

TEXAS INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR THE HOMELESS



Annual Report - 2019

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TICH Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless
www.tdhca.state.tx.us/tich/index.htm



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INTRODUCTION

This report is the progress report of the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless (TICH or Council), required by Texas Government Code §2306.908. In 1995, the 74th Texas legislature established the TICH. Legislation requires TICH to coordinate the state's resources and services to address homelessness. TICH serves as an advisory committee to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA).

Representatives from nine state agencies sit on the Council along with members appointed by the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the House of Representatives. This report is made available on the TDHCA website and also provided to the governing body of each State of Texas agency currently represented on the TICH, which includes the following, per §2306.903(a):

1. TDHCA;
2. Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC);
3. Department of State Health Services (DSHS);
4. Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS);
5. Texas Workforce Commission (TWC);
6. Texas Veterans Commission (TVC);
7. Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ);
8. Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD); and
9. Texas Education Agency (TEA).

This annual report covers the activities of the TICH in January 1 – December 31, 2019 and 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 annual report of the TICH. As a companion to this report, TICH works under the framework of *Pathways Home: A Framework for Coordinating State Administered Programs with Continuum of Care Planning to Address Homelessness in Texas*, 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 the 2019 quarterly meetings, TICH members discussed a need for further information from state agencies, especially concerning the housing status of clients served with state funds and how the state agencies may be preventing or ending homelessness.

The diversity of State agencies along with the numerous private entities that deliver services for people experiencing homelessness and for persons at risk of homelessness presents a significant challenge to identifying and presenting a unified survey of resources. Through routine presence at TICH meetings the appointed agency representatives and advisory members are provided opportunities to describe their programs and progress. Discussions on programming decisions relating to current resources were also often discussed, in particular, the policies being made regarding the new Ending Homelessness fund which is being administered by TDHCA.

Beyond the quarterly agency updates, the Performance Data Committee was formed at the meeting of April 11, 2017, in order to survey existing TICH member agency performance data to identify statewide data that may be adjusted to reflect homelessness outcomes. The Performance Data Committee was not able to meet in 2019 because of limited staff support, but work on this Committee is expected to resume in 2020. The committee is expecting to ultimately provide to the TICH a report uniformly reflecting the combined agency data on homelessness in Texas.

Update on 2018 HUD Homeless Assistance Grant funding

The Texas Homeless Network (THN) and its Continuum of Care (CoC) partners provided information about resources provided from federal funding sources, namely funding from HUD's Homeless Assistance Grant FY18. The CoC Program is offered by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to promote community commitment to the goal of ending homelessness, and consists of a network of organizations. This reporting is important because federal funding can bolster the efforts of state funded programs and recipients of these funds can utilize state funds to leverage dollars from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). During the TICH meeting of April 30, 2019, THN staff updated attendees on the results of the FY18 CoC awards. Chart 1 depicts the 2018 CoC funding allocations by CoC.

