Update on Emergency Assistance Relief Payments (EARP) implementation
 - Food distribution expansion
- Update on Sharing Resources by spreadsheet
- Are there other ways to share information or collaborate?

❖ 16 Attendees

- Bruce Baker. - CHEER
- Christopher Hinton. – CHEER
- Sara Mussie. – Impact Silver Spring
- Ken Flemmer. - ACSGW
- Anthea Levy. - CHEER
- Lisa Buttner. – Direct Support for Immigrants (DSI), CHEER, Neighbor of Long Branch
- Reemberto Rodriguez. – Director of Silver Spring Regional Center
- Claudine Schneider. – Co. Chair of Emergency Preparedness Committee
- Luis Martinez. – MC Department of Health and Human Services, Diversity Outreach
- Monica Goldberg. – TESS Community Action Center
- Melissa Ferguson. – Community Action Agency
- Julia Sarmiento. – City of Takoma Park
- Dayana Muniz. - CentroNía
- Vanesa Pinto. – CHEER
- Pat Wellington. – Community Health Nurse for Montgomery County
- Victoria Hall.

❖ Review of Agenda (3:38)

- Bruce

❖ Quick Introduction (3:42)

- Members introduced themselves in the chat feature

❖ Updates on New or Emerging Needs

➤ Vanesa (3:44)

- Has been able to help with people in a situation where a house member is sick and presenting with symptoms of the virus, so the entire household decides not to go out into the community
 - There are other situations with families who are concerned about going outside because they do not have transportation, so they are not getting food
- Community members are helping each other when someone cannot or is hesitant about going out into the community
- Food distribution directly to community member homes would be beneficial

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- Is aware of more COVID-19 cases appearing in the 20903 area
- Apartment landlords are sending people notices saying that because people are late paying their rent, they will be charged a late fee
 - ◆ There are other situations where landlords are telling people to leave their rent payments at a mailbox and the landlord will get in contact with the residents when they receive the payment
 - ◆ This is an issue because there is no documentation of this transaction which could be an issue for the resident if the landlord either does not get the payment or decides to say they did not receive the payment
- Has asked community members to take a picture of these notices for proof
- **Bruce (3:50)**
 - Has heard a report from the Office of Emergency Management where an undocumented individual was evicted during this period where evictions are not allowed
 - Asks if anyone else has heard a similar story or has heard of a situation where someone is being mistreated, or pressured inappropriately regarding their housing situation
 - If someone is experiencing an illegal eviction, they can call the non-emergency number for the police
- **Reemberto (3:52)**
 - If anyone does know of a related situation, please call 3-1-1 to report it
- **Pat (3:53)**
 - Works with undocumented individuals who rent from people who are legal
 - The undocumented residents are getting pressured about having to pay rent in June but are afraid to report this because they are undocumented
- **Julia (from the chat)**
 - City of Takoma Park has been receiving a lot of emails from tenants who are falling behind or are behind with their rent payment
- **Sara (3:55)**
 - Has heard about rent increases, particularly in Takoma Park
 - Knows a community member whose landlord had told her to pay what she can due to a personal crisis she is in (indirectly related to COVID-19)
- **Melissa (3:56)**
 - 3-1-1 is the number to call to report landlord-tenant affairs issues in the county are handled
 - Sent Bruce information on the speakers from the emergency assistance coalition meeting last week which included people from the renter's alliance
 - Office of Landlord Tenant Affairs are well aware of these issues and can help people learn their rights during the pandemic
 - Yesterday sent Bruce information on a new rent relief program through DHHS and housing stabilization services
 - This is not being widely advertised because when EARP was rolled out there was a subsequent lawsuit against the county
 - Rent relief program can be accessed by calling 3-1-1 to find out about eligibility
- **Lisa (3:58)**

