



WESTPORT

## Department of Human Services

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Telephone (203) 341-1050

00.11 CPAL  
00.12 CPSIS

### Town of Westport Public Hearings June 8, 2022 MINUTES

**Attendees:**

- Elaine Daignault, Westport Human Services Director;
- Steve Smith, Westport Building Official;
- Helen McAlinden, President & CEO;
- Paris Looney, Vice President & COO;
- Jessica Kubicki, Chief Initiative Officer, Opening Doors;
- Gabrielle Padilla, Western CT CAN Manager;
- Candice Savin, 3<sup>rd</sup> Selectwoman;
- Claudia Coplen, Westport resident;
- Lee Bollert, Westport resident;
- Harris Falk, RTM District 1;
- Holly Betts, Westport Senior Center;
- Kristen Witt, Westport Human Services;
- Sibel Yorlumaz, Human Services Finance Director;
- Annette Daugelli, Human Services Case Manager

00.11 CPAL  
Copy of Public Hearing Attendees List

00.12 CPSIS  
Copy of Public Hearing Sign-In Sheet

Elaine Daignault opened the meeting with a brief overview of the purpose of the public hearings about the Small Cities Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), which require citizen participation in all program phases. Elaine also announced that she is the Citizen Participation Coordinator for all matters concerning citizen participation activities.

Mrs. Daignault described the history of the Small Cities Grants under the US Dept of Housing and Urban Development under the guidelines of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The Town of Westport's population is 28,500 and is therefore eligible for the Small Cities Program available to municipalities with populations under 50,000 people. The Small Cities Grant Program Applications must meet one of 3 broad national objectives, including 1) benefit low and moderate-income (LMI) persons or households; 2) prevent or eliminate slums or blight; 3) meet an urgent need.

### HEARING I: SC2015801 – Public Service Homelessness Diversion

Mrs. Daignault opened the first hearing on Public Service Grant SC2015801– the 2020 Public Service Grant to address Homelessness through Diversion. This is Westport's 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive grant on behalf of the FFLD County Coordinated Access Network infrastructure.

Mrs. Daignault introduced presenters from the Housing Collective, the backbone agency for the FFLD County CAN, Jessica Kubicki, Chief Initiatives Officer, and Gabrielle Padilla, Western CT. CAN Manager.

Ms. Kubicki invited Helen McAlinden, President & CEO, and Paris Looney, Vice President & COO, to define Diversion, the strategy used in CT to prevent homelessness.

Mrs. McAlinden explained that the goal of the Fairfield County CAN is to prevent individuals seeking shelter from entering the shelter in the first place by assisting them when they call 211. Navigators/Diversionary specialists offer safe alternatives to shelter placement by providing financial assistance, conflict resolution, mediation, and case management. She described scenarios where a dedicated Diversion Specialist was able to divert an individual or family from a shelter.

Ms. Looney spoke about how Diversion slows things down to allow time to assess barriers to housing and help keep individuals out of the shelter system. It allows a specialist to find the core issues of the situation to address individual needs.

Mrs. McAlinden reviewed the FC CAN Partners who benefit from the grant.

Small Cities have contributed 7.5 FTEs to the FFC CAN system. The following agencies benefit from the grant by funding Diversionary Specialists.

1. Alpha Community Services (1 FTE – Team Leader)
2. Association for Religious Communities (.5 FTE)
3. Catholic Charities (1 FTE)
4. Homes with Hope (2 FTEs)
5. Pacific House (1 FTE)
6. Recovery Network of Programs (1 FTE)
7. Triangle Community Center (1 FTE)
8. Supportive Housing Works (Coordination/Administration)

Mrs. Kubicki reviewed a comparison of individuals diverted from shelter placement from year to year, outlining the number of households diverted, broken down by individuals and families. Jessica noted the significant increase in Diversion before the grant in 2017, which helped the network maximize staff resources. Mrs. Padilla stated there were less than four navigators throughout Fairfield County before the Town applied for funding in 2017. There is a more significant need for individuals, than families in the system. The decrease in families from 2020-2021 is due to the pandemic and the moratorium on evictions. She described the incline in those diverted from

shelters, reflecting better techniques in Diversion, resolving barriers to housing, and increased funding leading to better outcomes.