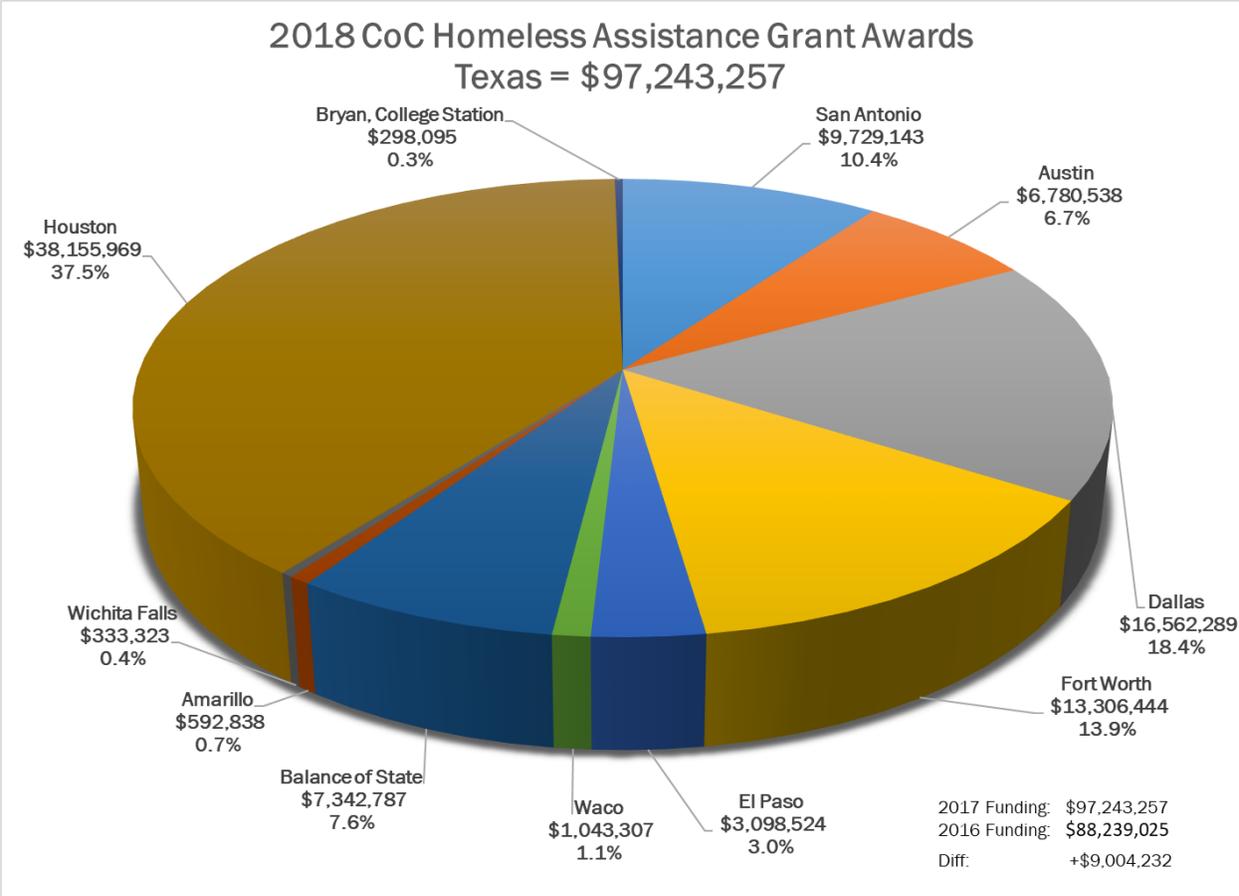


Chart 1 – Texas CoC Funding Allocation

Update on strategies to address Youth Homelessness

In 2019, the Texas Network of Youth Service (TNOYS) Providers started a Youth Homelessness Workgroup, and invited members of the TICH to participate. The Youth Homelessness Workgroup is organized and led by TNOYS.

(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. However, members recognize the need to expand the data sources used to gain a better understanding of the population.

Data on Homeless Populations

TICH finds extensive limitations in existing sources of data on homeless populations. In the past, the Council in conjunction with TDHCA, discussed plans to establish an information database to support more

sophisticated evaluation of current and future needs. A key component in this effort would be the development of a data warehouse. The proposed system would integrate data from the state's eleven independent Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) implementations. HMIS gathers client-level data from persons served in homeless assistance programs in CoC jurisdictions. Its use is widespread because HMIS allows homeless service providers to better coordinate an effective homeless crisis response system because programs receiving some federal and state funding are required to use it. The data warehouse would have the ability to match records in HMIS across all eleven CoCs in Texas and to connect to existing data in agencies' administrative datasets for cross-systems analysis.

TDHCA had previously identified funding for this effort in 2013 and the legislature approved use of the funds for a homeless data warehouse activity; however, there were concerns among the CoC members regarding which entity would own the data, so the project never entered the implementation phase and funding was reprogrammed elsewhere. Representatives from the Texas CoCs remained interested in the concept of a data warehouse and reconvened in October 2019 to establish the Texas Homeless Data Sharing Network, which will share data among 9 of the 11 CoCs (see next section for more information). The Texas Homeless Data Sharing Network addresses the requirements set forth by the CoCs with regard to the oversight and structure of a shared data warehouse:

- A non-governmental entity with strong ties to Texas CoCs and its communities should lead the effort;
- Resources are made available through public and/or private sources that allow expenses of constructing a system capable of integrating large, diverse data sets such as those in question; and;
- Official agreements are structured between each participating entity to establish equity among all and preserve client and Contributing HMIS Organization (CHOs) information security and anonymity.

Homeless Data Sharing Network

Building upon the work in late 2018, Texas Homeless Network worked with project partner Amazon Web Services (AWS) on developing a plan for a homeless data sharing network proof-of-concept. Texas Homeless Network partnered with two CoCs on the project: the Texas Balance of State CoC (TX BoS CoC), and Houston, Harris, Montgomery, and Fort Bend County CoC. The participating CoCs signed data sharing agreements and uploaded anonymized data that had been collected in HMIS between June 1, 2016 and May 31, 2018 to a central data warehouse for aggregation and de-duplication. The POC proved successful so THN and interested CoCs began planning the implementation of a Texas Homeless Data Sharing Network pilot project.

October 2019

The planning stage started in October of 2019 giving the necessary time to plan out the implementation phase of the Texas Homeless Data Sharing Network (THDSN) pilot and bring on a consultant to assist in the process. Because this project requires the skills and knowledge around data warehousing strategies, data security concerns (especially Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, known as HIPAA), and the technical aspects of database architecture as it relates to continually integrating disparate data sets, the beginning of the planning stage was focused on procuring an expert to assist with this. Three of five previously planned benchmarks were achieved during this month.

1) THN staff held preparatory conference calls with CoC lead representatives that would become the informally organized THDSN steering committee in August and September 2019, in order to coordinate the meeting in October. The group of 12 attendees met at the Omni Galleria in Houston during the Texas Conference on Ending Homelessness. The RFP for a project planning consultant was reviewed and approved. The group also held discussions on needs regarding a data sharing/use agreement(s) and reviewed a draft of a governance agreement for THDSN.

