



Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless

Quarterly Meeting – October 14, 2015

**Members present:**

#	Member Agency	Representative	Attendance (Yes/No)
1	Office of the Governor appointee, Cornerstone Network (TICH Chair)	Mike Doyle	No
2	Office of the Lt. Governor	<i>vacant</i>	n/a
3	Office of the Speaker of the House	<i>vacant</i>	n/a
4	Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)	Fedora Galasso Amy Felker	Yes Yes – by phone
5	Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS)	Penny Larkin	Yes – by phone
6	Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)	Jonas Schwartz	Yes – by phone
7	Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)	Lisa Howard (proxy for Frances Gattis)	Yes – by phone
8	Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)	Beth Engelking	No
9	Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Housing Finance representative (TDHCA)	Brooke Boston	Yes
10	TDHCA, Community Affairs representative	Naomi Trejo	Yes
11	Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)	Anna Sonenthal	No
12	Texas Education Agency (TEA)	Kelly Kravitz	Yes
13	Texas Department of Juvenile Justice (TJJD)	Karen Lashbrook	No
14	Texas Veterans Commission (TVC)	Pam Maercklein	Yes
15	Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)	George McEntyre	Yes – by phone

**Advisory Members present:**

#	Advisory Member Organization	Representative	Attendance (Yes/No)
1	Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS)	Christine Gendron	Yes
2	Austin Travis County Integral Care	Darilynn Cardona-Beiler	No
3	Community Healthcore	Stanley Williams	No
4	Private Citizen	Dennis M. Scholl	Yes

#	Advisory Member Organization	Representative	Attendance (Yes/No)
5	Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority (MHMRA) of Harris County, Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (CPEP) Division	Mende Snodgrass	No
6	Texas Homeless Network (THN)	Jennifer Paulsen (Proxy for Eric Samuels)	Yes
7	Texas Education Homeless Office (THEO)	Jeanne Stamp	No
8	Education Service Center Region 10	Jana Burns	No
9	Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation (TSHAC)	David Long	Yes
10	Texas Council on Family Violence	Molly Voyles	Yes
12	HHSC	Sonja Gaines	No

**Other attendees:** Christina Petrossi (Goodwill Industries of Houston), Kelly Opot (CSH), Lt. Michelle Hutchinson (The Salvation Army of Paris, TX), Dillina Brockway (New Hope Center of Paris), Ann Howard (ECHO), Mona Muro (TCFV), Sharon Gamble (TDHCA), Megan Sylvester (TDHCA), Eva Thibaudeau (Houston Coalition for the Homeless), Otis Thornton (Tarrant County Homeless Coalition), Monah Rhodes (Family Endeavors), Kim Wagner-Hudson (Family Endeavors), Sandra Hoelscher (Brazos Valley Coalition for the Homeless), Jennifer Young (Brazos Valley Coalition for the Homeless), Doug Weedon (Brazos Valley Coalition for the Homeless), Bettie Beckworth (HHSC), Delilah Oatess (Career and Recovery Resources), and Gabriel McDonald (Texas Appleseed).

**Administrative support:** Cate Taylor (TDHCA)

### I. Welcome and Introductions

**Brooke Boston** called the meeting to order at 10:15am. Because **Mike Doyle** was unable to attend the meeting, he requested that **Brooke Boston** act as Chair of the meeting in his absence. With 9 out of 15 Council members present, a quorum was established.

### II. Remarks from Chair

**Brooke Boston** thanked the Texas Homeless Network (THN) for hosting the Quarterly TICH meeting in conjunction with the Annual Texas Conference on Ending Homelessness. Many attendees of the conference were present for the TICH meeting and introductions were made all around. Several members of the Continuum of Care (CoC) network were in attendance.

### III. Report on VISTA Volunteer Project on §2306.905(7)

**Peter Grein** of THN provided an update of the VISTA Volunteer Project to meet the requirements of §2306.905(7) of the Texas Government Code, which states that the TICH shall “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.” The VISTA volunteer candidate, Aaliyah Noble, will start on Monday, November 23, 2015, and will be supervised by **Peter Grein**. Initial interviews with local workforce development boards and homeless service providers have already been conducted by **Peter Grein**. The results of these interviews will be the foundation for the VISTA volunteer’s work. Aaliyah Noble will make a recommendation for one to two of the communities in which interviews were conducted to participate in a pilot program to improve employment outcomes of persons who are experiencing homelessness. The interviews and proposed pilot are examples of TICH’s funds at work, since the Texas Workforce Commission contributed funding to the TICH for the VISTA Volunteer Project.