Q: Ms. Coplen – asked for clarification of terminology. The difference between individuals vs. families.

A: Families are present (with two or more individuals). There are many nuances. The graph represents per household composition – could be a traditional family with w/kids under 18; could be a group of 2 adults and/or siblings as one household, if two adults/couple require only one bedroom – they are counted as individuals.

Ms. Padilla was introduced as the CAN manager who oversees the entry side of the CAN system. She stated that the most significant impact of the grant is that entering a shelter isn't always the answer; it's about coming up with other options. COVID decompression led to less shelter availability. Only able to shelter about 60% of those needed, now serving less with COVID restrictions. They are making Diversion a more critical aspect of services. Barriers and challenges – moratorium lifted have led to an increase in 211 calls due to evictions, loss of housing, etc. For those at imminent risk, crisis response is triage and case conferencing at that moment to refer or provide any information or resource that they need. Pro – able to process individuals more quickly and no-show rates reduced. CT rent rate has increased, thus decreasing affordable housing stock, in combination with migration from cities to CT. Pay has not kept up with the inflation rate, causing more difficulty finding someplace people can afford. Ms. Looney noted that credit scores, mental health, substance abuse, eviction, and criminal history negatively affect individuals' ability to rent because landlords don't want to risk it.

As a result of COVID, the following improvements were made to the system. Same-day callback, warm transfer for those w/out phone call back numbers, back to sub-community specific appointments, drop-in days in each community, eliminated sub-population navigators so all diversionary specialists can serve all clients regardless of age/status. This list is a culmination of the Housing Collective's inquiries to partners, providers, and DOH.

Navigators can be reached by dialing 211 for an intake with a specialist. The small number of specialists led to an overwhelmed system where navigators had trouble responding to calls. The grant funding allowed homeless serving agencies to maximize subpopulations and address the significant need for individuals to find housing. The goal is to do less sheltering and minimize wait times for shelter placement to end homelessness throughout the state.

Mrs. Daignault thanked our guest speakers and reiterated the importance of the 211 Coordinated Access System, and outlined some of the limitations of municipal social workers. There were no further questions or comments from the public. Hearing #1 closed.

SC2015803 – Cares Act  
Homelessness and Food Insecurity

Elaine Daignault formally opened Hearing # 2 to review a CARES Act grant to address Homelessness and Food Insecurity during the pandemic.

Ms. Daignault noted that the funds became available in 2020. The initial funding request was for \$500,000 - \$250,000 for Homes with Hope Gillespie and \$250,000 for rent assistance. The second portion of the grant was shifted to Homes with Hope because the state ended up using ARPA funds through UniteCT, making a local program unnecessary.

The Town has since amended the application request to \$1,000,000 due to structural issues and the cost of supplies since the pandemic affected these resources. The Gillespie Center is a Town-owned property that the Town rents to Homes with Hope for \$1 a year.

Helen McAlinden reviewed Homes with HopHope's mission of providing homeless services to individuals in Fairfield County including Shelter, Diversion, Food, Rapid Rehousing, etc. Gillespie is one of 3 in the US in an affluent suburban Town. COVID caused significant disruptions in the service to those in need. This funding will help make necessary changes to improve the delivery of services.

Paris Looney, Gillespie is staffed 24 hours/day – professional case management services, coordination and collaboration between CAN partners to help clients navigate housing crises. Elaine notes that the renovation does not include any change of use, it's an improvement to the current services and facilities.

Steve Smith, Westport Building Official, provided an overview of the renovations. Steve has 40 years of building experience and put a building committee together through the Building Site and Building Commission to advise the project. Front of building, no change in footprint, just two dormers to enhance the food pantry capacity. Most of the project is upgrades, air quality improvements, and efficiencies to the building. Adding a handicap bathroom and improving interior access to the women's shelter so women no longer need to go outside to access the common area and food service. The plans also include an isolation shelter space to enhance health and safety measures. The laundry facilities will be updated. Steve noted that there will be a new entryway that connects directly to the food pantry upstairs and adds a dumbwaiter for food distribution. On the second floor, the current food pantry is only accessed through the community room and serves as a supply closet. A new dormer will allow for greater flexibility and floor space, to accommodate distribution and client meeting space with less contact between volunteers, staff, and clients. A modest addition will also include a new HVAC system.