2) THN staff and partners reviewed and discussed the governance structure draft but chose not to finalize until a planning consultant could be in place to facilitate a more directed discussion on the creation of this structure. THN and partners agreed to continue meeting as an informal THDSN steering committee until the final governance was created.

3) The vote to approve membership on the THDSN steering committee was decided to be postponed until the final governance was created.

4) THN staff posted the Request for Proposals for a project planning consultant following the October 8th meeting.

5) The THDSN steering committee reviewed the proposal submission for a consultant to assist throughout the planning phase of the project and chose to contract with the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH). The contract was signed on October 25, 2019.

November 2019

THN and CSH worked on a pilot project timeline and presented a preliminary version to THDSN steering committee members for comment. The THDSN steering committee and CSH decided to review the final draft pilot project timeline before choosing whether or not to approve after the Thanksgiving break at the in-person, all-day meeting on December 9th.

December 2019

The THDSN steering committee and project partners met to review and finalize the pilot project timeline and THDSN Governance Structure and planned to create data sharing and data use agreements. Three of four previously planned benchmarks were achieved this month.

- 1) The THDSN steering committee, project partners and CSH met on December 9, 2019. 17 partners from around the state joined THN's two lead staff and four staff members of CSH. Attendees reviewed and approved the final drafts for the pilot project timeline.
- 2) Attendees of the December 9th meeting also reviewed and approved the final drafts for the Texas Homeless Data Sharing Network (THDSN) Governance Structure. Board members were identified to represent 9 of Texas' 11 CoC's, and of that group executive committee members were nominated for later approval by the board at-large.
- 3) During the meeting on December 9th, the THDSN Board decided to delay the creation of a data sharing use agreement at the advice of the project's planning consultants from the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) until a vendor was chosen through the RFP process.
- 4) Five THDSN Board members were elected to the THDSN Executive Committee by electronic vote on December 20, 2019. Two slots remain empty.

Disaster Response Coordination

During the 2019 TICH meetings, there were multiple updates from many of the members of the TICH regarding disaster recovery efforts in response to Hurricane Harvey. Most of the updates were regarding the work of TEA in response to the disaster and the collaboration between THEO, TNOYs, and THN Safety Nets for students and families project. Which gave out about a half a million dollars in grants to organizations to build capacity to serve young people who are homeless, due to the hurricane, as well as providing free training and technical assistance for schools and for providers.

(3) Assist in Coordinating and Providing Statewide Services

TICH accomplishes this requirement by attending regular meetings and cooperating with state agencies, convening a diversity of providers, policy makers, advocates and homeless individuals in THN's Annual Conference on Ending Homelessness, and participating in workgroups relevant to addressing identified challenges. Additionally, through TDHCA's administrative support of TICH, including maintenance of the TICH web pages (<https://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/tich/index.htm>), interested parties are able to access information and assistance.

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*. For an outline of the document's proposed objectives and strategies for assisting in the coordination and delivery

of services, please refer to pp. 71-79 of *Pathways Home*.

TICH continues to increase communication between state agencies and non-profit agencies through webinars, in-person workshops and teleconferences. THN hosts monthly CoC Leader conference calls designed to facilitate conversation among the 11 CoCs in Texas to work on common issues and provide information that may be helpful in preventing and ending homelessness across Texas.

Additionally, in 2019, TDHCA awarded Community Services Block Grant Discretionary (CSBG-D) funds to THN to support homelessness efforts in the Balance of State Continuum of Care and related statewide homelessness initiatives. During the calendar year THN staff provided a total of 259 trainings for 2,131 people across 409 cities and 335 counties, the average number of unique cities assisted per month was 34 and counties 28. A total of 143 of the trainings were one-on-one, 74 were group training events, and 42 were webinars. Additionally, staff provided 2,326 instances of technical assistance (704 hours) to 582 partner cities and 471 counties with an average of 49 unique cities and 39 counties per month.

During 2019, to assist in coordinating and planning statewide services, the TICH members provided updates about several programs and services for people experiencing homelessness. An overview of many of these updates by member agencies follows.

TDHCA

Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)

The ESG program, formerly the Emergency Shelter Grants Program, is a competitive grant that awards funds to private nonprofit organizations, cities, and counties in the State of Texas to provide the services necessary to help persons who are at-risk of homelessness or homeless quickly regain stability in permanent housing. The ESG program is funded by the HUD) and is administered by TDHCA in the State of Texas.

The ESG program provides funding to:

- Engage homeless individuals and families living on the street;
- Improve the number and quality of emergency shelters for homeless individuals and families;
- Help operate these shelters;
- Provide essential services to shelter residents;
- Rapidly re-house homeless individuals and families; and
- Prevent families and individuals from becoming homeless.

As reported in the 2018 Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report reporting on Program Year, the ESG program expended \$8,511,884 and served 33,873 individuals in program year 2018, the most recent program year for which data is available. The 2019 CAPER will be out for public comment in early November 2020, therefore that data wasn't available for this report.