#### **VII. Approval of Draft Minutes**

**Brooke Boston** skipped to agenda item VII to approve the draft minutes from the October 14, 2015, meeting. **Dennis Scholl** moved to approve and **Naomi Trejo** seconded. Members voted aye unanimously to approve the minutes.

#### **IV. Update on House Bill 679, Youth Homelessness**

**Christine Gendron** of the Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) provided an update on the status of *Youth Count Texas!*, a count and survey of youth who are unstably housed or who are homeless in Texas. As required by House Bill 679, 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative session, TDHCA has been charged with conducting this count and preparing a report on youth homelessness, due to the Texas Legislature by December 1, 2016. To satisfy the count and needs assessment of homeless and unstably-housed youth, TDHCA has contracted with TNOYS to develop and implement a survey of youth who are unstably housed or who are homeless in Texas. This survey development and implementation has been coined *Youth Count Texas!*. Two surveys have been created: one survey that meets the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point in Time guidelines and one survey that is a more comprehensive youth needs assessment. **Christine Gendron** noted that there is an information table at the THN conference and all attendees were invited to stop by and learn more about *Youth Count Texas!*. It was also noted that the TICH has formed a workgroup to oversee parts of *Youth Count Texas!* and **Christine Gendron** called for additional volunteers to join to workgroup.

#### **V. Update on Senate Bill 1580, Veteran Homelessness**

**Naomi Trejo** gave an update of the Veterans Study and provided a handout listing items that TICH members will review during the development of the Homeless Veterans Study, which is due to the Texas Legislature by December 1, 2016. It was reported that the TICH Veterans Study workgroup met on September 29, 2015, and made progress on the deliverable items due to the TICH as a whole in January. **Naomi Trejo** anticipates that the needs assessment process for the Homeless Veterans Study will be similar to the needs assessment process from “Pathways Home.”

**Naomi Trejo** then noted that the **Bettie Beckworth** of HHSC's Office of Veteran Services will work together with HHSC's Center for Health Statistics to conduct a survey of 11 cities that have been identified as accepting the challenge to effectively end veteran homelessness. The results of this survey will be brought to the July TICH meeting.

**Naomi Trejo** finally invited all TICH attendees to a roundtable discussion the following morning, as part of the ongoing conference, to provide recommendations to effectively end homelessness among veterans. Dennis Scholl asked if TDHCA has reached out to the American Legion of VFW for involvement in the Veterans Study. Naomi Trejo responded that TDHCA has not yet reached out but would consider doing so in 2016.

#### **VI. Welcome New Member**

**Brooke Boston** welcomed **Valinda Bolton**, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) who will be replacing **Beth Engelking**. **Brooke Boston** thanked **Beth Engelking** for her service on the TICH.

#### **VIII. Draft TICH Annual Report**

Prior to the meeting, the latest version of the Draft 2015 Annual Report was circulated to members for review. **Brooke Boston** noted that the TICH had several accomplishments and activities during 2015 and the report reflected the hard work of the Council members, advisory members and partner organizations. Brooke Boston called for any comments on the draft report but there was no discussion needed among the group. The final report will be prepared and will be a voting item for the next TICH meeting in January 2016.

#### **IX. TICH Committees**

- (a) *Homelessness Prevention*: As the Chair position of this committee was vacated by **Beth Engelking**, **Brooke Boston** called for volunteers and requested that any interested members contact **Cate Taylor**.
- (b) *Housing and Supportive Services*: **David Long** reported that the committee met by phone on September 9, 2015 and thanked **Michael Wilt** for facilitating that meeting. During the meeting, the committee developed updates for the 2015 TICH Annual Report.
- (c) *Data, Research, and Analysis*: Since the last TICH meeting, the committee updated the annual report.
- (d) *State Infrastructure*: Since the last TICH meeting, the committee updated the annual report.

#### **X. Development and Draft of By-laws**

**Brooke Boston** then moved to a discussion on the development of the draft Bylaws for the TICH, noting that there would be no formal action taken at this meeting. **Penny Larkin** asked if the latest change in statute governing the TICH mentioned now required a financial contribution from member agencies. **Naomi Trejo** clarified that the requirement for resources added to the TICH governing statute as a result of Senate Bill 679, 84(R) did not specifically mention funding, and then asked if the \$10,000 financial contribution should be in the bylaws. **Megan Sylvester** clarified that the financial contribution may be in the bylaws but it does not necessarily have to be. **Megan Sylvester** also noted that she is researching the option of conducting member votes by email, as that provision does not appear in the statute either.

