

TEXAS INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR THE HOMELESS

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# Annual Report

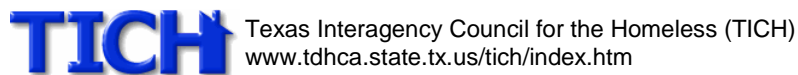
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## INTRODUCTION

This report is the progress report of the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless (TICH), required by Texas Government Code §2306.908. It is provided to the governing body of each agency currently represented on the TICH, which includes the following:

- Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs;
- Health and Human Services Commission;
- Department of State Health Services;
- Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services;
- Department of Aging and Disability Services;
- Department of Family Protective Services;
- Texas Workforce Commission;
- Texas Veterans Commission;
- Department of Criminal Justice;
- Texas Juvenile Justice Department; and
- Texas Education Agency.

This report is organized based on the nine specific duties of the TICH per state law. This report covers progress made on each of these assigned duties since the last report of the TICH. As a companion to this report, TICH submits *Pathways Home*, which TICH released as a proposed policy framework for coordinating state administered programs with local service providers in Texas. TICH intends for *Pathways Home* to address most of the duties required under its statute.

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## ACTION ON STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

### (1) Survey Current Resources

During 2013, TICH sub-committees met on several occasions and determined a need for further information from state agencies, especially concerning the housing status of clients served with state funds and how the state agencies define homelessness or if they have a definition of homelessness, at all. Sub-committee chairs plan to meet in early 2014 to decide on the questions to be asked and the method of distribution of the survey questions.

In addition, Texas Homeless Network (TICH Advisory Council member) is partnering with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs to conduct an assessment of the twelve Continua of Care (CoC) in Texas to determine readiness for the CoC to be a Collaborative Applicant for US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Homelessness Assistance funds and readiness and ability of the CoCs to distribute and manage State Emergency Solutions Grant funding. After the assessment phase is completed, THN will also provide training and technical assistance, where needed to help ensure the CoCs meet HUD and TDHCA requirements.

### (2) Initiate an Evaluation of Future and Current Needs

In developing *Pathways Home*, TICH initiated efforts to evaluate the current and future needs of the state, focusing on four subpopulations: families with children; unaccompanied youth; individual adults experiencing chronic homelessness; and veterans. The assessment of current needs draws primarily on Point-in-Time (PIT) Count data. See Homelessness in Texas, pp. 11-32 of *Pathways Home*, for discussion on data sources, demographics, and factors contributing to homelessness.

TICH finds extensive limitations in existing sources of data. The council, in conjunction with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA), has undertaken efforts to establish an information base to support more sophisticated evaluation of current and future needs. A key component in this effort is the development of a data warehouse. The proposed system will integrate data from the state's fifteen independent Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) implementations. HMIS gathers client-level data from persons served in homeless assistance programs funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The data warehouse will have the ability to match records in HMIS with records in state agencies' administrative datasets for cross-systems analysis. The TDHCA tentatively identified funding for this effort however issues arose on which entity would own the data so efforts are being made locally to secure funding. This item remains a priority for the council.

### (3) Assist in Coordinating and Providing Statewide Services

The primary goal of *Pathways Home* is to enumerate a set of strategies to help state agencies coordinate resources to address the needs of homeless individuals in the state. The document organizes this framework

under four thematic sections: 1) Affordable Housing and Supportive Services; 2) Homelessness Prevention; 3) Data, Research, and Analysis; and 4) State Infrastructure. This discussion begins on p. 34 of *Pathways Home* under the section titled Framework for Strengthening Texas's Infrastructure. See pp. 71-79 for an outline of the document's proposed objectives and strategies for assisting in the coordination and delivery of services.

TICH committees continue to plan for increased communication between state agencies and non-profit agencies through webinars, in-person workshops and teleconferences. Texas Homeless Network will host monthly CoC Leader conference calls beginning in February 2014. These calls are designed to facilitate conversation among the twelve CoCs in Texas to work on common issues and provide information that may be helpful in preventing and ending homelessness across Texas.

