

From: Eric Phillips <ericphillips813@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, April 12, 2019 5:48 PM
To: James Kemper <James.Kemper@SMGOV.NET>; Gary Rhoades <Gary.Rhoades@SMGOV.NET>
Subject: Public comment - 4A Fair Housing Update

Dear Santa Monica Housing Commission,

This is my written public comment regarding the fair housing update - item 4A at the 4/18/19 Housing Commission meeting.

My general comment is that individuals with disabilities, whether homeless or housed, do not have effective advocacy services to turn to in the City of Santa Monica. The City does not even have an ADA coordinator.

Please see the enclosed email that was previously submitted to Ms. Glauber and the Santa Monica Disabilities Commission.

Sincerely,
Eric Phillips

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: "Eric Phillips" <ericphillips813@yahoo.com>
To: "dglauber@lawyerscommittee.org" <dglauber@lawyerscommittee.org>
Cc: "natalie.verlinich@smgov.net" <natalie.verlinich@smgov.net>
Sent: Thu, Mar 28, 2019 at 5:37 PM
Subject: Public comment re Assessment of Fair Housing Plan

Dear Ms. Glauber,

I am writing to bring to your attention the disability discrimination in Santa Monica's homeless services and subsidized housing like Continuum of Care.

I am a disabled individual with impaired mobility. I suffer from serious medical conditions: bilateral leg ulcers, venous stasis edema and I use a cane for mobility.

I was homeless in Santa Monica for about three years, then I entered the Respite Bed Program at OPCC/The People Concern's facility called Samoshel upon referral from the Venice Family Clinic.

After about a half a year I was moved to another The People Concern facility called Turning Point, which was newly remodeled. However, I was constantly sleep deprived there due to the noise and ongoing drug trafficking and activity which the staff were not addressing at all. My mental health deteriorated due to the lack of sleep and constant exhaustion. I requested to be moved back to Samoshel and I was transferred, but this time to the regular dorm, not the Respite Bed Program anymore.

In total, as a disabled individual I spent almost three years in the City-funded The People Concern shelters because their case workers were hardly doing anything to attend to my permanent housing needs. For example, it took months before they applied for a voucher for me. I thought that as a disabled individual I would be offered a reasonable accommodation and housed on a priority basis. I applied for a voucher through the Department of Mental Health and obtained a voucher but received no housing case management from DMH or The People Concern who claimed they were not obligated to help me because the voucher had not been obtained through their organization. I believe this is just The People Concern's excuse rather than the truth. How can they refuse to help me find permanent housing when I live at their shelter? I was unable to secure a unit without any assistance and it expired.

After more than a year at The People Concern shelters I talked to Director of Interim housing Luther Richert about my situation, which was no better than when I had entered the shelter in the first place. Upon my insistence that The People Concern start helping me obtain permanent housing, Mr. Richert assured that the application process for a Santa Monica voucher was started.

I obtained a Santa Monica Continuum of Care voucher and was able to secure a unit by myself, as The People Concern case managers were not helping me at all.

After about a year in the permanent housing unit, where I was an exemplary tenant and participated in all the supportive services, I started thinking about graduating from the CoC program since I believed that I would be able to live more independently. I asked my The People Concern case manager Maria Lopez how to go about the process of graduating from Coc and she spoke to the Santa Monica Housing Authority Housing Specialist Isabel Trevino. I was told by my case manager that some paperwork was forthcoming from the Housing Authority but I never received it. When I finally met with my The People Concern case manager to discuss this, she showed me some paperwork that she said I needed to complete and file with the Housing Authority. My case manager told me that after I file the application to graduate from CoC, then I would have to file another application for the regular housing voucher, where there is a waitlist of thousands of people, and the wait could be several years.

This process as described to me makes absolutely no sense and does not help people with disabilities like myself obtain a more independent housing and lifestyle. I feel like I am not receiving much assistance from my The People Concern case manager, who appears to be unhappy about the prospect of my emancipating myself from the social service organization and she offers no advocacy. Instead of helping me move on with my life to more independence I feel like I am being held down by The People Concern due to their financial interest in obtaining funding for my participation in their supportive services program which in reality does not have much to offer. I feel a distinct cooling off in my relationship with my case manager since I mentioned I would like to graduate from CoC.

In the past my case manager Maria Lopez threatened that if I do not attend all the supportive services sessions, The People Concern has the power to remove me from permanent housing and put me back in the shelter. I do not understand this kind of treatment - I am not a criminal on parole. The supportive services are supposed to be helping me with my needs, not be imposed on me so that The People Concern can collect public funding for it. Please note that I have no criminal background nor am I a substance abuser. I am a reasonable and responsible individual who simply has some disabilities.

Similarly, I do not feel that the Housing Authority offers much assistance to individuals with disabilities. I have no-one to turn for advocacy relative to this matter, and particularly my disabilities. For example, I am not living in a modified unit which I need. One of the things I need is a walk-in bathtub. The Santa Monica Housing Authority's attitude is take it or leave it, and they do not care that I have special needs. I know they treat other clients with disabilities the same way - no accommodations or modifications are available, people are put in a situation where they have the choice of accepting a unit without modifications or remaining homeless. This is not right. Our rights as disabled individuals are being violated by the Santa Monica Housing Authority.

Currently I am in a limbo with my attempt to graduate from the CoC program, or rather I am trapped or kept hostage in it, with no support to graduate and no feasible process to graduate unless I am willing to spend years on the waitlist.

I request that when you assess the Santa Monica Fair Housing Plan you look into the issue of people with disabilities having no support from the Housing Authority or the City's homeless services provider and no viable ADA-related advocacy.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Eric Phillips

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)