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- Has heard a fair number of stories about people who are fearful of leaving their apartment
- Recently spoke with a mom who said she wasn't going to get school provided food anymore because she would have to take her kids with her, and she is concerned about contracting the virus
- Availability of masks for community members is a concern
 - Has suggested that families use any fabric that they can wrap around their face as an alternative to no mask at all
- Has emphasized the importance of getting outside simply for a change of environment and to get fresh air
- Knows of a few families who are fearful of the hospital
 - Has been told that some families think they will be killed if they go to the hospital, so they choose to stay home and not seek treatment or testing
 - Suggests that an information outreach campaign may be useful to combat unwarranted fears
- **Vanesa (4:01)**
 - Reports that community members are receiving misinformation about what they should be doing right now to stay safe and healthy
 - People are choosing to default to methods of treating common cold instead of seeking the appropriate treatment for COVID-19 related symptoms
 - **Pat (from the chat)**
 - ◆ Reports that some of her patients are going to curanderos (a person who uses spiritual remedies to heal ailments) and sobadoras (a person who uses manual massage to treat physical ailments) instead of doctors
 - Also reports that community members are fearful of hospitals because of horror stories they have heard
 - Community members are reporting increasing stress with the impact of the pandemic; these notices from landlords about late rent fees is adding on to their list of stressors
 - Is there something someone can do legally to prevent these landlords from threatening these late fees?
- **Sara (4:03)**
 - Reaffirms the existing fear of going to the hospital from community members
 - Shared a story where dad, wife, and children were showing symptoms of COVID-19
 - Wife was in bad condition, coughing blood
 - Sara and the parents called 3-1-1 on a three-way call to speak to a nurse; the nurse felt that the family should call 9-1-1 because of the wife's condition
 - Sara had to do a lot of convincing because the family was undocumented and did not have health insurance
 - Wife finally went to the hospital and is now in stable condition
 - Families are concerned about how they are going to pay for hospital bill, this is where a majority of their fear regarding hospitals comes from
 - IMPACT is partnered with a group called "The Go Team"
 - For families that need to be tested but are fearful of the hospital, Sara can refer the family to this group and the group can go to the home and administer testing
- ❖ **New programs and services (4:08)**

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- **Emergency Assistance and Relief Program (EARP)**
 - **Bruce (4:09)**
 - ◆ CHEER has signed up to be a referring agency
 - ◆ Bruce's understanding is that there are 7 agencies in total that will be referring agencies and will be distributing the payments
 - ◆ Does anyone have more information?
 - **Sara (4:10)**
 - ◆ IMPACT is another agency that will administer the EARP
 - ◆ Mary's Center, CASA, Family Services, and Catholic Charities are other agencies that Sara knows are referring agencies as well
 - **Lisa**
 - DSI is also a referring agency for the EARP
 - ◆ IMPACT has over 500 people in their database who are in need of financial assistance, but IMPACT is only eligible to assist 430 people
 - In order to be eligible a participant's income level must meet a certain guideline, and participants cannot have previously received financial assistance from the county or federal government
 - The income level guideline is ridiculously low; Sara knows a single father who only works two days a week and does not earn much and he is not qualified
 - IMPACT will be mindful of these individuals who do not meet the guideline but do need assistance, so they can be helped in some other way
 - **Bruce (4:13)**
 - ◆ To his understanding the guideline is that eligible participants must have a maximum income of 50% of the federal poverty level
 - ◆ This means you could be at poverty level and in a situation where you cannot afford rent, and you would not be eligible for the EARP
 - **Sara**
 - ◆ To provide context, for one person their monthly income must be \$532 dollars and below and for eight people in a household the total monthly income must be \$1038 dollars a month and below
 - ◆ Can someone with no ITIN or social security apply for EARP? Yes – Sara (Question from Chat)
 - **Robert**
 - ◆ If someone does not meet the monthly income eligibility requirement for the EARP, is there a list of resources that those ineligible people can turn to in order to seek assistance elsewhere?
 - **Sara**
 - ◆ IMPACT has been sharing information regarding food assistance, financial assistance, and assistance for various other resources
 - ◆ IMPACT right now is trying to develop a program where they can help people who do not qualify for these financial assistance programs
 - ◆ Sara suggests that organizations that have the capacity should give what they can, even if it is just a \$25-dollar gift card because even small assistance makes a difference

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- **Melissa (from the chat)**
 - ◆ TESS Community Action Center can connect people to emergency resources – programs and resources for utilities, rent, etc.
- **Robert**
 - ◆ Does IMPACT reach out to schools if they know of families with children who attend these schools, and are in situations where families cannot or have not received any assistance?
- **Sara (4:19)**
 - ◆ That is a great idea, but not something that she has personally done. However, she and IMPACT do implement outreach in other ways
- **Vanesa (4:20)**
 - Community members have expressed the need for increased availability of diapers
 - Community members have also expressed their gratitude for all of the organizations that are providing assistance locally because they do not want to have to use public transportation to access the resources they need
- **Ken (4:21)**
 - Prepacked produce boxes are a great resource
 - The capacity and opportunity to put healthy food into the community is great