Texas Ending Homelessness Fund

The 85th Texas Legislature passed H.B. 4102, which was enacted on September 1, 2017. The act amended Subchapter H, Chapter 502, Transportation Code to add Section 502.415, Voluntary Contribution to Ending Homelessness Fund (EH Fund). This section allows registrants of a motor vehicle in Texas to elect to contribute any amount of funds to the newly established EH Fund. Funds will be sent by the assessor-collector to the comptroller, and held in trust to be administered by TDHCA as trustee. The funds must be utilized to provide grants to counties and municipalities to combat homelessness. The Act further requires TDHCA to adopt rules governing applications for grants from the fund, and the issuance of those grants.

Beginning January 1, 2019, Texans gained the ability to donate to the Texas EH Fund (www.txhomelessfund.org) when they register or renew registration for their vehicle.

Donations to the fund will help:

- Enhance the number and quality of emergency shelters
- Prevent families and individuals from becoming homeless
- Encourage self sufficiency
- Secure stable housing

TDHCA awarded funds to eligible municipal and county governments on October 10, 2019 for a total of \$210,810. Awards of \$35,135 were made to each of the cities of Arlington, Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Plano and Texarkana.

Homeless Housing and Service Program (HHSP)

HHSP was established during the 81st Texas Legislature through an appropriations rider and codified during the 82nd Texas Legislature. Through HHSP, the state provides funding to the nine largest cities to support services to homeless individuals and families. Cities currently served through HHSP include Arlington, Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, Plano, and San Antonio.

Allowable activities include construction, development, or procurement of housing for homeless persons; rehabilitation of structures targeted to serving homeless persons or persons at-risk of homelessness; provision of direct services and case management to homeless persons or persons at-risk of homelessness; or other homelessness-related activity as approved by the Department. As reported in the 2019 State Low income Housing Plan and Annual Report, the HHSP program expended \$3,603,644 and served 6,473 individuals in SFY 2019.

HHSC

HHSC staff provided updates on several programs available to support collaboration of services and to help people with mental illness who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless find and keep housing.

Healthy Community Collaboratives (HCC)

HHSC staff provided updates throughout 2019 on the HCC program, which was created by the Texas

Legislature to establish or expand community collaboratives bringing the public and private sectors together to provide services to persons experiencing homelessness and mental illness.

Senate Bill (S.B.) 58, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, established the HCC program and required DSHS to award a maximum of five grants to the most populous municipalities in this state located in counties with a population of more than one million. The 2019-19 General Appropriations Act, Senate Bill (S.B. 1), 85th Legislature, Regular Session, 2017 (Article II, HHSC, Rider 73), appropriated \$25 million in general revenue and allowed HHSC to set aside up to \$10 million for rural collaboratives over the biennium to fund community collaborative grants pursuant to Texas Government Code, Chapter 539.

The S.B. 1849, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, 2017, provided the basis for expanding the HCC program into less densely populated areas of the state. This shifted the geographic priority of the program by giving preference to counties with less than 100,000 inhabitants. New legislation also required HCC sites to work with local law enforcement to divert HCC eligible individuals from correctional facilities (for example, jails) to treatment facilities or other supports. Procurements for funding rural areas will be completed in fiscal year 2019.

The HCC program utilizes the Coordinated Assessment Model, focusing on aligning the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness with referrals to services addressing their needs. Providers conduct coordinated assessments to rapidly and effectively match a participant's needs to available housing and services. Further, the coordinated assessment system standardizes the access and assessment process and coordinates referrals across the local service area. During the 18-month window of September 1, 2016, through February 28, 2018 – the most recent for which data was available – 25,512 individuals were enrolled in the HCC program. Over 4,300 HCC participants were housed by HCC providers since the start of fiscal year 2017, and another 400 individuals who were enrolled were able to self-resolve their homeless status by reuniting with family, moving in with friends, or obtaining housing independently. HCC participants were likely to experience a number of positive outcomes related to securing housing and employment, addressing behavioral health service needs, and reducing rates of substance use and justice system involvement. The report is available on HHSC's website at the following address: <https://hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/laws-regulations/reports-presentations/2018/rider73-healthy-community-collaboratives-dec-2018.pdf>

Supportive Housing Services

Supportive Housing services are currently required in the Performance Contracts of all thirty-nine Local Mental Health Authorities and Local Behavioral Health Authorities (Centers). These include assistance in locating, moving into, and retaining housing and treatment planning to facilitate recovery.

Services must be provided within the context of a "Housing First" model as part of the Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) of Permanent Supportive Housing. This EBP involves the provision of services to assist people in choosing, obtaining, and maintaining safe, affordable, and integrated housing. In Permanent Supportive Housing, a return to permanent housing is the individual's most immediate need. Once housed, individuals are provided home-based skills training to maintain their housing. This service

includes recovery planning to facilitate independent living and recovery with an emphasis on improved functioning and quality of life rather than a primary focus on symptom reduction.

Supportive Housing services also emphasizes flexible, voluntary services. People can accept or refuse other services, but staff must continue to offer supportive and flexible engagement around housing and crisis planning when needed.