Q: Ms. Coplen– what is the timeline for the project completion?

A: Timeline depends on zoning approvals – a couple of months to obtain permits, develop final drawings, 6 months from putting it out to bid. The scope of the project has changed so we need to complete the final plans and hope to start the project within

6 months. Construction costs have risen, so our timing may actually help with the cost of labor and supplies.

Elaine notes that they are planning to submit an amended application for the \$1,00,000 to certify the application and submit it to DOH for final approval and restart the project. Ingress and egress, Isolation space, access to the food pantry.

Q: Ms. Coplen - No change to footprint means that Gillespie will serve the same number of people in that shelter?

A: Ms. Looney - no change in the number of people served.

Q: Harris Falk – what is the transition plan for service during renovation.

A: Mrs. McAlinden - Plan is not to have any interruption in sheltering. The Project will be phased to accommodate current service and continue to fulfill the mission.

Comment: Harris suggested that we approach open office space to utilize if needed.

Q: Ms. Coplen– who does the food pantry serve?

A: Ms. Looney– services whoever is in need, ask for a bit of information, but they help anyone who asks

Comment: Elaine mentions that the Human Services utilized both the Gillespie Pantry and the Women's Club to help people dealing with food insecurity. Gillespie also has two hot meals served

Comment: Helen McAlinden provided the following statistics:

454 people received groceries through pantry

70 people were sheltered

2100 meals were distributed for individuals in need.

Q: Mr. Falk asked about what is provided through the pantry. Groceries and toiletries?


A: Ms. McAlinden - Gillespie provides both groceries and personal products. Personal hygiene and cleaning products are provided to supplement SNAP benefits during covid.

Elaine also introduced Human Services Finance Manager Sibel Yorulmaz who is managing the financial aspect

Helen McAlinden thanked the Town for their support.

Comment: Harris Falk thanked the panel for their efforts.

Elaine closed the public hearing #2.




**Town of Westport Public Hearings**  
June 8, 2022

**HEARING I:**  
SC2015801 – Public Service  
*Homelessness Diversion*

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**HEARING II:**  
SC2015803 – Cares Act  
*Homelessness and Food Insecurity*

Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Funding




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**Why Public Hearings?**

- Small Cities Community Development Block Grants require citizen participation in all phases of the programs(s)
- The purpose of the public hearing is to obtain citizen's views on the Town's community development and housing needs and review and discuss specific project activities in the areas of housing, economic development, or community facilities
- Elaine Daignault, Director of The Department of Human Services, serves as the Citizen Participation Coordinator for all matters concerning citizen participation activities.

Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Funding




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**What is the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), aka Small Cities Program**

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the guidelines of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974
- Primarily benefits low-and moderate-income (LMI) persons
- The Small Cities Program is only available to Connecticut towns and cities with populations of less than 50,000
- Must meet one of 3 broad national objectives: 1) benefit to low and moderate-income (LMI) persons or households; 2) prevent eliminate slums or blight; 3) meet an urgent need.


Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Funding



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**HEARING I:**  
SC2015801 – Public Service  
*Homelessness Diversion Program Update*  
Fairfield County CAN Small Cities Public Service: Diversion




**Introductions:**  
Elaine Daignault, MA, NCC Director Westport Human Services


**Program Update on behalf of the Fairfield County CAN:**  
Jessica Kubicki, LCSW Chief Initiative Officer Opening Doors Fairfield County  
Gabiella Padilla, Western CT CAN Manager





Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Funding



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**HEARING I:**  
SC2015801 – Public Service  
*Homelessness Diversion Program Update*  
Fairfield County CAN Small Cities Public Service: Diversion





(See HC SLIDES)


Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Funding



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**HEARING II:**  
SC2015803 – Cares Act  
*Homelessness and Food Insecurity*  
**PROJECT UPDATE**




**Introductions:**  
Elaine Daignault, Director Westport Human Services

**Gillespie Overview:**  
Helen McAlinden, President & CEO  
Paris Looney, Vice President & COO

**Gillespie Project Overview:**  
Steve Smith, Westport Building Official  
Joan O'Riordan, AIA | NCARB  
Principal Architect



Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Funding

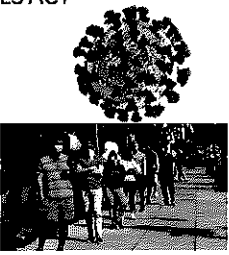



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### SPECIAL APPLICATION FOR CORONAVIRUS FUNDING (SC CDBG- CV) UNDER THE CARES ACT

CDBG funds may be used for a range of eligible activities that prevent and respond to the spread of infectious diseases such as the coronavirus.

