

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

DATE: February 16, 2018

TO: Supervisor Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Mary Jo Meyers, Acting Director, Department of Health and Human Services

SUBJECT: **An informational report from the Acting Director, Department of Health and Human Services, providing an update on calls received by IMPACT 2-1-1 related to requests for housing services**

Background

At its December meeting, the Finance and Audit Committee requested a report on the calls received by IMPACT, Inc. related to housing and emergency shelter needs in the community. DHHS is submitting this informational report in response to this request.

Discussion

Since 2002, IMPACT, Inc. has operated the 2-1-1 information line providing Milwaukee County residents with efficient and easy access to community resources. In its 15 years serving the community, IMPACT has expanded access to include an online database of information and texting through mobile devices in addition to its 24-hour call center. Over 200,000 Milwaukeeans rely on these referrals each year.

Along with food, healthcare and clothing/personal needs, housing needs are among the top requested services for IMPACT 2-1-1. In 2017, approximately 40 percent of all calls were related to housing needs. "Housing needs" are broadly defined and can range from someone wanting to move but not knowing where to start, someone who has received an eviction and isn't sure of next steps, someone who is doubled-up or living with friends/family and not paying rent, someone in emergency shelter interested in housing, or someone who is sleeping outside who needs a roof over their head.

IMPACT assesses the caller's needs in relation to their presenting issue. For example, if someone just received a first eviction notice, this individual may be referred for legal assistance, eviction mediation and, if eligible, emergency rent assistance programs. Solutions also include connecting people to mainstream benefits like Food Share or Energy Assistance so they can dedicate more of their budget to rent and housing expenses; one-time assistance like rent assistance programs; legal assistance to mediate a potential eviction; showing them where to go to apply for subsidized housing; or referring them to emergency shelters, warming locations and many other resources.

All housing programs within Continuum of Care are mandated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to work within Coordinated Entry, a process developed to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equitable access and are quickly identified, assessed for, referred, and connected to housing and assistance based on their strengths and needs. Aside from

Coordinated Entry being mandated by HUD, it is a process that has made Milwaukee County more collaborative and inclusive in its efforts to end homelessness.

Through the Continuum of Care, Milwaukee County agency partners work together to ensure all potential resources are made available to those in need on a daily basis. Requests are assessed on several criteria including, but not limited to, whether or not the person is currently homeless or losing housing, family composition and the age of the children, and susceptibility to domestic violence or other safety concerns.

Through the Continuum of Care database, available beds are reported and filled in real time, ensuring the maximum number of available beds are utilized. Referrals to Coordinated Entry and non-Coordinated Entry shelters are based on the number of beds available. IMPACT 2-1-1 serves as the front door for screening and a point of referral for these cases. However, through HUD’s “no wrong door” philosophy, IMPACT works as part of the overall network serving Milwaukee County residents. Referrals to coordinated Entry and non-Coordinated Entry shelters are based on the number of beds available.

The chart below shows the 4th Quarter 2017 (October 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017) data for housing-related calls received by IMPACT, Inc. and the referrals completed. Please note there is overlap in the number of requests referred to housing resources and number of requests referred to Coordinated Entry/Non-Coordinated Entry shelter resources. This is due to callers in need of both types of assistance.

Total calls to the IMPACT 2-1-1 call center (from Milwaukee County residents)	27,237
# of Housing-related calls	10,250 (37.6% of all calls)
# of Initial requests for emergency shelter needs	7,281 (71.0% of all housing related calls)
# of requests for emergency shelter referred for other housing resources (legal resources, subsidized housing lists, DV resources, crisis nursery, etc.)	4,314
# of requests for emergency shelter referred to Coordinated Entry/non-Coordinated Entry shelter resources	2,987
# of <u>Unduplicated People</u> referred to a Coordinated Entry network shelter (this includes Cathedral Center, Community Advocates – Milwaukee Women’s Center, Guest House, Hope House, Salvation Army)	786

Recommendation

This report is informational and no action is required.



Mary Jo Meyers, Acting Director
Department of Health and Human Services

cc: County Executive Chris Abele
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