



Meeting Notes - COVID-19 Regional Response Team (RRT) Call #6

Thursday, April 23rd 2020

3:00-4:00 pm

Facilitated by:

Jason Purnell, Washington University in St. Louis

Rebecca Bennett, Emerging Wisdom LLC

WELCOME – JASON PURNELL

Jason opened the meeting by reminding everyone that we've pivoted from lead agencies to clusters and now to campaigns and strike teams, which is the right pivot, based on the team's feedback, for the action-oriented approach we want. He reassured the team that none of the work stops because we've identified certain campaigns that require immediate teams and responses to get to solutions. We continue to support all the groups even if there isn't a specific campaign put into action right now. We still need everyone at the table coordinating and collaborating.

CAMPAIGN UPDATES – REBECCA BENNETT

Rebecca invited the RRT to consider where they may be able to provide input in areas that the team leaders still require help.

Strike Team Reports:

1. Unhoused

Grace Kyung gave a high-level update, noting that they've been meeting with lots of partners about how to provide medical and behavioral healthcare to this population. The focus has been on encampments, hospitals, and those quarantined.

Tammy Laws gave the update on challenge in St. Louis City:

- Substance addiction among those who are in quarantine
- Proper sanitation and portable toilets in encampments
- Food for encampments is going to run out at some point
 - Many are living in vacant buildings and not making themselves known so it isn't always clear where to drop off food.
- Communication and cohesive messaging around reserving shelter beds, the process of which is handled by the Department of Human Services

Yusef Scroggin gave the update for St. Louis County:

- The County, SLARCC, and the Regional Commission on Homelessness have been meeting weekly

- MOUs were put in place in Jefferson, Franklin, and Simon Counties to collect data and codify what was happening relative to isolation and quarantine. Dozens have participated.
- Substance abuse issues exist, causing some leaving the hospital to be reluctant to go into quarantine because of the need to feed their habit. Luckily all of those people were negative, but that is a potential challenge.
- Additional space has opened at North County Recreational Center. MOUs outline a number of supports required from parties involved.

Todd Barnes provided an update for St. Charles County:

- Since March 16th, 20 have been housed, three of which had medium or high risk for COVID-19.
 - An additional case manager was hired for coordinated entry to help with the increased volume
 - Daily medical checks are performed on the 20
- Encampments have shrunk, and the people there aren't showing any signs of having the virus.
- Street outreach continues to provide food.
- Prevention services are being ramped up along with Lincoln and Warren Counties.
 - \$5,800 in rent assistance was paid from a United Way grant. They have approached partners to help with funds for the wave they see coming.
 - They will likely add an additional case manager in the next few months.

Evan Krauss provided an update for the St. Louis COAD efforts:

- A high volume of calls has been coming in to agencies for help; most agencies are at near exhaustion of their funds.
- Call for Help recently got a \$166,000 grant from the IL Department of Human Services to help with the placement of about 100 families in the area (a high number of families).
- They are trying to gauge what the numbers and levels of need are, as well as what will happen after the temporary stays are done.
- They are hearing and trying to validate the decisions of the IL Department of Corrections to release folks with low level offenses. There are concerns about if they have housing as well as other supports.
- Beds are very limited, and the ones they have are not great quality.
- Grace will be working with Evan to bring more resources into Metro East.

From the chat box:

Don Halpin shared that Catholic Charities St. Patrick Center is about to sign a contract with the city to rent out the top three floors of the former Little Sisters of the Poor building. The top floor will be a women's shelter and the next two floors will be for other homeless individuals.

Dave Sykora shared that besides Little Sisters of the Poor, the City has already filled 19 rooms at the Mark Twain hotel and 31 rooms at the Western Inn. Those beds are being filled via street outreach process with DHS. Regular year-round shelter beds are being filled through a combination of both outreach and coordinated entry. All persons are being fed now and on Monday will get a hot meal daily. Shelf stable meals and water are going to over 250 unhoused in the encampments.

Wendy Orson mentioned that they are working on virtual intakes within the shelters with someone from MO Network. They would put secured iPads on rollers for individuals to use and a coach could be on the line. They would try to get them interested in a virtual intake and be connected to services that way. There is an upcoming call with MO Network about this, and Wendy would love to pull people into the meeting if that would be helpful.

BHN also recently was told about an expansion program for Epic to have a counselor specifically in the city, but unfortunately that won't be until September.

2. Homebound older adults and individuals with disabilities

Stacey Easterling said they are continuing to work with the plan that was created by Catholic Charities and the Salvation Army folks, which is targeted outreach to the vulnerable people, identifying their immediate needs, and connecting them to the 211 United Way system, which serves as hub and navigator to match clients to services within 48 hours. The plan is getting refined and further developed.