❖ **Food Distribution Expansion**

- **Bruce (4:22)**
 - Food resources have been expanding which is great
 - We, as Long Branch Partners, want to know who has the food assistance capacity and where these resources are so that we can refer people to them
- **Lisa (from the chat)**
 - DSI got a \$24K MoCo food access grant to serve 24 families over 3 months
- **Ken (4:25)**
 - ACSGW ordered 700 pallettes initially
 - Has called other pantries in the area to pass along the excess; they have all told him they are under pressure to buy more pallettes and distribute more of these produce boxes
- **Bruce**
 - Montgomery County Emergency Food Access grants were issued and now 38 organizations are able to expand their resources
 - CHEER is trying to partner with New Hampshire Estates Elementary School to expand their food distribution efforts
 - CHEER can do some direct household food delivery services through their Food is Medicine Program
- **Ken**
 - Came under pressure to work with YMCA and Linkages to Learning to serve families with children that attend New Hampshire's Estates Elementary School; looking to include Rolling Terrace afterwards
 - Not sure if he can begin to deliver direct-to-home because plate is full

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- Is willing to participate in collaboration in some way with organizations who have the capacity and availability to implement direct-to-home food delivery
- **Reemberto (4:28)**
 - Emailed Long Branch Partners members asking what they are doing to contribute to food distribution in the community
 - Received a lot of great responses
 - Included a link in the chat to a document with listed food assistance related resources:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C4084m5a9YhwzbQyQxefp1MqTCZJ8fBP/view?usp=sharing>
- **Bruce/Christopher (4:29)**
 - So far there have been four responses to the resource sharing and needs tool that was sent to every Long Branch Partner member
 - Thus far we have responses from Maureen L., Carlos P., Ken F., and Bruce B.
 - We are still in the early stages of developing the tool so there is plenty of time for members to update the tool with their resources and services
 - Please send your responses to the tool to Christopher at christopher@communitycheer.org
- **Sara (4:31)**
 - If we had a database of volunteers that can be contacted when an organization needs manpower to implement a service, this could be beneficial
- **Claudine (4:33)**
 - ◆ How do we access food resource information so it can be shared with the community?
 - **Bruce**
 - ◆ The Montgomery County Food Council has a collection of resources on their website
 - ◆ Food resource map indicates all of the pantries/food distribution sites in the county
 - **Melissa**
 - ◆ Included a link to the Montgomery County Food Council
 - ◆ If you contact Marla Caplon of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) she can help you arrange to provide produce boxes to families in need
 - ◆ Marla_R_Caplon@mcpsmd.org
- **Vanesa (4:36)**
 - Community members are grateful for food boxes with fresh produce, they are a better alternative to canned foods

❖ **Next Meeting: Tuesday May 26th @ 3:30 PM**

❖ **Information Included in the Chat:**

- https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DHCA/dhca_cares.html#Information%20for%20Renters – Link to Renters Protection, including the notice of NO evictions indefinitely

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- <https://giphy.com/stories/heres-a-gif-by-gf-guide-to-making-a-no-sew-face-mask-1c05284b-3131> - Link to manufacturing your own mask
- RentersAlliance.org – Link to report landlord-tenant issues
- https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS/RightNav/Coronavirus_EARP.html - For information on the EARP
- <https://mocofoodcouncil.org/covid-19-local-food-system-resources/> - Link to find out how to access produce boxes
- List of EARP referring organizations
 - African Communities Together (ACT)
 - Baltimore Field Office
 - Camp Fire Patuxent Area Council
 - CAREERCATCHERS, Inc.
 - CASA de Maryland, Inc.
 - Catholic Charities Family Services, Inc.
 - CollegeTracks
 - CHEER
 - Community Reach of Montgomery County
 - Eastern Montgomery Emergency Assistance Network (EMEAN)
 - Family Learning Solutions, Inc.
 - First African Methodist Episcopal Church of Gaithersburg
 - Generation Hope
 - Impact Silver Spring
 - Identity, Inc.
 - Interfaith Works
 - Kids In Need of Defense
 - Mary's Center
 - Ministries United of Silver Spring/Takoma Park (MUSST)
 - Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP)
 - Western Upper Montgomery County (WUMCO)
 - Help, Inc.
 - YMCA Youth & Family Services