Supportive Housing Rental Assistance Program

Twenty of the thirty-nine Centers mentioned above help people across the state who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless with temporary rent subsidies, utility payments and move-in costs. They also work on homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing to keep people housed or move them quickly into housing. This program is for people who are eligible to receive mental health services at the Centers and are homeless and willing to have a transition plan to either subsidized housing or become self-sufficient in their rent. In fiscal year 2020, the number of Centers providing direct rental and utility assistance to eligible individuals will increase to thirty-six.

TEA and Texas Homeless Education Office (“THEO”)

TEA and THEO provided updates on the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), previously the No Child Left Behind Act. ESSA made changes to the McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act and information was provided to the TICH on new definitions of homelessness, data reporting requirements, training mandates, and new roles for school homeless liaisons.

DFPS and TJJD

Preparation for Adult Living (PAL)

DFPS and TJJD staff provided updates on the PAL program at DFPS which ensures that older youth in substitute care are prepared for their inevitable departure from DFPS care and support. At any given time, there are about 3,500 youth 16 years of age and older in substitute care. PAL program staff strive to provide each of these youth with skills and resources they will need to be healthy, productive adults and reduce the likelihood of future homelessness. TJJD partners with DFPS to provide PAL to eligible youth who are in TJJD custody or on probation.

TDCJ

Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments (TCOOMMI)

TCOOMMI provides pre-release screening and referral to aftercare treatment services for special needs offenders releasing from correctional settings, local jails, or other referral sources. TCOOMMI contracts with Local Mental Health Authorities across the state to provide continuity of care services for persons on probation or parole by linking them with community based interventions and support services. TDCJ staff updated TICH on continued efforts to monitor progress made in meeting the treatment, rehabilitative,

and educational needs of special needs offenders in the adult and juvenile criminal justice system.

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

The ongoing work of the TICH and its execution of statutory requirements results in greater flow of information to providers and authorities. Again, TDHCA support to TICH is the essential means enabling improved communication.

Through the development of *Pathways Home*, TICH has facilitated more dialogue among independent service providers, both at the state and local level. 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 CoC systems. A 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 215 rural and non-metropolitan counties in Texas. HUD identifies the CoC as the hub for coordinating service delivery. Through new regulations, HUD requires heightened integration between agencies receiving HUD funds and local CoCs. As a result of these new regulations, TDHCA and TICH have increased their level of communication with CoC leadership across the state.

In 2017, the TICH was informed that lead agencies from each of the 11 CoCs intended to be more involved with the Council's work. TICH leadership encouraged participation in quarterly meetings and tasks of the Council. Unfortunately, there was CoC participation in only one of the Council's quarterly meetings in 2019. It's hoped that CoC participation in future council meetings will increase because this involvement serves to increase the flow of information from the state to local communities.

In 2019, THN presented a report to the Council of HUD CoC Point in Time (PIT) and Housing Inventory data for all Texas CoCs that THN had aggregated. In 2020 this report will be updated and presented to TICH membership again. THN will utilize these research findings to encourage the use of a common PIT survey date and questions in Texas CoC beginning in 2020.

(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. For a proposed Housing Status Continuum, see p. 68. For a discussion on strategies for establishing a common definition of "at risk of homelessness", see Homeless Prevention, beginning p. 54. Objective 2 of Data, Research, and Analysis, pp. 63-65, provides 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.

Nonetheless, due in part to the intricate patchwork of funding sources and varied service delivery needs of persons experiencing and at risk of homelessness across Texas, TICH has found it challenging within available resources to develop comprehensive and integrated guidelines for quality monitoring of the complex manner of Texas-wide efforts to combat homelessness.

In accordance with Texas Government Code §2306.905(a)(5), TICH will continue to work towards effective monitoring of the provision of services for the homeless and the methods of delivering those services in coordination with THN the network of Texas’ CoC leaders.

(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

THN has provided resources and data to the TICH, including representatives of TDHCA, on the homeless population and its various subpopulations, including those with special needs. Notably, THN has over 25 years of experience conducting research and data analysis utilizing sensitive information from people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. While the Department has a robust data analysis capability to inform all program divisions including Multifamily, THN will also provide technical assistance in the area of data collection, analyses, and the dissemination of research to TICH and the Multifamily Program Division, as needed. The Multifamily Program Division is responsive to issues relating to homelessness, encourages the development of permanent supportive housing in the programming of its funds, and is collaborative in responding to suggestions for rule and policy changes made by developers of permanent supportive housing in Texas.

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

With the support of the TICH, THN has partnered with TWC on a project to fulfill the requirement of the 7th statute, “Coordinate with the Texas Workforce Commission to Provide Homeless Individuals Information to Assist them in Obtaining Employment and Job Training”. The AmeriCorps VISTA Project manager, overseen by THN, is working with CoCs and local workforce boards to facilitate the coordination of employment assistance delivery to persons experiencing homelessness. The project is funded by the TWC contribution of \$10,000 for this TICH goal, and overseen by TDHCA as administrative support to the TICH.