#### **(4) Increase the Flow of Information among Separate Providers and Appropriate Authorities**

Through the development of *Pathways Home*, TICH has facilitated an unprecedented level of dialogue among independent service providers, both at the state and local level. Through the state agency survey, interagency discussions relating to the development of *Pathways Home*, and public hearings that engaged leaders and staff from local agencies and nonprofits, TICH opened new channels for communication. State Infrastructure, on pp. 66-70 and pp. 78-79, describes strategies for continuing to increase the flow of information among service providers and appropriate authorities.

As the subtitle to *Pathways Home* suggests, the framework focuses on the possibility of achieving stronger coordination between state agency programs and local Continuum of Care systems. A Continuum of Care (CoC) acts as the core entity for organizing resources at the local level for homelessness assistance. The size of CoCs varies, from a single county like Travis County, to a multi-county network like the Texas Balance of State, which covers a swath of 213 rural and non-metropolitan counties in Texas. HUD is increasingly recognizing the CoC as the hub for coordinating service delivery. Through new regulations, HUD requires heightened integration between agencies receiving HUD funds and local CoCs. TDHCA and TICH recognize the importance of CoCs in the administration of assistance to persons experiencing and at risk of homelessness. As a result, TDHCA and TICH have increased their level of communication with CoC leadership across the state.

Beginning in September 2013 TICH members met with Texas continua lead agency staff to discuss how TICH can support the work of Texas continua in efforts to eliminate homelessness. Additional TICH helped facilitate a meeting between Texas CoCs and staff from the Texas Information and Referral Network on how homeless service providers could more efficiently use 2-1-1 to aid in efforts to implement Coordinated Assessment. The TICH plans to conduct regular meetings and webinars with Texas' continua in an effort to collaborate more efficiently.

The Texas Homeless Information Exchange Governing Body (THIE) met three times in 2013 in an effort to establish a data warehouse. The group's primary goal is to execute decisions relating to the HMIS data warehouse, the formation of the governing body affords TDHCA and TICH the opportunity to strengthen relationships with CoC leadership. The governing body allows TICH and TDHCA to better understand processes behind local service delivery, which in turn will help the state better understand how to tailor state programs to fit local needs

In March THIE governing body members considered an opportunity to utilize funding provided through TDHCA in March to establish a data warehouse but ultimately could not come to a consensus on the terms of the grant. THIE governing body members continued to plan for the implementation of a data warehouse in

April and later in September. All members remain interested in project implementation so the THIE will continue meet in 2014.

In 2013 the Data, Research, and Analysis committee presented a report of HUD CoC Point-in-Time (PIT) and Housing Inventory data for all Texas Continua that Texas Homeless Network aggregated. In 2014 this report will be updated and present to TICH membership again. Also in 2014 the committee will collect each CoC's PIT survey instrument and examine the questions to determine what data may be compared across CoCs for Texas. The committee will utilize these research findings to advocate for the use of a common PIT survey instrument in Texas beginning in 2015.

#### **(5) Develop Guidelines to Monitor the Provision of Services for the Homeless and the Methods of Delivering those Services**

In *Pathways Home*, TICH issues guidance on monitoring the delivery of services to persons experiencing and at risk of homelessness. See p. 68 for a proposed Housing Status Continuum. See Homelessness Prevention, beginning p. 54, for discussion on strategies for establishing a common definition of "at risk of homelessness." Objective 2 of Data, Research, and Analysis, pp. 63-65, provide guidance on developing metrics for monitoring the delivery of services to persons experiencing homelessness. Objective 1 of State Infrastructure, pp. 66-68, discusses the need for coordinating the definition of "homeless" that state agencies use for data collection and assessment.

