

THE CITY OF SUMMIT

N E W J E R S E Y

CITY HALL 512 SPRINGFIELD AVENUE SUMMIT, NJ 07901

In advance of a Common Council discussion at its Tuesday, April 18 meeting, we asked Christina M. Topolosky, Division Director of the Division of Individual & Family Support Services (DIFSS) in the Department of Human Services of County of Union to answer our questions about the Comprehensive Emergency Assistance System and Continuum of Care (CEAS/CoC) committee.

Our questions and her responses are listed below.

Why was the CEAS/CoC created?

The CEAS/CoC is a standing committee under the Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC) and is a requirement within the State-wide regulations (N.J.A.C. 10:2-3). Each county has HSAC and CEAS/CoC bodies.

What is the primary purpose of the CEAS committee?

CEAS serves as the primary vehicle for planning and coordinating the delivery of emergency services to the homeless (including designated core social services for the homeless and those at-risk of homelessness) within a county.

How is the CEAS governed?

This body is governed by the HSAC state regulations.

Does it cost money to join? Are there dues? Are there any required financial contributions?

There is no cost associated with CEAS/CoC. No dues or other financial contributions are required of a member of this body.

Is there a term length once a member joins or is membership indefinite?

Membership is indefinite.

What does joining the CEAS/CoC obligate Summit to do? What is still at our discretion?

There is no obligation once joining CEAS/CoC and membership may be terminated voluntarily. This body is a network of public (government) and private (private not-for-profit, for-profit, consumer advocate, volunteer, homeless/formerly homeless persons) participants responsible for integrated social services planning including services that provide housing or are intended to prevent homelessness, as well as the development of service priorities and spending plan priorities for homeless funds.

Are there reasons why joining the CEAS/CoC would benefit a municipality even if non-profit organizations from that community are already members?

Yes. Other municipalities within Union County are members. Participation allows you to know what services are available throughout the County to best assist/serve your residents and offers you the opportunity to participate in planning and funding priority discussions.

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What are the steps to leave or resign from the CoC?

If someone that is a CEAS/CoC member would need to leave/resign, a letter/email to the program staff would be sufficient.

Is there a penalty or consequence to leaving the CoC?

There is no penalty or consequence for leaving the CEAS/CoC body unless any particular grant funding your organization receives requires participation.

Can you please provide a list of all member organizations of the Union County CEAS/CoC?

Unfortunately, we do not share our membership list. However, attendance at a meeting would expose you to the network of organizations represented.

Is Hillside the only municipality in Union County that is a member of the CEAS/CoC? If so, what is your best guess as to why that is? If not, which other municipal governments are members?

I don't believe Hillside is a member. Currently we only have the following as active members:

City of Elizabeth/Linden/Rahway

Elizabeth/Plainfield Housing Authority

Other municipalities have been invited in the past but due to staff limitations were unable to participate.

What are the potential benefits to Summit? What is the potential "up-side"?

Participation on the CEAS Committee provides an opportunity to learn what resources are available throughout the County to best assist/serve your residents when situations arise. Attendance at meetings also allows Summit to influence human service program planning through input.

Is membership in the CEAS/CoC considered a pre-requisite to potentially applying for grant funds from the federal, state, or county governments?

Yes for all three.

What are the theoretical downsides to Summit? What are potential risks to Summit?

We envision no downsides to Summit should you choose to join the CEAS/CoC Committee. Rather, should you choose not to join, Summit may not build the relationships nor expand knowledge of contacts for various services. Through networking with fellow participants, other nonprofits and municipalities have forged alliances that assist them in meeting the needs of their residents.

Are specific programs and initiatives to address homelessness discussed? Can the specific programs be discussed openly outside of the CEAS/CoC or are the conversations considered confidential?

Yes. These conversations are generally not confidential. If any information is confidential, it will be disclosed before discussion starts or within a separate meeting.

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Are specific cases related to individual people discussed? If so, is there a mechanism to protect the identity of individuals being discussed?

Yes. Private information is maintained by the organizations serving an individual/family. There may be a conversation before the meeting and initials are used if it is necessary to identify individuals receiving services during the public discussion. If necessary, a separate closed meeting may be held. Organizations that provide services must comply with HIPAA and other privacy regulations.

Do participating agencies have a standard set of metrics to use to measure whether programs have been successful?

Yes, there is a standard set of metrics used to measure program success which is usually dictated by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (source of most funding for CoC).

Is there a requirement to build a shelter should we join?

No.

Are there any "housing requirements" associated with joining?

No.