- Buildings and Improvements, Including Public Facilities
- Assistance to Businesses, Including Special Economic Development Assistance
- Provision of New or Quantifiably Increased Public Services
- Planning, Capacity Building, and Technical Assistance



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### CDBG Program Service Set-Asides

**PAST GRANTS:** The Town of Westport has successfully submitted (3) PUBLIC SERVICE applications to support Homelessness Diversion Infrastructure for the Fairfield County Coordinated Access Network (CAN) catchment area.

**NEW GRANT: 2020 CARES ACT Funding to PREVENT, PREPARE OR RESPOND TO COVID19**


- Westport's initial request for \$500,000 to fund (2) separate projects was amended per DOH directive with all funds directed to Homelessness and Food Insecurity Facility Improvements for Homes With Hope's Gillespie Center.
- Westport revising the requested amount to \$1,000,000 to accommodate the rising cost of improvements to the facility and address structural issues discovered during pre-project activities.

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### Homes With Hope Gillespie Center Homeless Shelter

- 37+ years - shelter, diversion, food, and rapid rehousing services for homeless and at-risk residents of Westport, Norwalk and Fairfield County CAN.
- The Gillespie Center's Emergency Shelter and Food Pantry is one of only three shelters located in an affluent suburban town in the United States.
- COVID-19 has caused significant disruption to the shelter's accommodations and food pantry distribution.
- Requested funds for improvements to the food pantry, shelter, and overall delivery of services to protect the health and safety of all



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### Homes With Hope Gillespie Center



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### Gillespie Center Renovations


45 Jesup Road, Westport, CT 06880

**Town of Westport Gillespie Center**  
 Jennifer Tucker, First Selectwoman  
 Town Hall, 118 Myrtle Avenue, Westport, CT 06880

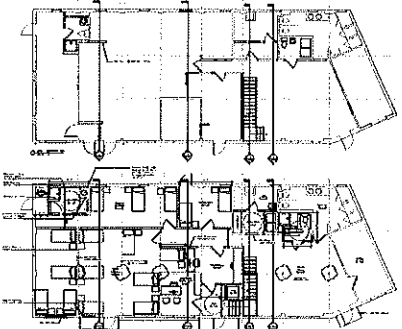
**CDBG Small Cities 2021 Program**  
 Governor Ned Lamont  
 State of Connecticut

