



Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless
Quarterly Meeting – July 27, 2021
Meeting Minutes

A transcript from the electronic recording of the meeting may be found here:
<http://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/tich/meetings.htm>

Members present:

#	Member Agency	Representative	Attendance (Yes/No)
1	Office of the Governor appointee, Cornerstone Network (TICH Chair)	Mike Doyle	Yes
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)	Joyce Pohlman	No
5	HHSC	Suzie Brady	Yes
6	HHSC	Claire Irwin	Yes
7	Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)	Sherri Cogbill	Yes
8	Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)	Valinda Bolton	No
9	Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA), Housing Finance representative	Brooke Boston	Yes
10	TDHCA, Community Affairs representative	Naomi Cantu	Yes
11	Texas Education Agency (TEA)	Cal Lopez	No
12	Texas Department of Juvenile Justice (TJJD)	Marqus Butler	No
13	Texas Veterans Commission (TVC)	Blake Harris	Yes
14	Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)	Deborah Arellano	Yes

<There are currently 12 filled seats so quorum is 7>

Advisory Members present:

#	Advisory Member Organization	Representative	Attendance (Yes/No)
1	Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS)	Fedora Galasso	Yes
2	TNOYS	Ann-Charlotte Proffitt	No
3	Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute	Darilynn Cardona-Beiler	Yes
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5	Texas Homeless Network (THN)	Eric Samuels	Yes
6	Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation (TSAHC)	Mike Wilt	Yes
7	Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation (TSAHC)	David Long	No
8	Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV)	Molly Voyles	No

Other attendees Michael Lyttle, TDHCA; Elizabeth Yevich (TDHCA),

Administrative support: Elizabeth Yevich (TDHCA), Jeremy Stremmler (TDHCA)

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Mike Doyle called the meeting to order at via GoToWebinar 10:09 am, confirmed a quorum was present.

II. Remarks from the Chair

Mike Doyle opened the meeting by saying that in his area of the state in Fort Worth/Tarrant County that he was aware that federal money was currently available to assist vulnerable populations reiterating how good it was that this funding was now available and serving those in need.

III. Approval of draft minutes from the April 20, 2021 TICH Meeting

Mike Doyle then called for a motion to approve the April 20 minutes. Brooke Boston then made a motion to approve the minutes, Blake Harris' then seconded the motion. The motion is passed unanimously with no comments.

IV. Legislative Session Update

Michael Lyttle, TDHCA's Director of External Affairs presented a brief report on the 87th legislative session (Regular). He began by referencing that several bills passed which would be of interest to the TICH adding that TDHCA was fortunate to go through the session without any major cuts in its proposed budget. He explained that Exceptional Items are generally things that are above and beyond the normal, baseline budget and that TDHCA only had one exceptional item which was a capital budget related to computer information technology needs for the agency. As for the Homeless Housing and Services Program (HHSP) it received \$12.6 million in General Revenue (GR) over the upcoming biennium which goes out to the nine largest Texas cities. Also of note was the Ending Homelessness Fund (EHF) with an

estimated \$400,000 over the biennium. This is an estimate due to it coming from contributions when Texans complete vehicle registration with an option to donate to this fund.

Mr. Lyttle then prefaced his next section by stating that in his over 21 years with TDHCA he had never seen a session have more bills filed about homelessness. He also noted that though there was pre-session discussion about possibly less bills being filled due to COVID, it turned out that more filled were filed this past session than in the last few sessions. As for fiscal note (FN) preparation for TDHCA there was about 30 percent more FN's this session than previous. In short, a very busy session.

The highlight bill was HB 1925 by Representative Capriglione which Brooke Boston will discuss in further detail. He stated that it was more than halfway through the session when TDHCA got added on to this bill to perform reviews of camping plans submitted by cities which planned for designated areas to serve the homeless. The next set of bills were from freshman representative Campos out of San Antonio and all related to homelessness which was clearly an important issue for her noted. Most of the bills made it out of Urban Affairs Committee which is TDHCA's house oversight committee and which Representative Campos also sits on. The only one that passed was HB 1278 directing TICH to hold a public hearing in both an urban and rural location. Mr. Lyttle concluded by saying he expected there would be a special called session on redistricting and federal pandemic response funds which may or may not related to serving homeless communities.