Continuing with the discussion, **Dennis Scholl** asked about the source of the bylaws and **Brooke Boston** explained that over the last year, THN had worked with a consultant (**Dianna Grey**) to improve how the TICH functions. Several TICH members were involved in the analysis of the TICH and one of the requested outcomes from the analysis was a set of draft bylaws. **Dennis Scholl** then asked about the track record for attendance, noting that it may be difficult to define the involvement of each agency simply based upon attendance. **George McEntyre** then followed with a comment on the membership section of the draft bylaws, suggesting that no one person can commit resources for an agency as a whole. **Brooke Boston** then suggested that this would be a good conversation to continue at the January meeting.

#### **XI. Update on State Agency Homelessness Services Programs and Initiatives**

**Sharon Gamble** reported that TDHCA is now down to two core homelessness related programs: Emergency Solutions Grants Program (ESG) and Homeless Housing and Services Programs (HHSP). All of the THN-funded programs to work with the CoC member agencies have come to an end. In Program Year (PY) 2015, ESG funding is approximately \$8.8 million, up by 4.7% from PY 2014. The PY 2015 ESG contracts began on October 1, 2015 and TDHCA is currently in the process extending some of the PY 2014 ESG contracts. The plan for PY 2016 ESG is to shift to more direct CoC participation, encouraging local competition and increased financial and administrative responsibility at the local level. This plan was supported by an assessment completed by THN which found that many CoC's are ready for more locally focused competitions within the State ESG program.

Moving to the HHSP program, **Sharon Gamble** gave a brief overview of HHSP to the new attendees and several questions were raised from the group about which cities are currently in the program and which cities will be eligible in the future. **Sharon Gamble** explained that there are currently eight Texas cities with a population of 285,500 or more, and are therefore eligible for the HHSP program. The population threshold is set by state statute and the population is determined by the U.S. Census. So, cities with a growing population approaching the 285,500 threshold may be eligible for the HHSP program in the future. **Sharon Gamble** reminded the group that the program requirements for HHSP are much less stringent than the ESG Program and the awarded cities may use their HHSP funds to fill gaps that exist in other homeless programs and services. **Brooke Boston** then thanked the current HHSP cities for contributing a portion of their HHSP funds to support the efforts of *Youth Count Texas!*

Following the TDHCA update, **Brooke Boston** made a call for other State Agencies or advisory member organizations to provide updates on homeless prevention activities at the next meeting.

## **XII. Discussion with CoC members about the Status of Coordinated Access**

**Naomi Trejo** then introduced a discussion on the status of Coordinated Access among the CoC members present. **Eva Thibaudeau** of the Houston Coalition for the Homeless, representing the Houston/Harris County CoC, provided an overview of how Coordinated Access has been working in the Houston area. Initially piloted in July 2013 with the support of a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals (CABHI) grant and regular workgroups, the Houston Coalition phased in Coordinated Access with the day shelters and the veterans drop-in center, where chronically homeless individuals were known to be located. Following the pilot, the current system was launched in July 2014. With the growth of Coordinated Access in Houston, each shelter, outreach location, and service provider has repurposed one staff member to run point on the citywide Coordinated Access network. Coordinated Access has also been wrapped in to HMIS, so any providers that use HMIS have access to Coordinated Access. (Note: HMIS, or a Homeless Management Information System, is a data management system used by local providers to collect client-level data for homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness accessing housing and services). **Eva Thibaudeau** also informed the group that there is a phone-in option to Coordinated Access, where individuals may call from within a county jail or emergency room and a case manager will meet that individual upon exit. **Dennis Scholl** asked if there was a report detailing the success of Coordinated Access in Houston and **Eva Thibaudeau** indicated that all information was available online at [www.homelesshouston.org](http://www.homelesshouston.org).

**Molly Voles** then asked how Coordinated Access works with survivors of domestic violence since many domestic violence providers do not use HMIS in order to protect the confidentiality of their clients and maintain their clients' safety. There was a discussion about the lack of safety training for the use of the Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT), which is a commonly used assessment tool for Coordinated Access implementation. THN was working on a script for the VI-SPDAT during the summer of 2015. **Eva Thibaudeau** responded that many would agree that it's been a challenge to prioritize this population with housing placements, as many providers have found that this population can be underreported and are hesitant to disclose personal information. In order to work through some of the challenges, Houston created a domestic violence workgroup and has trained staff to use a script to use with domestic violence clients during the assessment process.

