

TEXAS INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR THE HOMELESS

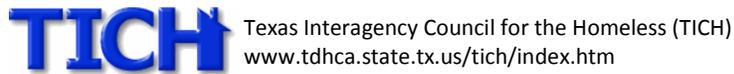


Annual Report

2014

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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 works under the framework of *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.

ACTION ON STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

(1) Survey Current Resources

During 2014, 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 2015 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) has partnered 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 was completed, THN also provided training and technical assistance, where needed to help ensure the CoCs meet HUD and TDHCA requirements for Continuum of Care and Emergency Solutions Grants funding.

Through another partnership with TDHCA, THN is providing in-depth technical assistance to non-profit organizations across the state to develop housing projects that can be funded by either CoC or ESG funds. THN is currently working with eighteen non-profit organizations in several different CoCs. The project development assistance is focusing on Housing First and Rapid Rehousing projects. Organizations were asked to respond to a request for proposals and from the agencies that responded, THN was able to choose eighteen of them for assistance. The projects are located in Brownsville, Tyler, Killeen, Kerrville, Bay City, Denton, San Antonio, Austin, Galveston, Texarkana, Denton, Corpus Christi, Temple, Lubbock, Dallas and Bryan/College Station.

(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 hosts a semi-monthly Continuum of Care (CoC) Leader conference These calls are designed to facilitate conversation among the eleven CoCs in Texas to work on common issues and provide information that may be helpful in preventing and ending homelessness across Texas.

TDHCA partnered with Texas Homeless Network to conduct an in-depth assessment of the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless (TICH). The assessment has been done and THN is working on the recommendations and will begin working with TICH members to implement the recommendations chosen by TICH for follow-up.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funding opportunity: Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals for States (CABHI-States)

The Department of State Health Services (DSHS), in partnership with Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) and the Texas Interagency Council on the Homeless (TICH), spent last year exploring the feasibility of an application to SAMHSA for the Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals for States (CABHI-States), clarifying roles and responsibilities and laying the ground work for an application in 2015. The purpose of this funding is to enhance or develop the infrastructure of states and their treatment service systems to increase capacity and provide accessible, effective, comprehensive, coordinate/integrated, and evidence-based treatment services; permanent supportive housing; peer supports; and other recovery support services to chronically homeless individuals or homeless/chronically homeless veterans with substance use disorder, serious mental illnesses or co-occurring mental and substance use disorders. As a result of this program, SAMHSA seeks to: 1) improve

statewide strategies to address planning, coordination, and integration of behavioral health and primary care services, and permanent housing to reduce homelessness; 2) increase the number of individuals, residing in permanent housing, who receive behavioral health treatment and recovery support services; and 3) increase the number of individuals placed in permanent housing and enrolled in Medicaid and other mainstream benefits (e.g., Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance [SSI/SSDI], Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF], Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP]). As a result, DSHS is primed to submit an application in the spring of 2015 for the SAMHSA CABHI-State grant opportunity, which, if funded, will result in more treatment dollars to selected sites around the state and the opportunity to enhance coordination between state agencies with an overall goal of preventing and ending homelessness in Texas.

Supported Housing Program

During the 83rd Legislative Session, DSHS requested and received funds to provide additional supported housing resources among certain Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs) across the state. The purpose of this funding is to enhance the ability of LMHAs to provide rental and utility assistance to individuals with mental illness, who were homeless and imminently homeless, along with supportive housing and mental health services. LMHAs are required to become HOME Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) Administrators through TDHCA which allows them to access rental assistance funds, depending on availability, to maintain someone in subsidized housing when they are on wait lists for permanent housing subsidies.

Approximately \$10.9 million (\$4.7 million in fiscal year 2014, \$6.2 million in fiscal year 2015) was awarded and allocated to 18 LMHAs, which began utilizing funding and created supportive housing programs in fiscal year 2014. Participants are either considered short-term (up to 6-months of assistance) or long-term (up to 12 months of assistance). Two additional LMHAs were added in fiscal year 2015, bringing the total number of participating LMHAs to 20. During 2014–15 biennium, 3,096 individuals have received DSHS rental assistance.

Funding for this LMHA program is currently rolled up into the base budget of DSHS.

Healthy Community Collaboratives

The 2014-15 General Appropriations Act, S.B. 1, 83rd Legislature, 2013 (Article II, Department of State Health Services, Rider 90) authorized DSHS to allocate up to \$25 million in General Revenue over the biennium to fund grants to serve persons experiencing homelessness and mental illness.

Awards were made to collaborative projects in the five most populous urban municipalities: Austin, Houston, San Antonio, Fort Worth, and Dallas for the purposes of promoting collaboration based on locally identified priorities, leveraging local matching funds in an amount equal to the grant awarded and addressing homelessness, criminal recidivism, emergency room utilization, substance abuse, employment rates, and local economic benefit. Funds appropriated for Community Collaborative projects support significant coordination and collaboration between LMHAs, municipalities, and other community stakeholders. The five sites are in the first year of coordinating access, providing services and collecting data. Each site has submitted an initial plan for their collaborative project to become self-sufficient in seven years.

Numbers served for all five areas will be available March 31, 2015.

(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 216 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 was to execute decisions relating to the HMIS data warehouse.

March 2014 THIE governing body members considered an opportunity to utilize funding provided through TDHCA 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 later in 2014 but interest in the initiative and CoC lead involvement waned. The THIE governing has not reconvened but in October of 2014 CoC leaders expressed interest to resume planning on a data warehouse project.

The Data, Research, and Analysis committee will facilitate a meeting of CoC leaders in the summer of 2015 with the purpose of resuming substantive planning on a data warehouse project. The first goal of this initiative will be the agreement between all CoCs upon a common set of data points that are proposed for inclusion in a data warehouse proposal. Additionally the committee will identify best practices in terms of program design and funding support from other statewide data sharing projects. A

summary report of the best practices identified and the committee recommendations for Texas will be provided at Texas Homeless Network's *Conference on Ending Homelessness*. The committee will follow up with CoC leaders to garner support for the recommended plan in the fall and winter of 2015.

In 2014 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 2015 this report will be updated and present to TICH membership again. Also in 2015 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 2016.

(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 2015 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 Texas' CoC leaders 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 and fund a 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. TICH is working (1) to establish best practices on how to gather and share information; (2) be sensitive to entities which

may have reservations about releasing certain data or information; and, (3) determine a way to collect data and information on individuals at risk of becoming homeless.

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

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 targets individuals without housing and employment and moves 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.

Funding was awarded to three agencies, the American GI Forum National Veterans Outreach Program, SEARCH Homeless Services and Haven for Hope of Bexar County. As of March 2015, 1,489 people have been enrolled for employment services and 534 of participants have entered regular employment. Contracts are slated to end in July and August 2015.

(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. 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, continue to provide 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 selected 7 communities (Tyler, Texarkana, Denton, Corpus Christi, Harlingen, Brownsville, and Lubbock) through the grant secured in 2013 to pilot Coordinated Access. Full implementation in these communities will begin in the spring of 2015. These entry points will then be ready to receive referrals for coordinated access directly from 2-1-1.

(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. TICH is evaluating THN's scope of work with TDHCA to determine what has been accomplished to date and to look ahead to determine what reasonably could be accomplished in the future based on statutory requirements and funding sources. This will also include clearly defining THN's roles and responsibilities with respect to supporting TDHCA and TICH.