V. Updates from Member Agencies

(a) Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA)

- i. **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Annual Funds and ESG through the CARES Act**
Naomi Cantu presented on ESG CARES which she indicated has met the 20% required benchmark more than two months ahead of time. ESG CARES I contracts have been in effect more than a year and ESG CARES II contracts began in January 2021. The program is now working toward the second benchmark which is 80% expended by March 2022. ESG CARES I contracts have been in existence for about a year and have seen some closing and some voluntarily return funds so the program is in process of reallocating those funds. ESG CARES II contracts are underway and staff is looking to increase expenditures for those. In short: positive news for ESG CARES. Naomi concluded with updates about HUD and expected new flexibility with the funding indicating that HUD had already lifted the shelter limitations which is viewed as a favorable change.
- ii. **Ending Homelessness Fund (EHF)**
Naomi began by adding on to Mr. Lyttle's discussion from earlier in the meeting on EHF saying on average \$20,000 to \$25,000 per month are received in donations for EHF.
- iii. **Homeless Housing and Services (HHSP) program**
EHF awards were made to the nine cities which fall under HHSP. These EHF awards were issued in early July, in the amount of \$51,804 distributed evenly among the nine cities. The HHSP annual general award was also made at the early July TDHCA board meeting, in the amount of \$6.2 million. A general discussion then ensued about the HHSP program.
- iv. **Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program**
Spencer Duran, Director of Section 811 presented next providing an overview of this new EHV HUD initiative. TDHCA was awarded 798 new Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) that are part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) appropriation. These 800 vouchers means that TDHCA received almost 20% of all vouchers awarded in Texas and that near 800 number

nearly doubles TDHCA's current Section 8 program. These new Section 8 vouchers are limited in who they can serve. Follows are the four target populations: they must serve persons who are experiencing homelessness; people who are at risk of homelessness; persons who are fleeing domestic violence or sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking; or those who are recently homeless. The Balance of State counties plus TDHCA's current 34-county Section 8 jurisdiction has been identified as the service area for this program backing out the areas already receiving their own EHV's. This means 190 counties are eligible for these 798 vouchers. Spencer went on to add that much of this set up is HUD driven with TDHCA trying to serve areas that are otherwise not served. No contracts with counties are signed just yet but HUD has made it clear that this should be a dynamic process where the housing authority and the service provider will come to an agreement through a MOU on how the referrals will be made and then how those housing and other services will be delivered.

v. **HB 1925 and Draft Rule**

Brooke Boston presented on HB 1925 which passed during the Regular legislative session and signed into law on June 15. It established prohibitions on camping in public places, created a criminal offense in the Texas Penal Code prohibiting camping; prohibited a local entity from adopting or enforcing a policy that prohibits or discourages the enforcement of the camping ban, and if a local entity does do that then they are restricted from receiving any state grant funds. Lastly the bill established a new Subchapter PP of Chapter 2306 of Texas Government Code relating to properties designated by political subdivisions for camping by homeless individuals. In short, what the new subchapter added is that a political subdivision cannot designate a property to be used by homeless individuals to camp unless TDHCA has approved a plan as described by that subchapter. The bill goes into effect September 1. TDHCA will be releasing a rule for public comment that will outline how that process would be governed. This draft rule went to TDHCA's board on July 8 receiving approval and is now out for public comment through August 23. The rule outlines how political subdivisions can submit those plans, what the plans have to include, the process to be used for submission for TDHCA's review and then the criteria by which TDHCA will approve or deny the plan. Ms. Boston then described in more details particulars of the rule as they related to statute encouraging the members to review the rule and its requirements. Brooke closed her discussion advising that the approval of these plans and its process is going to be under the Housing Resource Center (HRC). Several questions were raised by the Chair and members about the intent of the rule and how it might look which Brooke addressed referencing back to the legislation reiterating that the rule is a draft now and could change after the close of public comment.

Brooke then provided the membership with an update on the pandemic funds which TDHCA has received namely the Texas Rent Relief (TRR) program pointing out TRR had made enormous progress since the April TICH meeting as it had just now paid out \$600 million with another \$28 million approved and pending payment. She added that Texas leads the nation in getting out this assistance therefore nationally, Texas is being held up as a model of having a strong eviction diversion program. She added that many states have not even started on their Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) rent relief programs yet. She concluded by stating there is always room for improvement and there has been good feedback from both tenants and landlords but it is gratifying to be able to effectively help Texans.

Brooke then updated on the ERA program which is the federal money behind the Texas Rent Relief program and it will be using 10% for something new called Housing Stability Services, a fluid fund tied directly to services. In addition, TDHCA is using \$20 million on a contract

with the Texas Access to Justice Foundation (TAJF) who will be providing legal services helping support eviction diversion activities. Several more activities are being planned for that pool of stability services.

Brooke then talked about a recent collaboration with Texas Health and Human Services and TSAHC in a virtual Community of Practice. This has been hosted by the Council of State Governments Justice Center and Corporation for Supportive Housing. The initiative focuses on strategies that justice and housing managers need to collaboratively look at trying to improve housing for people with behavioral health needs who are leaving incarceration or have been diverted from the justice system.

Brooke then provided the TICH with an update on Project Access vouchers reminding the membership that there is intersection between the homeless population and Project Access. Project Access just issued 74 vouchers which means that the wait list is the shortest it has been in a long while at about 40 persons but in addition due to flexibility with recent funding from HUD, all 74 voucher-holders were offered a landlord incentive letter so that they can hopefully get housed more quickly.

