
The Northern Berkshire Health and Human Services Coalition Newsletter

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The Coalition is funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and
the Governor's Offices of Human Resources. It is sponsored by the Berkshire
Area Health Education Council and North Adams State College

November 1986

November Coalition Meeting

American Legion Hall
November 14, 1986 10AM until Noon

Meeting Agenda

- I. Welcome
- II. Introduction of Participants
- III. Task Force Reports
 - Substance Abuse Task Force
 - * *Listen to the discussion of the new RFP for alcohol services*
 - Health Care Task Force
 - * *Hear Startling Figures From DPH about how many of their services reach our area*
 - Housing Task Force
 - * *Is there a housing crunch in Northern Berkshire? What about the Right to Housing Project?*
 - Information Outreach Task Force
 - * *Is the word getting out?*
- IV. New Business
 - * *What's your beef?*
- V. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment

COALITION NEWS is the newsletter of the Northern Berkshire Health and Human Services Coalition. Its function is to keep the membership informed. It's a service to the COALITION membership. Announcements that you may have will reach all COALITION members (over 150 at present) if submitted to Al Bashevkin c/o North Adams State College to be included in this newsletter.

KEY INFORMANTS NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Back in the September meeting of the Coalition, we began to look at the concerns of the Health and Human Service Providers by the means of a Key Informant Needs Assessment. This was further clarified during the October meeting of the Coalition through a handout that participants filled out. The assessment form listed (1) the critical issues for residents of Northern Berkshire and (2) the most pressing issues in the Health and Human Service Network. Participants voted for the five issues in each category they felt to be most important. After long and careful tabulations, the following are the results:

Most critical issues for residents in Northern Berkshire:

1. Employment
2. Low cost housing
3. Stabilization and regrowth of our economic base
4. Health issues
5. Youth Programs / Substance Abuse Services (tie)

Most pressing issues in the Health and Human Service Network:

1. Families in crisis
2. Teen Pregnancy
3. Coordinate efforts among agencies to work together
4. Employment
5. Self esteem of Northern Berkshire residents

What are the implications of this needs assessment? Clearly it points to directions that the Coalition has been heading in the past months (housing, health, COORDINATION OF EFFORTS, teen pregnancy...). Yet it also looks at issues that are concerns of the area and need closer examination (youth programs, families in crisis, self esteem...). What do you think? Do these results reflect your concerns regarding the social welfare of the Northern Berkshire residents? Comment to Al Bashevkin. More to come.

REPORT ON COALITION MEETING OF OCTOBER 10, 1986

Once again, we had a significant turnout for the October Coalition meeting at the American Legion Hall in North Adams. Over forty people were in attendance, representing a broad spectrum of interested participants. Senator Peter Webber, instrumental in the forming of the Coalition, assisted with his perspective as a state senator. The agenda of the meeting included participation in a Key Informants Needs Assessment (see tabulations elsewhere in newsletter) and reports from the various task forces. The energy of the meeting was so high we forgot to break for coffee, (we'll do better next time). A summary of the task force reports:

HOUSING :

The Housing Task force report was delivered by Therese Louison. The Housing Task Force is looking at the problem of an insufficient amount of suitable, affordable, housing that meets basic health code standards as its major concern. Emergency shelter and housing for teenagers are also concerns that the task force is looking at. The task force is inviting representatives of all affected groups to participate in this dialogue and has included the housing code inspector from North Adams (John Taft) and Nick Peck from the Department of Social Welfare. The task force has also endorsed the Massachusetts Right to Housing Project. The Project is assembling petitions (65,000 signatures statewide) to ask the commonwealth to put as a referendum vote the right to non transient housing for all in our state constitution.

HEALTH CARE:

The Health Care task force report was delivered by Thorman Hulse. The task force is focusing initial efforts towards the major concern of high numbers of our population without health insurance. We have had a number of meetings with the Department of Public Health, most recently with Tom Salmon and Sally Fogarty. Dr Bailus Walker, commissioner of the Department Health, has expressed strong concern about the lack of access to health care for much of our population. Tom and Sally have presented us with their picture of the State's predicament regarding new programs, yet they were able to leave us with some hope about Maternal Infant Child grants that will be appearing shortly and that our region has strong needs for. Health Care Task Force is also working on how to present those free care programs already available so the public will take full advantage of them. Len Radin has assisted the task force with information on free dental programs available in the State.

INFORMATION OUTREACH

In a most thorough presentation, Ken Swiatek presented us with the work of this task force. Information outreach is trying to better disseminate (not insemminate) the information about available services to the public. They urge stronger coverage from the Press (can't do any worse), support for the resource notebook that Helpline is assembling, inserts to the newspapers about available resources in the area, Coalition mailing lists available to all (they are - contact Al), assembling a speaker's bureau, and consideration of different sites for the Coalition. Lastly, the outreach task force took it upon itself to make this Coalition stuff more fun by augmenting the tedium of Social Change with Coalition Socials. More to come on the latter and other ideas later.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

In what was the most engaging report, Sharon Vargo reported to the Coalition on the work of the Substance Abuse Task Force. There is a planned Request for Proposals (RFP) from the Department of Public Health that two area agencies are interested in. Substance Abuse services will change in the area as the result of this RFP. Discussion of substance abuse services centered on what will be best for the Northern Berkshire area. Service gaps in our area include teenagers, adult children of alcoholics, the college population, the unemployed / underemployed. More segments of the service population need to be recruited to examine the need for substance abuse services in our area so we can present a thorough application to DPH. All parties agree that more substance abuse services in North County are needed that are well integrated with existing institutions.