CoCs are responsible for coordinating the programs that serve people experiencing homelessness as well as work to end homelessness in their local community, be it city, county, or region. Local Texas Workforce Development Boards are responsible for helping people seeking employment find work.

Ideally, the CoC and Workforce Development Board would work together in each community and coordinate services for homeless clients, who often need to increase income for housing stability. Some areas have already built such a partnership. Houston is a community in which the local CoC includes Workforce Solution offices in the community's coordinated response system designed to assist people experiencing homelessness. HUD has actively encouraged the use of funds from the Workforce Opportunity and Investment Act to collaborate with local CoCs to enhance programs for people experiencing homelessness.

THN utilized 2019 fiscal year funds from the Texas Workforce Commission to accomplish activities that complemented the work completed by THN over the past two years. The activities built on research into the collaboration between Continuums of Care (CoC) and Local Workforce Development Boards completed at the end of fiscal year 2017.

In accordance with Texas Government Code 2306.905(a)(7), THN will “coordinate with the Texas Workforce Commission, local workforce development boards, homeless shelters, and public and private entities to provide homeless individuals information on services available to assist them in obtaining employment and job training.”

This project allowed THN to partner with up to 3 Continuums of Care (CoC) with matching support for VISTA placement(s) that were dedicated to strengthening the coordination between the CoC and local Workforce Solutions Offices in assisting individuals experiencing homelessness with unemployment. And, it provided resources to track and measure the progress at each placement to determine if goals that each CoC established were met. Finally, it allowed for an evaluation to be completed that assesses the overall effectiveness of such programs and determines which program components could be successfully replicated.

The final report of activities that started in April of 2019, the start date for the first VISTA member placed on this project is below.

Texas Homeless Network concluded the TICH grant for supporting the progress of assisting the homeless through the implementation of Pathways Home's Action on statutory Requirements #7 'Coordinate with the Texas Workforce Commission to Provide Homeless Individuals Information to Assist Them in Obtaining Employment and Job Training, and Texas Government Code §2306.905(a)(7). In the final report, Texas Homeless Network (THN) will describe the accomplishments of the past grant year in the two sub-sites Volunteer In Service To America (VISTA) members that the project supported, Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) in Travis County and the Tarrant County Homeless Coalition (TCHC) in Tarrant County.

Tarrant County Report

Initial site assessment

When the VISTA engagement began, TCHC had undertaken a lot of work with WFS already in terms of relationship-building: Workforce Solutions (WFS) representatives were both members of the TCHC and

CoC Boards of Directors. Therefore, collaboration and engagement at the leadership levels were well established. However, information sharing, problem-solving, and other activities at the staff-level to support jobseekers experiencing homelessness was a new level of effort that was accomplished through the VISTA engagement. Specifically, TCHC was successful in obtaining WFS and Vocational Rehab feedback in the stakeholder engagement process, participation in the Education and Employment Committee to assist with the design process, and the Employment Implementation workgroup to assist in the launch of Phase I of the employment and economic program model, now called UPWARD, that occurred on July 1, 2019.

Project accomplishments

TCHC approached the development and design of UPWARD, an Economic Mobility Model with the City of Fort Worth, Workforce Solutions, Vocational Rehab, and the CoC partner agencies to assist clients to increase their income through enhanced employment or benefits. The VISTA initiated the project with stakeholder engagement, literature review, best practice identification and research, SWOT analysis, and review of approaches to expand community capacity for benefits, SSI/SSDI and SOAR. The finalization of a model for UPWARD was curated in collaboration with and as an essential part of community dynamic prioritization for employment navigation that resulted in implementation planning and activities. The VISTA promoted development/use of technological enhancements and tools, and established preliminary program outcomes to drive program evaluation. After, the piloting of key concepts and approaches and refinement of approaches and tools led to the launch of phase I of UPWARD.

During the project year, the VISTA created a sustainable and multiuse questionnaire to enable stakeholder evaluation and an executive dashboard of stakeholder feedback. The VISTA participated in multiple briefings and recommendations to the executive director, agency board, and agency leaders on the project initiatives. The VISTA also made educational pieces of work to support community education, report findings from stakeholder feedback sessions, promote community engagement such as the employment referral form tool to drive the staff screening and recommendations for clients.

Toolkits and training created

- Training for pilots and launch of UPWARD
- Assessor Script Manuals and Guides
- Employer Engagement
- CoC employment and financial coaching engagement questionnaires

Travis County Report

Initial site assessment

ECHO historically did not focus on workforce and employment navigation channels for clients outside of

SOAR initiatives. ECHO's Action Plan did not allude to significant correlations between employment goals and other goals, such as Coordinated Entry or housing goals. However, prior to the start of the project, ECHO created and began an Income and Employment Workgroup.

The Income and Employment Workgroup lacked a clear focus. The focus was on decreasing system barriers to increase client income. In addition, this focus was consistent with the content in the other workgroups. The work at the agency needed to focus on creating more training and resources for staff.

Project accomplishments

Through the project year, the ECHO VISTA promoted and built a sustainable structure for the employment navigation system that ECHO grow with in the future. The VISTA helped push the workgroup forward, initiated and sustained contact with the Workforce Solutions, and created an Employment Navigation Manual.