**Sella Mesquero Erero, Commissioner**  
 State of Connecticut Department of Housing

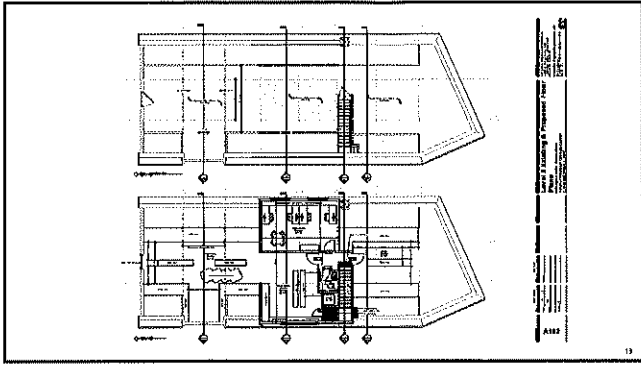
**PROGRESS SET**  
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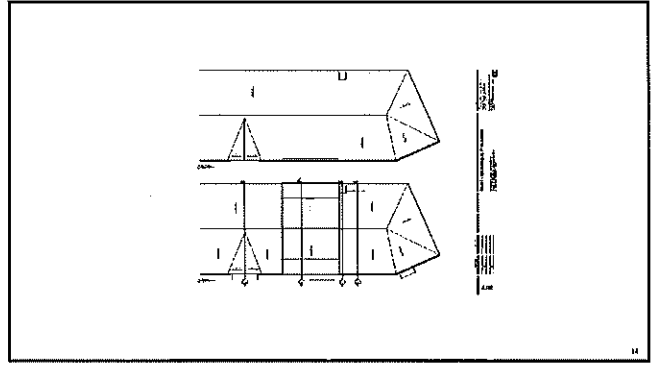
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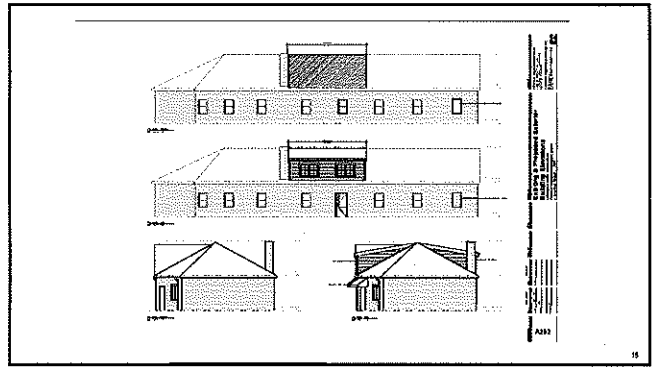
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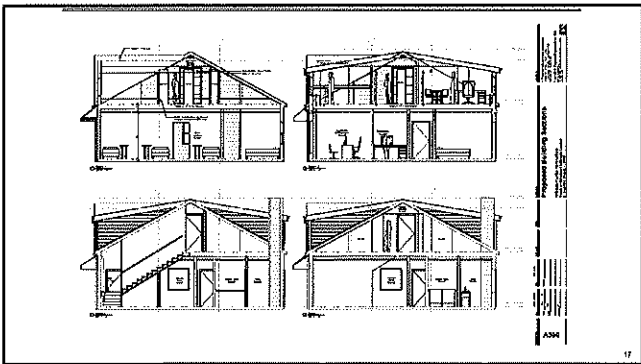
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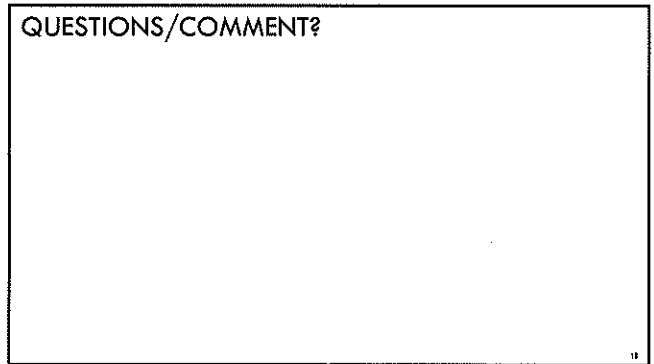
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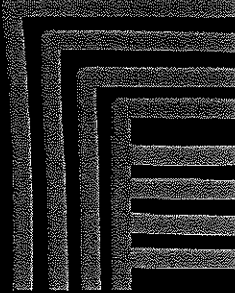
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


# CT Department of Housing Small Cities Diversion Program

Progress Report FY 20



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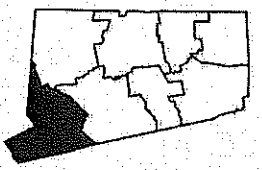


## FAIRFIELD COUNTY SMALL CITIES PUBLIC SERVICE: DIVERSION


Introductions by the Town of Westport:  
Elaine Delgado, HUMAN SERVICES DIRECTOR

Homes with Hope on behalf of FC CAN  
Nolan McAlinden, PRESIDENT & CEO  
Paris Looney, VICE PRESIDENT & COO

Housing Collective, FC CAN backbone organization  
Jessica Kubiak, CHIEF INITIATIVE OFFICER, OPENING DOORS  
Gabrielle Pasile, WESTERN CT CAN MANAGER



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## FAIRFIELD COUNTY'S SMALL CITIES TEAM

**FC Partners:**


1. Alpha Community Services (1 FTE – Team Leader)
2. Association for Religious Communities (.5 FTE)
3. Catholic Charities (1 FTE)
4. Homes with Hope (2 FTEs)
5. Pacific House (1 FTE)
6. Recovery Network of Programs (1 FTE)
7. Triangle Community Center (1 FTE)
8. Supportive Housing Works (Coordination/Administration)

All together, Small Cities has contributed 7.5 FTEs to the FFC CAN system.