Next, **Ann Howard** of the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO), representing the Austin/Travis County CoC, provided an overview of status of Coordinated Access in the greater Austin area, noting that the assessment was very similar to Houston's process but Austin did not specifically target the chronic homeless population from the start. Funding from a DSHS Healthy Collaborative grant allowed Austin to build a frontend system for Coordinated Access and Austin was able to complete 2,700 client assessments in one year. **Ann Howard** noted that approximately 1/3 of the need in that first

year was for permanent supportive housing, while the remaining 2/3 of the need was for rapid re-housing services.

**Dennis Scholl** asked if the CoC's knew where most of the persons experiencing homelessness were coming from. **Ann Howard** responded that all cities face the same issues and successes with homelessness. In order to minimize the perception that homeless populations are gravitating to certain large cities, the question "Where did you become homeless" was added to the 2014 Point in Time survey conducted in Austin. ECHO found that in 2014 most of the homeless population in Austin was from central Texas, such as Austin and Bastrop. Also, those exiting the criminal justice or state hospital systems are released in major cities. **Eva Thibaudeau** added that much of the Houston homeless population became homeless in Houston and is not transient.

To further assist the homeless populations, **Eva Thibaudeau** informed the group that Houston is now adding an income and employment piece to Coordinated Access with assistance from \$2.4 million grant from TWC that will fund seven workforce positions in shelters and Coordinated Access intake centers. **Naomi Trejo** reminded TICH members that **Peter Grein** had surveyed local workforce boards and homeless service providers across the state to as part of the VISTA Volunteer Project on §2306.905(7) as reported earlier in the meeting. **Naomi Trejo** then asked how local providers could better interact with members of the TICH. **Ann Howard** responded that a Pay for Success grant from the criminal justice system was valuable to homeless service providers as jail release can be very impactful on a local community.

Connecting the ongoing conversation to the ongoing efforts to effectively end youth homelessness, **Eva Thibaudeau** noted that preventing youth homelessness does not live in the world of homeless service providers; it lives in the world of youth services providers, including juvenile probation and foster care providers, who are able to intervene with young people before they have a need for homeless service providers.

Then, **Otis Thornton** of the Tarrant County Homeless Coalition, representing the Fort Worth/Arlington/Tarrant County CoC, provided an overview of status of Coordinated Access in the greater Fort Worth area, noting that Fort Worth has also taken a "no wrong door approach." Beginning in April 2014, Coordinated Access was piloted with Rapid Re-housing programs, where centralized intake information on homeless and disability status was forwarded to the CoC for verification and the client was assigned to a specific service provider that best addresses their needs. In Tarrant County/Arlington/Fort Worth had implemented a helpline, was using VI-SPDAT, and had a social worker specifically to work with clients with disabilities.

Following on the centralized intake discussion, **Eva Thibaudeau** mentioned that, through the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing program during 2009-2013, coalitions learned that homeless service providers vastly choose who they serve and it was difficult to delegate case management for a client when the case managers were spending a bulk of their time doing income verification, fair market rent calculations, and seemingly endless paperwork at each provider location. Houston contracted with the

Houston Housing Authority to do some of the paperwork, such as to determine Fair Market Rent and rent reasonableness, to free up the homeless service providers' time. **Otis Thornton** added that including scoring criteria to proposals or Notices of Funding Availability for Coordinated Access activities would be helpful in strengthening the entire Coordinated Access system.

**Dennis Scholl** then asked how many staff are dedicated and trained to work with special populations such as veterans or persons with disabilities. **Ann Howard** responded that a count is not known but homeless providers follow HUD guidelines to secure the most vulnerable populations first. Further, the Austin CoC brought in training to the homeless services provider community and required that anyone who participates in Coordinated Access take the training. **Eva Thibaudeau** agreed that not all work at the homeless service provider level has to be done by social workers, but the social workers' case management was for the most complicated cases.

Finally, **Ann Howard** relayed that the School of Social Work at the University of Texas at Austin of has offered to be the regional hub for the National Center on Excellence in Homeless Services, and hopes to provide training on a continual basis and to partner with CoCs across the state. This will be one of three national centers; the other centers are in New York and California.

**XIII.** Public Comment  
None.

**XIV.** Next meeting  
The next meeting has been tentatively scheduled for Tuesday January 12, 2016, in Austin, TX.

**XV.** Adjourn  
The meeting was adjourned at 12:15pm.