NEXT COALITION MEETING FRIDAY NOVEMBER 14 AMERICAN LEGION 10 - NOON

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congratulations to the Northern Berkshire Emergency Workers Assistance Center for its receipt of the *Excellence in Performance* award from Governor Michael Dukakis. This is the second year in a row the center has won the award, based on several factors: number of placements, % of previous wage obtained in the new job, workforce participation at the center, and timeliness in providing placement services.

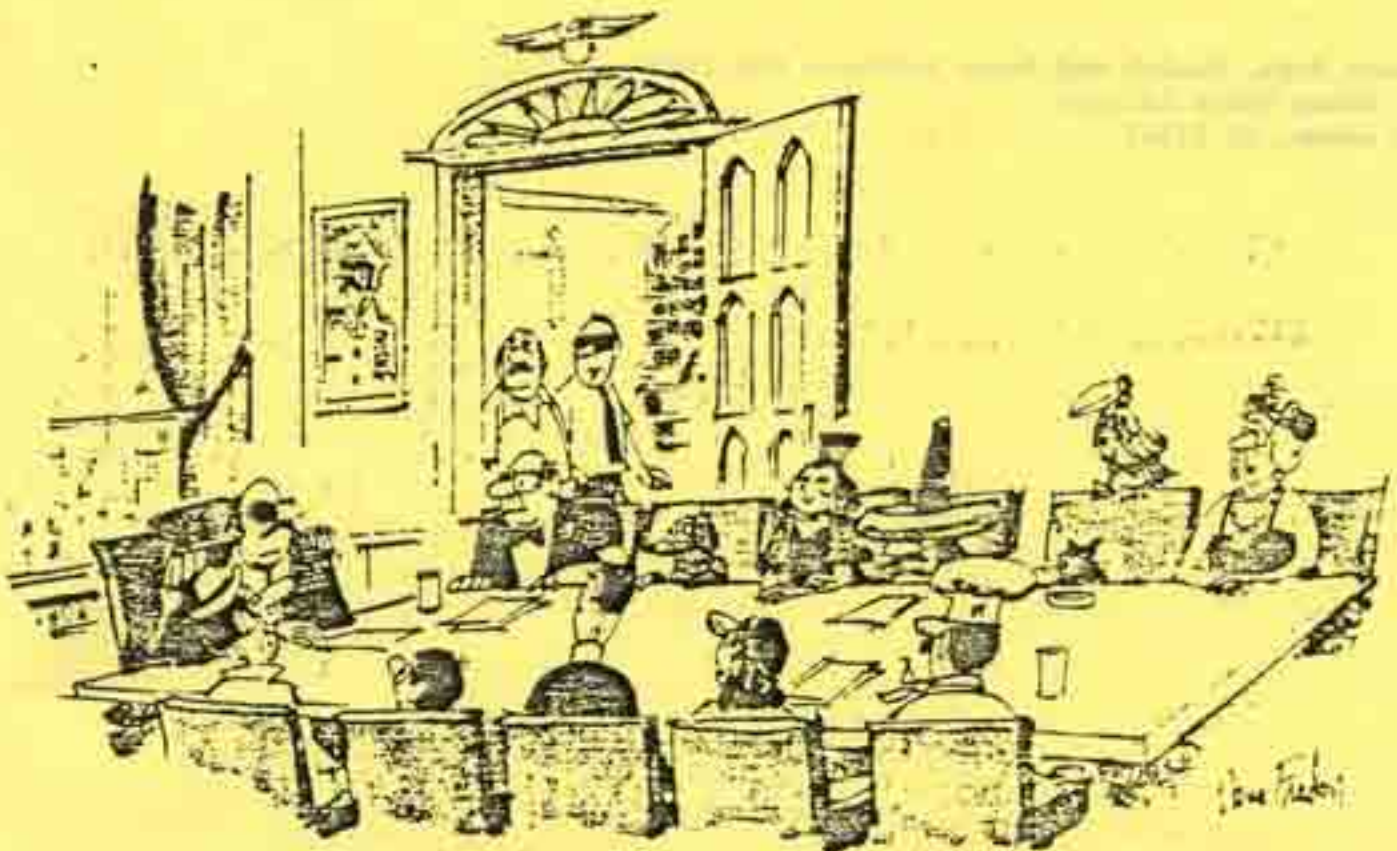
OPEN HOUSE Wednesday November 5 at the Northern Berkshire Adult Learning Center Brewer Perkins Building 277 Ashland St in North Adams. Call 664-4511 X561 for more information.

The Right to Housing Project is looking for volunteers to collect signatures for their petition process. If you have time to spare and want to contribute to this worthy, Coalition -sponsored project, contact Al Bashevkin. For more information call Al at NASC, 664-4511 X474.

Bring a Friend to the next Coalition Meeting, November 14 from 10 - Noon at the American Legion Hall.

The Mailing list of the Northern Berkshire Health and Human Services Coalition is and will always be in a constant state of revision. If interested in a copy of the mailing list at any point in time, contact Al Bashevkin.

Additional Community Updates - Your announcement could be here. Just send it to Al at North Adams State College.



"I don't have much hope for this broad-based coalition."

CALENDER OF EVENTS

- Oct 28 - Health Care Task Force 1:00 P.M. North Adams City Hall
- Oct 28 - Substance Abuse Task Force 2:00 P.M. North Adams City Hall
- Nov 4 - Election Day **VOTE VOTE VOTE.**
- Nov 5 - FACT Meeting Noon Haskins School
- Nov 14 - All Coalition Meeting
- Nov 18- Substance Abuse Task Force City Hall North Adams 11:00 A.M.
- Nov 18 - Housing Task Force Meeting City Hall North Adams 1:00 P.M.
- Nov 20 - Steering Committee 1:00 P. M North Adams City Hall
- Dec 2 - Health Care Task Force 1:00 P.M. North Adams City Hall

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