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## WHAT IS DIVERSION?

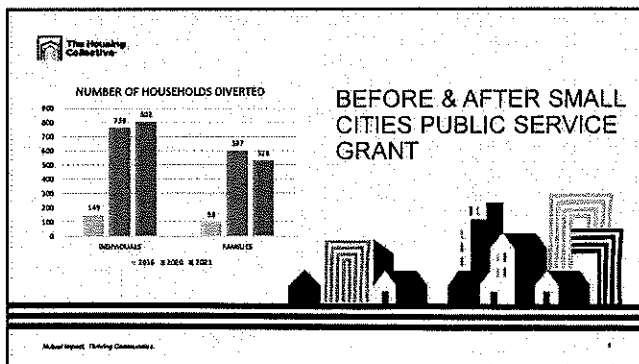


Diversion is a strategy that prevents homelessness for people seeking shelter by helping them identify immediate, safe alternative housing arrangements, and if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing.

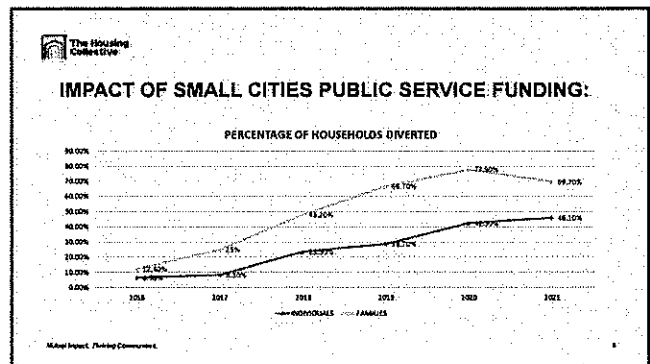
**Diversion strategies include:**

- Conflict resolution / mediation
- Transportation / relocation assistance
- Rental arrearages / assistance
- Security deposits
- Case management


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 **COVID IMPACTED THE FC CAN SYSTEM**

**211 / CAN ASSESSMENT CALLS**


- Wait times for 211 increased significantly
- CAN assessments went to call backs
- Wait times for CAN call backs increased
- Challenge to connect with clients who don't have the ability for a call back
- Lack of in person engagement

**DIVERSION TACTICS / RESOURCES**

- Housing inventory, housing affordability, and eviction screening process by landlords
- Decompressed shelter beds
- Previous evictions rate increased
- Sustainability income doesn't match housing prices
- Relocation out of the community of preference

Mental Health, Thriving Communities 7

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 **IMPROVEMENTS MADE TO THE SYSTEM AS A RESULT OF COVID**

Adjustments were made through the following assessments:  
Data review, feedback and suggestions from funders, providers, and participants; and conferencing with other CANs.

**HOW CAN WE SERVE THE POPULATION IN NEED AS EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE?**

**IMPROVED THE ASSESSMENT AND SCREENING PROCESS**

**WENT BACK TO SUB-COMMUNITY SPECIFIC ASSESSMENTS**


**IMPROVED THE ASSESSMENT AND SCREENING PROCESS**


**IMPROVED THE ASSESSMENT AND SCREENING PROCESS**

**IMPROVED THE ASSESSMENT AND SCREENING PROCESS**

Mental Health, Thriving Communities 8

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 **QUESTIONS?**



Mental Health, Thriving Communities 9

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LB

Thank you! Hoping the  
good work can continue.

Me to Everyone

Elaine Daignault  
203-341-1165

Jessica Kubicki to Everyone

JK

thank you for having us!

Gabrielle Padilla to Everyone

GP

Thank You!

Helen McAlinden, Homes with... to Everyone

HM

Thank you Jessica and  
Gabriella for a wonderful  
presentation. We appreciate  
the support and backbone  
support of the Housing  
Collective.

Candice Savin to Everyone

CS

Good stuff! Thanks to all.

Lee Bollert to Everyone

LB

These are very exciting  
changes! I'll sure the staff,

volunteers and residents