With the workgroup, the VISTA revised ECHO's 'Referral Manual/Pilot Program', presented best practice research for connecting people experiencing homelessness to employment services staff, and crafted summary guides over reformation and refocus of the workgroup. The VISTA revised ECHO's original manual by converting it into the Employment Navigation Manual. In doing this, the VISTA reformatted how services were listed so clients could more easily search for services, as well as steps on how to access the services and what they need to know before going. The VISTA also focused on directing clients to employment services intended for job seekers with barriers, especially the barrier of homelessness.

Toolkits created

- The Travis County Employment Service Navigation Manual
- Best Practice Research: The CoC and Local Workforce Boards
- The Public Workforce System + the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 Guide
- Toolkit for Understanding Jobseekers Experiencing Homelessness

Long-term impacts of this project

Both projects will see the long-term benefits and impacts of this project. TCHC ended the project in April 2019 and the Travis County VISTA ended service in August 2019. Both projects created measures and goals for their partnerships with WFS and plans for the development of employment navigation tools. TCHC continues to grow implementation with full collaboration and support from WFS, Vocational Rehab and all 50 of the CoC agencies. The VISTA is now employed at the agency as full-time staff which will ensure long-term oversight of the work. During the VISTA's time, internal scripts were compiled and other referral procedures were documented for future use by staff and partner agencies. The outcome data from the project was collected and is stored for agency records. The agency is working with WFS, Vocational Rehab and all 50 of their CoC agencies with support to continue the work.

ECHO has identified an internal lead for the future of the initiative. ECHO conducted a larger Employment Workgroup, and together, WFS and ECHO are currently planning cross-staff training opportunities. ECHO is moving forward with a written agreement for this partnership that will build over the years to come. In addition to the partnership, the creation of the Employment Navigation Manual was one of the largest pieces of work and focuses during this project for long-term sustainable efforts. The manual to direct clients and case managers to WFS and to present on the local Labor Market Index and will be used and updated for the foreseeable future. ECHO also plans on using the best practice research accomplished during the project year to inform and shape future decisions for employment navigation and workforce solutions.

During the last quarter of of 2019 the following was accomplished:

As of 12/2019, the project is currently working on recruiting sites to host volunteers around the state, specifically in the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care. While the project has not secured sites as of 12/2019, THN has held meetings and provided project pitches to McAllen, Denton, San Angelo, Kileen, Sherman, and Corpus Christi. While many of the first attempts to connect with these areas have resulted in agencies saying they do not have the capacity to take on the project at this time, we will be reaching out to other agencies, some in the same areas, to see if there are other options. The main barrier of the project so far is searching for areas that have the start of a veteran initiative happening that have the capacity to take on a full-time volunteer to help build capacity for their agency.

Success stories this quarter:

The main successes for the project during Quarter 1 are on the building of recruitment efforts. The project manager has created an activity description approved by the Corporation of National and Community Service for the Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD) that will be the basis of an outline of the project goals for future Volunteers in Service to America (VISTAs). This VAD will be updated and site-specific upon securing sites for the project but get the beginning VAD approved has helped provide context when talking to sites about the project. The Statewide Initiatives team at THN has created a recruitment strategy including target locations, flyers, information email templates, social media posting templates, and a protocol for contacting and working with sites. And while we have not had success in securing sites for the project, we have had many meetings that offer us more possibilities of sites because of the networking as a result of spreading word about this project.