Elizabeth George shared an RFP that she issued for funding targeted specifically to basic needs for older adults. The RFP was sent to a targeted set of organizations that has been part of the conversation since April 1. Proposals are due this Friday, April 24, decisions will be made by Tuesday, April 28, and funds are to be distributed by Friday, May 1.

The proposal review is being approached with a racial equity lens. The St. Louis City Seniors Fund has identified the zip codes that have the highest risk and greatest need for seniors and the disabled. That's where they will focus that first line of outreach.

3. School/Food – Katie Kaufmann

All districts are now serving meals through lots of workarounds and solutions with help from The St. Louis Food Pantry and the St. Louis Food Bank. Many districts have moved to a one day a week pickup or providing a week's worth of meals at once.

Questions are coming up about summer and what that will look like. Paul Ziegler is in constant communication there. Katie asked if RRT members can help support districts during the summer which will work differently this year than in the past. They are trying to stay ahead of the numbers and understand where challenges might pop up.

[This flyer](#) was developed last week and is on the RRT website. It outlines number of ways families can find assistance and other basic needs during this time.

From the chat box:

Nicole Hawkins said that if anyone doing food assistance needs volunteer support, they have access to National Guard Volunteers through May 19. They can do anything from set up to packing, food distribution and clean up. Please email Nicole at nhawkins@stlfoodbank.org for more information.

ONLINE RESOURCE – R3 EXCHANGE: Regional Response Resource Exchange – Rick Skinner, United Way

Rick introduced the team to the R3 Exchange, a platform built by Slalom (a tech consulting firm) where organizations can share information in real time and track supply and demands. Prioritized supply demands for the first release are food, toilet paper, sanitary items and diapers.

United Way will be serving as the backbone for this tool under the volunteer center.

It's in its final stages of development, but the team was invited to attend one of two demos the next day to provide any input or reactions.

Rick and Jason expressed thanks to Mel Donatelli and the team at Slalom for working on this.

OTHER UPDATES

1. Regional Response Fund – Elizabeth George

- 40 organizations have been awarded about \$1.25 mil so far.
- An RFP recently closed for any organization to apply for up to \$10k for their crisis response. They received 168 proposals and now have hard decisions on how to look at those and award approximately \$1.5 mil.
- They are keeping in mind the regional approach to make sure all five counties are receiving some services, including key areas that we are hearing need the most assistance.
- About \$5 mil was raised for this fund. After grants and the homebound project that leaves about \$2 mil going forward.
- They are holding on to some of that to continue to respond to emerging needs like the unhoused, mental health issues (including for essential workers), and the purchase of PPEs.

2. Distance Learning Update – Kristen Sorth via Jason Purnell

- The St. Louis County Library was able to purchase “playtime pads” which are PBS kids branded tablets. They will be distributed to the districts in Ritenour and Hancock, where superintendents expressed interest in them.

- Nine Network has over 40 teachers interested in doing online instruction. This is a workaround to the inability to secure hotspots. Nine Network will begin airing those teacher produced spots next Monday over the noon hour. The focus is on PreK-4th grade math and reading.
- The SLCL is acting as a distribution site for food and diapers and has received additional funding that will also include new books for children to be distributed as families come to get the other items.

3. Prepare STL / PPE – Rebecca Bennett

Prepare STL has been focusing on the most vulnerable populations in St. Louis, which are the African American communities. They are working to 1) stop the spread of virus and 2) survive the shelter in place orders. Rebecca’s role for this group is leading community outreach and engagement.

- They initiated street canvassing and have done three canvases so far. 78 community volunteers went to community “hotspots” – local businesses that remain open, receive heavy foot traffic and high visibility, like grocery stores, convenience stores, gas stations, etc. They have been able to reach 339 sites in 19 zip codes with info about the virus and resources.
- Most workers at these sites had no access to PPE whatsoever, so now efforts have expanded to take PPE kits with masks and gloves and instruction cards to the workers in those spaces. Distributions have been done through the Urban League.
 - They are hoping to do a survey around PPE needs for non-medical organizations that Karishma Furtado will be leading. More info on that to come next week.
 - From the chat box: Michelle Mitchell asked if the PPE model has been translated to school volunteers working prepping and distributing food.
- The volunteers who are working for this cause are being given financial support, as most have suffered income losses or employment loss.

COMMUNICATIONS – KELLY FERRARA

The team can use the C19RRT.org site for updates.

Kelly and Karishma have been discussing ways to make the survey information more shareable and useable. Stay tuned for more information about that.

If people/organizations want to participate in the RRT, they can go on the website and sign up under the “get engaged” section. They can also submit ideas and suggestions for campaigns there.

CONCLUSION – JASON PURNELL

Jason thanked everyone for their dedication and involvement both on the call and in the chat. He encouraged everyone to continue having conversations in between these meetings and to reach out if assistance with coordination is needed from our team.

Meetings will last one hour going forward, respecting the wishes of you all to make these calls shorter.

ADJOURN