Brooke concluded her remarks with mentioning the American Rescue Plan (ARP) stating that there are some HOME funds under ARP. TDHCA has been awarded \$132 million in HOME ARP funds to allow the typical HOME activities but also allows homeless services, non-congregate emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing and can even include operating costs for eligible nonprofits. These funds have a long expenditure life of not having to be spent until 2030. More information will be forthcoming soon from HUD on guidance on how this new program will look.

(b) Other Agency Updates

Michael Wilt, External Relations with Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation (TSAHC) announced that TSAHC will be offering their Supportive Housing Institute again this year. It was launched last year with Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) who provided the training. There was great success last year with the teams. Applications are currently open with the deadline Friday, July 29. All of the sessions will be virtual beginning in September until the end of the calendar year combined with technical assistance 1-on-1 with CSH. More information is available at TSAHC.org.

VI. Pathways Home Discussion

Elizabeth Yevich, Director of the Housing Resource Center (HRC) with TDHCA presented and began by reminding the membership that Chairman Doyle had referenced in previous meetings that the TICH's overarching document entitled Pathways Home was published back in 2012 and it was nearing time for more of an update than the annual report section. So revisiting this document is on the agenda under the leadership of the HRC working closely with the TICH. Most likely the task of working on this re-write would fall under the duties of an expected new HRC position possibly posted in August or September. Such a revision will include reevaluating the four current goals, the objectives, reassessing the strategies and targets along with looking at national research, and analyzing current data with the hopes of having a draft for TICH by late winter or early spring. Elizabeth added that taking this document out for public comment could coincide and satisfy HB 1278 legislation. The plan would be to have a new document in place by summer 2022. Ms. Yevich added that as Eric Samuels and THN take the lead each year on

updating the Annual Report section of the current Pathways Home that she and Eric have already discussed that their two areas will work closely on the update and revision of this main document. Eric then asked if the Annual Report needed to be completed this cycle. Brooke Boston suggested that perhaps the Annual Report could be abbreviated and instead allude to the fact that Pathways Home is ten years old and the TICH feels this is a prime opportunity to rework it and place energy into the new product rather than the Annual Report this year. Mr. Samuels and Chairman Doyle agreed.

VII. Texas Homeless Network

Eric Samuels began with sharing that the results from the 2021 Point in Time count were available: 17,286 homeless people were counted in Texas on one day in January. Eighty-nine percent were homeless individuals with no children, with 17% chronically homeless. He stated that there is some success yet not as much as it was five years ago. He also wanted to point out that the count this year was different than in previous years and felt due to that it really shouldn't be compared to other years. There were communities that did partial counts, communities that did no counts, and all communities had far fewer volunteers due to COVID. He said he felt that up to only 60% of the population might have been captured. However he said the size of the number, the percentages were roughly equal to what they have shown in the past but that homelessness by household type was far off than what it normally would be. He concluded saying that in early 2022 after a 'normal count' more will most likely be known.

(a) VISTA Project

Eric stated that THN will have a VISTA grant going for another year which they are pleased about and most likely funded through the following year as well. Since the April TICH meeting the VISTA's have put in 13 new systems or processes within the communities they serve and helped five organizations receive capacity-building. They are still recruiting for two VISTA positions. One is their VISTA leader who will be working on their data sharing network and another will work on coordinated entry analysis.

(b.) Texas Homeless Data Sharing Network

Eric then provided a brief update on the Texas Homeless Data Sharing Network saying that they are wrapping it up after 1.5 years adding that the implementation lasted a bit past one year but they have funding to carry out the project through the end of September. They are continuing to work with communities and all the CoC's. Should funding not be available after September this project will be put on pause until further funding is secured. Mr. Samuels then walked the membership through various slides in a PowerPoint presentation outlining the project. He concluded with saying much had been accomplished.

Eric then said that the annual THN Conference is expected to be held in Houston in early October with more information forthcoming soon.

Fedora Galasso with Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) introduced offering several announcements about upcoming events – a summit with TEA and that TNOYS was awarded an AmeriCorps grant that is specifically for youth who have experienced homelessness, foster care or other systems involvement. This is a peer-to-peer model with ten folks who will be placed at organizations on the ground. TNOYS will be providing future updates on this model as the program expands and moves forward.

VIII. Public Comment

Deborah Arellano introduced herself saying she was a new TICH representative for TWC replacing Shirley Jones. Ms. Arellano is with the Workforce Development Division and works as a policy analyst.

Darilynn Cardona-Beiler asked a question about all the various pandemic resource funding inquiring if coordination and collaboration amongst agencies and locales was taking place in leveraging the resources suggesting perhaps it could be looked at in the forthcoming update of Pathways Home. Chairman Doyle asked Brooke Boston to field the question. She responded to Darilynn that coordination was happening on several levels in various councils and committees citing the Housing and Health Services Coordination Council and the Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council as examples.

IX. Closing Comments

Mike Doyle reminded the TICH that the fall quarterly meeting is planned to be held in conjunction with the THN conference in early October.

X. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:34 a.m.