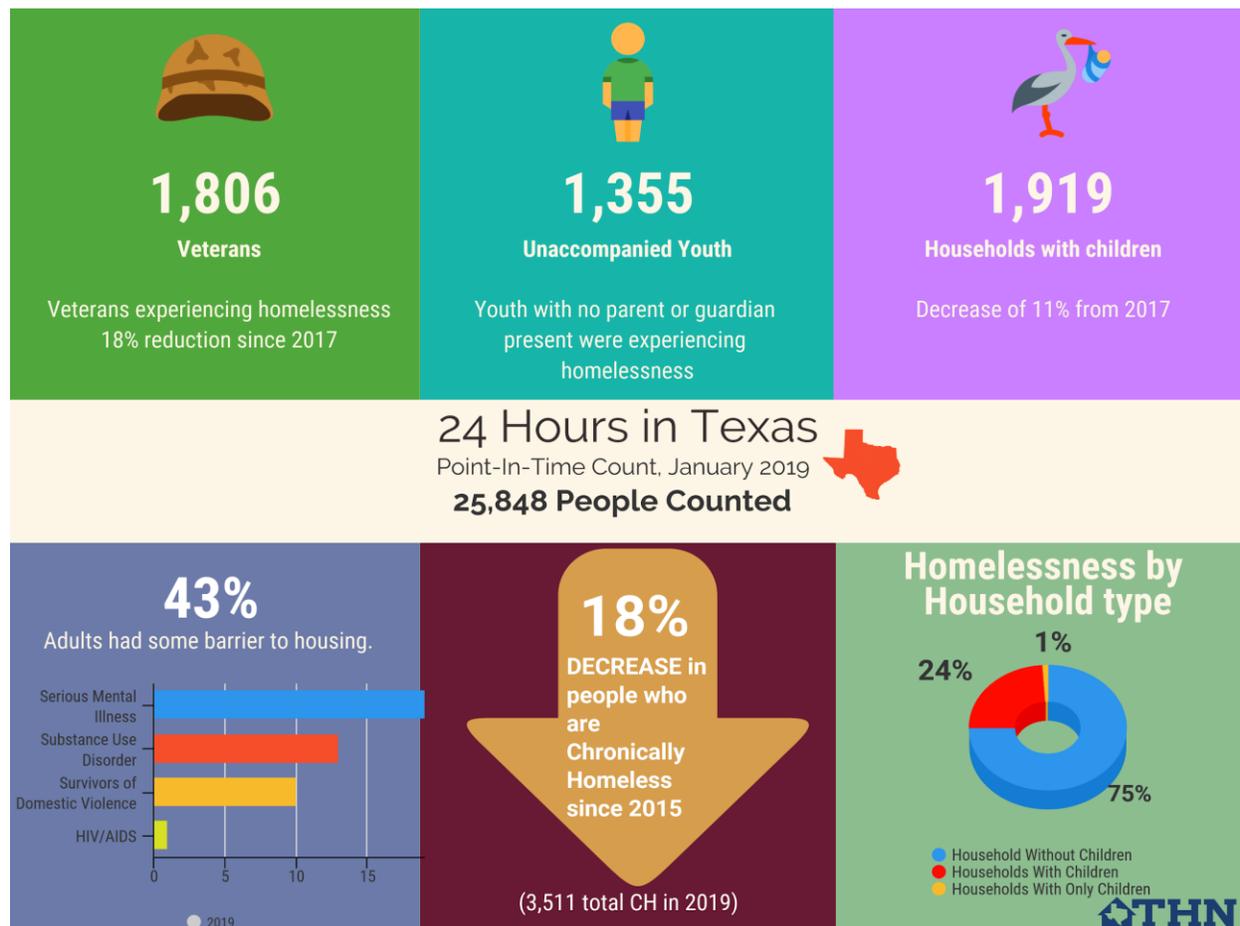
(8) Establish a Central Resource and Information Center for the Homeless

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 work with Texas' CoCs, and 2-1-1 to ensure that this system maintains comprehensive and accurate information on current resources.

HUD required CoCs to restructure their methods of case management, resource delivery, and information distribution. This restructured system is called Coordinated Entry and implementation is required by all CoCs. In regulations issued for the ESG Program and CoC Grant Program, HUD has set a deadline for projects funded from either program to begin using a coordinated entry process as the basis for all service

delivery in 2019. CoCs will use a coordinated entry assessment to both determine client eligibility for assistance and to refer clients to local resources that best fit their needs.

THN assists the TICH with the compilation and synthesis of data on homelessness on a statewide level. The most common source of this data is collected each year through a PIT count by CoCs during the last ten days of January. In 2019 THN staff provided results of the 2019 PIT count that showed a 2% higher population than the 2018 point in time count, and the highest figure in the state of Texas since 2014 and the population has increased by 7% since 5 years ago. Despite the fact that the 2019 numbers are higher than the previous year and there is an upward trend in overall numbers, there is still a decrease of Veteran Homelessness over 18% since 2017 and the number of households with children is 11% lower in the same time frame. In addition to these results, THN presented an infographic that provided a snapshot of homelessness in Texas at any point in time, "24 Hours in Texas Point-in-Time."



(9) Council Responsibilities Executed by Other Entities

The TICH works closely with THN, a nonprofit organization that provides assistance to Texas communities

to end homelessness through training, technical assistance, and policy maker education. THN has the following statutory authority to supplement the TICH's work pursuant to Section 2306.905(b) of the Texas Government Code: "In accomplishing the council's duties under this section, the council and each of its represented agencies may seek program or policy assistance from the Texas Homeless Network or any other organization in this state that has a network of providers with expertise in assisting homeless youth."

THN provides support to agencies and communities that are building systems to end homelessness in Texas through education, resources, and advocacy. This is the umbrella under which all programs and staff operate at THN, and it is under this directive the staff and board derive the agency's purpose and role.

Advocates, nonprofits, and state agencies formed THN to meet the unmet needs they identified in their efforts to end homelessness on the community and state level. Twenty-nine years later, THN continues to evolve and is meeting these needs through two primary focus areas, the Texas Balance of State CoC and Statewide Initiatives.

The Texas Balance of State CoC initiative serves 215 counties in Texas, 85% of the state, through technical assistance, training and development of a coordinated response to end homelessness. The Statewide Initiatives program serves all of Texas in the areas of advocacy, community support through VISTA AmeriCorps Support, implementation of a Texas Homeless Data Sharing Network, representation in state agency and council planning, and through organizing an annual conference on ending homelessness. These two initiatives intersect and complement each other as THN strives to meet its goal of ending homelessness.