In 2014 the Data, Research, and Analysis committee will resume the analysis of state agency data collection regarding persons experiencing homelessness. The goal is to establish common program intake questions regarding a person's housing status so that TICH may compile and compare data across all state agencies. State agency program intake data may prove to be a great resource TICH could use to further examine homelessness across Texas over the course of time. Additionally this committee will meet with the THIE governing body to facilitate planning so that a data warehouse can be implemented. The committee will poll HMIS projects in Texas to determine commonalities in regard to entry standards and practices.

#### **(6) Provide Technical Assistance to the Housing Finance Division of the Department in Assessing the Need for Housing for Individuals with Special Needs in Different Localities**

TICH is providing technical assistance and guidance to TDHCA's Housing Finance Division through its effort to establish an HMIS data warehouse. The data warehouse will provide TDHCA, including the Housing Finance Division, easy access to data that will support assessment of local need for housing for persons with special needs. In addition, program leaders from various Agencies presented programmatic information and best practices at TICH meetings, which allowed for direct and open conversations and collaboration that was shared with the Housing Finance Division. For example, the National Youth in Transition database, managed by the Department of Family and Protective Services, was identified as a resource to track homeless prevention efforts.

## **(7) Coordinate with the Texas Workforce Commission to Provide Homeless Individuals Information to Assist them in Obtaining Employment and Job Training**

In 2013, the Texas Homeless Education Office (THEO), Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and Texas Homeless Network conducted “Homeless Summits” in Harlingen, Midland and Tyler designed to facilitate communication between state agencies and non-profit agencies in those areas to prevent and eliminate homelessness. These endeavors were successful in bringing agencies that have not been involved in ending homelessness efforts in the past, to the table to discuss how state and local agencies can work better together to provide assistance to homeless persons. Funding for continuation of this project was lost, due to shifting priorities of the granting agency. The Texas Homeless Network and THEO are actively seeking ways to continue this project and take the collaborative workshops to other areas in Texas.

In addition, the 83rd Legislature created a rider to the TWC Appropriations Bill that provides \$4 million in funding in 2014 and \$4 million in 2015 to “implement a program with community based organizations in partnership with employers to move Texans off of public benefits and into the workforce. The program will target residents without housing and employment and move them into permanent employment.” THN worked with TWC to get a request for proposals to community based organizations in Texas so that those organizations that qualify could apply for the funds appropriated.

## **(8) Establish a Central Resource and Information Center for the Homeless**

2-1-1 Texas currently serves as the state’s central resource and information center for persons experiencing and at risk of homelessness. Over the past year, TICH has increased dialogue with 2-1-1 staff. TICH will continue to work with 2-1-1 to ensure that this system maintains comprehensive and accurate information on current resources. THN, in coordination with TICH, has provided information to 2-1-1 to ensure that information on homeless services remains up to date.

TICH anticipates that, over the next few years, HUD will require CoCs to restructure their methods of case management, resource delivery, and information distribution. In recent regulations issued for the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program, HUD has already taken steps to encourage CoCs to begin using a coordinated or centralized assessment process as the basis for all service delivery. CoCs will begin to use a coordinated or centralized assessment to determine client eligibility for assistance and refer clients to local resources that best fit their needs. As this transition occurs, TICH plans to serve as a liaison between CoCs, 2-1-1, and state agencies to ensure that the state’s information resources are well positioned to support newly established assessment and referral processes. THN secured a grant to pilot a coordinated assessment process for the Balance of States which will begin in 2013.

## **(9) Council Responsibilities Executed by Other Entities**

TDHCA and TICH work closely with the Texas Homeless Network (THN), a nonprofit organization that assists service providers in receiving and managing HUD grants, administering services, and gathering data. THN supplements many of TICH’s efforts to act on duties required by statute. THN staff members have advised TICH throughout the implementation of *Pathways Home*. THN has assisted with the assessment of the state’s current resources, evaluation of current and future needs, development of guidelines for monitoring and delivering services, and establishment of a central resource and information center for persons experiencing and at risk of homelessness in Texas.