Neighborhood Partnerships

IDA FO Meeting Conference Call
Wednesday, March 31, 2010
10:00 am – 11:10 am

MINUTES

Attending:
Joy Hunt, Neighborhood Partnerships
Karie Herrlinger, Neighborhood Partnerships
Deanne Grant and Laina Green, NAYA
Itzel Spehar, Portland Housing Center
Sarah Castagnola, Mercy Corps NW
Rebekah Bassett, Umpqua CDC
Thomas Jensen and Letty Duran, CASA
Leah Murray, eDev

Check-Ins
Joy asked everyone to share a 2010 work plan item they are most excited about.

- Thomas announced that Letty has been promoted, and is now CASA's key point person on IDAs. Letty said that they are excited about providing web-based trainings and monthly webinars to their partners.
- Leah said that she is excited to begin administering customer satisfaction surveys for participants at exit.
- Sarah is looking forward to increasing accessibility to their classes by offering them online.
- Deanne is excited to focus on engaging with NAYA's early college academy students. The school is getting bigger. NAYA also has a staffing change, achievement coach Debra Clayton is moving onto graduate school.
- Itzel is excited about PHC's focus on decreasing their attrition rate. They are going to have more contact with savers. They are creating online communities to support dialogue among participants and instituting a newsletter. PHC is also continuing to offer quarterly meetings and home tours. In addition, they are working on developing a culturally specific homeownership curriculum for African Americans.
- Rebekah said that Brenda has moved onto another job. Rebekah has been promoted to IDA Program Manager. She is excited about using technology to help UCDC work smarter this year. They plan to use their website more and streamline work with their partners.
- Joy informed the group that Cynthia will be transitioning to half-time, and focusing on tax credit marketing. NP will be hiring eventually. In the meantime, Joy is busier than usual and asks that if anyone needs something from her right away, s/he should push for attention.

Update on the Initiative Assessment Process
Joy explained that there are recommendations related to program issues and finance. The finance recommendations will likely lead to some significant changes. Janet will be meeting with OHCS and FO executive directors, probably the afternoon of April 29th after the quarterly FO meeting. The FO meeting will be structured with a break at 1:30 to accommodate the OHCS meeting.

Participants with Multiple IDAs
It was discovered that there were two instances of participants being enrolled in IDAs with two different organizations at the same time. Itzel shared that she talked to the participants, and they each said that they didn't know they couldn't participate in two programs at once. She explained that they would have to decide which program to continue with. The participants were angry. Portland Housing Center's intake form does ask if potential participants are already participating in an IDA program. Both participants had answered "no."

Joy added that this issue is dependent upon communication between FOs. Joy recommends reiterating the one account rule during intake. Participants can always finish an IDA for one type of asset and then start another IDA for another asset.

Letty asked if there is a waiting period before they can re-enroll? Joy said that the statute states that they can't have two at the same time. Joy will check with Cynthia and Janet about the waiting period question. Letty asked for a reminder about the lifetime total amount of match funds per household. Joy answered that the Rules state that the limit is $20,000 per individual. However, she cautioned that this needs to be considered carefully—use the front page test. The limit is one IDA per person at a time. Joy will send out bullet points on this issue after the meeting.

Itzel asked who she should contact about these particular clients? Thomas said he would like to be contacted, as the FO. He will contact the partner organizations involved. Joy reminded all that this cannot be flexible.

<u>Support for participants changing asset goals during the Savings Period</u>
Letty said that CASA has a policy for the VIDA program. In their system, the participant has to do a new savings plan agreement and a supplemental worksheet/questionnaire about the new asset goal. These materials have to be submitted two months before closing the old savings plan.

Leah said that she is one of the ones Letty gets heavy requests from. E'Dev's clients change mostly because business planning classes encourage them to re-evaluate the feasibility of their goal. Joy asked Leah if the clients stay with e'Dev's program, or if they switch to an education IDA provider? Leah answered that any education pursuits funded have to be related to their business goal. Leah wondered what Joy means by "more support."

Joy said that, if the asset change is something the FO or partner cannot accommodate, FOs and partners call each other to help facilitate the participant's transition.

Sarah reported that they don't experience asset changes. Joy asked if it was a problem for NAYA or Umpqua, who both offer all three asset classes. Deanne reports that it has not come up. Itzel also reported that this is not much of an issue for Portland Housing Center. Rebekah reported that it comes up all the time for Umpqua. The transitions are smooth because they offer all three asset classes. Rebekah runs into instances with clients who want to split their IDA into two uses. This usually comes up when the participant is at goal.

Itzel said that because they are a homeownership center and only offer homeownership IDAs, it's when participants are dropping out that she hears their plans have changed. The participants have not known that they might transfer to another program which offers other asset types.

Joy thinks a conversation among Portland area providers would be good.

Itzel has people who have saved for a year or more who don't necessarily tell her if they could use their savings for another option. Itzel asked if the client's savings with PHC could be taken into account if they change FOs. She feels that this is important.

Joy asked if others would be interested in pursuing this?

Letty said it would make sense for CASA. They can work with partners to see who can take on the IDA. They already have a member-to-member IDA transfer form.

Joy encourages all to contact each other.

Leah added that as a former VIDA member and a newer FO, she has found it harder to transfer to another FO.

Joy asked if the group will be willing to be flexible on minimum time enrolled. What does the group need from Joy in order to sign off on this? Joy asked that people call as cases come up.

Proposal to label some education IDAs as work force development or job training in
AFI has stricter rules regarding what constitutes an "education" IDA, recognizing only accredited schools. Thomas explained that leaves some education as OK with Oregon, but not with AFI. Thomas is asking to clarify "adaptive technology and specialized training." He proposes that classes taken at trade school and other non-accredited institutions be labeled "specialized training." Sarah said the idea sounds great to her. Joy asked if there were any objections. There were none.

Electronic Bank Statement Upload
Joy has heard a lot of different perspectives on this issue. CASA has a work plan item around only using electronic bank statements. Thomas explained that significant staff time goes into entering the information from paper bank statements. Some banks are eager to work with CASA, some are not. CASA is in the process of transferring to banks which are willing to cooperate. Letty gave the list of banks that are working with them:

- Columbia River
- OSU Credit Union
- West Coast Bank
- US Bank
- Wells Fargo

CASA is still working with other smaller banks to see if it will work with them. Leah reported that she is putting data into Vista Share's Spreadsheet template and then uploading it. It is extremely efficient for her this way.

Sarah said that Mercy Corps does not currently use the electronic bank statements. They are currently looking for a partner bank. Thomas said he would be happy to share information.

Joy proposed that she will prepare an excel list to be shared.

Letty asked that a column be added to the list which indicates whether the bank allows people in the Chex System to open new accounts. (Letty explained that the Chex System affects people who have an outstanding issue with the bank or an unfavorable record.)

Deanne reported that Sterling Savings Bank has agreed to create a spreadsheet for electronic upload for NAYA but wants to charge $25 per month. NAYA has a new banking partner: Capital Pacific Bank. They have only one branch in the Fox Tower downtown, but deposits can be made at any Wells Fargo ATM. Capital Pacific Bank agreed to do electronic uploads. Deanne is requiring this of their banking partners moving forward. Deanne also wants to be able to access participants' accounts online. Capital Pacific Bank allows this.

Itzel reported that PHC has been talking to Tim about uploading the information from Spreadsheets. They have done this process manually in the past because the financial institutions they partner with don't offer electronic bank statements.

Joy will look for a credit union that will offer uploads. On Point is not willing to offer this feature.

Rebekah has not been using electronic bank statements. She is looking forward to beginning to use them this year. Rebekah is interested in learning the names of the contact people at specific banks who have helped the process along.

Letty has been working with US Bank's regional representative (out of Washington) to get branch-by-branch contacts. US Bank is creating a training program so that all branches can offer IDAs. Letty will keep Rebekah posted.

Leah has been working with their banking partners to view accounts online. The reason she has been given as to why it's not possible is because, if the client has more than one account at that bank, the FO would be able to access to all of the participant's accounts.

Thomas pointed out that there is a certain type of account setup format which will allow access, such as an attorney would have. Banner Bank can do this, like a trustee account. Thomas can connect Deanne to Banner Bank if she wants. Deanne said that this issue has not come up for NAYA, as the accounts are custodial accounts.

Joy asked Leah if she'd heard this from one or multiple banks. Leah said it's the answer from both of their banking partners, and eDev does use custodial accounts. Thomas suggested that it might be a credit union problem. Joy encouraged Leah to keep pushing, there might be a work-around.

Training Calendar Updates

Joy said that NP is looking for funds to provide two trainings on financial education in October. These trainings will be geared toward staff who provide financial education. Final details are still being developed.

The next FO meeting will be April 29, 2010. It will not be held at the Black Bear Inn, but rather at the Salvation Army Kroc Center in Salem. The agenda will be developed to allow for the flexibility to attend the meeting at OHCS in the afternoon. CASA and PHC will present best practices. Other FOs should think of best practices to share at a future meeting. Joy will be calling for presentation ideas.

Housekeeping

In addition to the usual budget, NP is asking for a copy of each FOs program budget this year. Deanne asked if this needed to be updated quarterly. Joy answered no—submit one annual IDA program budget.

Joy adjourned the meeting at 11:10 AM.