

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

TEXAS INTERAGENCY COUNCIL
FOR THE
HOMELESS

via GoToWebinar

January 21, 2021
10:00 a.m.

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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BROOKE BOSTON
SUZIE BRADY
MARQUS BUTLER
NAOMI CANTU
SHERRI COGBILL (by CHRISTY ADAMS)
BLAKE HARRIS
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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MS. YEVICH: Good morning, everybody, and
3 welcome to the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless
4 meeting. I'm Elizabeth Yevich. I'm Director of the
5 Housing Resource Center.

6 For those of you who are new or may have missed
7 the email, Danny Shea, who had been the administrative
8 support for these TICH meetings for about the past year
9 and a half, has moved over to another position in
10 TDHCA. So TDHCA was fortunate to be able to retain his
11 skills. So in the interim, or for the foreseeable future,
12 as I was telling Mike and Eric earlier, y'all have me
13 again sort of coordinating everything. So all of the
14 emails for the -- that invite you to the meetings, and
15 updates, will be coming from myself.

16 And with that, we have a couple of new
17 members. As of yesterday, we have Dr. Blake Harris from
18 Texas Veterans Commission, and welcome, Blake. Also, we
19 have Suzie Brady with HHSC, who is taking the place, I
20 believe, of Kevin James.

21 Hi, Suzie, and welcome. And then we also have
22 a substitution. I believe Sherri Cogbill -- I think her
23 name is up there, but I think we have Christy Adams here
24 today. Correct? Yeah. Hi, Christy. So thank you for
25 stepping in for Sherri today.

1 And with that, we do have a quorum, and so I'm
2 going to turn it over to our Chair, Mike Doyle.

3 MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Elizabeth. Can y'all
4 hear me?

5 MALE VOICE: Yes.

6 FEMALE VOICE: Yes.

7 FEMALE VOICE: Yes.

8 MR. DOYLE: Okay. I want to announce up front
9 that I'm going to try to get this meeting over with by
10 11:15. I've had something come up with a -- our biggest
11 donor here at Cornerstone, and I told him I'd try to be --
12 talk to him by 11:15.

13 So if we can get all the work we need to do,
14 but if I have to leave, I've asked either Naomi or Brooke
15 to chair the meeting. So if I don't see you -- if all of
16 sudden I disappear, Brooke or Naomi, who is going to take
17 over?

18 MS. CANTU: I can. This is Naomi.

19 MR. DOYLE: Okay. Thank you. Thank you. All
20 right. Well, what I'd like to -- and the Governor's
21 Office would like to hear from us about is, the effect of,
22 obviously, COVID on homelessness. So that's what I hope
23 to hear today, to be able to make a report on.

24 So let's just get into it, and so we can get
25 going. You were sent the minutes, and they were posted

1 several weeks ago, so I would entertain a -- and we've got
2 no additions or corrections, so I would entertain a motion
3 to approve the minutes as submitted.

4 I can wait. Just raise your hand so I can see
5 your -- we can see you, if you would make that motion.

6 MS. CANTU: So moved. This is Naomi.

7 MR. DOYLE: Okay. Naomi. And a second?

8 MS. LOPEZ: This is Cal. I second.

9 MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Cal. All in favor, say
10 aye.

11 (A chorus of ayes.)

12 MR. DOYLE: All opposed, same sign.

13 (No response.)

14 MR. DOYLE: And those do pass. All right.

15 Updates.

16 MS. YEVICH: I hate to interrupt. I
17 inadvertently skipped over -- Jeremy Stremler was going to
18 go over some housekeeping stuff for the webinar. But I
19 think at this point, I think most people understand how to
20 mute or unmute or to put something in the comment box.

21 Did you want Jeremy to go over those
22 housekeeping few slides, or do you think we should just
23 move on?

24 MR. DOYLE: Whatever you think is best.

25 MR. STREMLER: I will say, the one thing that

1 those listening as attendees only to the meeting, should
2 you wish to make comment on an agenda item, or when we
3 come to the section of the agenda where you could make
4 public comment unrelated to things that were on the
5 agenda, other items, to either raise your hand -- there's
6 a raise-your-hand button.

7 I can unmute you so you can speak. But you can
8 also enter questions into the questions box, see if you'd
9 like to make a specific ask of anybody who's presenting an
10 agenda item, and I can read that out loud for you as
11 well. But that's really the important thing for
12 participation, for those of you that are attendees only.

13 MS. YEVICH: Thank you, Jeremy. Thank you,
14 Mike.

15 MR. DOYLE: You bet. Eric?

16 MR. SAMUELS: Okay. And as you're trying to be
17 fast, we'll get to this pretty fast. I know you want an
18 update from us on our VISTA project and the Data Sharing
19 Network. And joining from my team is Nick Thompson to
20 talk about the VISTA project, and then after him, Shrabya
21 Poudyal, and then Joe Schultz can talk to you -- Data
22 Sharing Network.

23 So I'll let Nick just take it away.

24 MR. THOMPSON: Hi, everyone. I hope that you
25 can hear me. So I am the program manager for the VISTA

1 project here at THN. And we currently have seven members
2 in-service right now, including one member who is focused
3 specifically on ending veteran homelessness.

4 And for our VISTA members who have been working
5 really hard throughout this pandemic, I know that that is
6 something that we're focused on specifically in this
7 meeting. It certainly has impacted where they are doing
8 their service.

9 So they are tele-serving at this time, other
10 than one of the members. And it also has put an extra
11 strain on recruitment efforts as well, during this time as
12 well. But our VISTA members have accomplished a lot
13 during this time, especially as it relates to changes that
14 have to do with the PIT count, and then development and
15 communications in homeless programming across the state.

16 MR. SAMUELS: So I should add that we've been
17 approved for another year. So starting in May, we'll have
18 another year of this, and then we'll see after that.
19 Hopefully, we'll continue on. We've also expanded
20 slightly outside of the state.

21 We are now working with the New Mexico -- it's
22 the New Mexico Coalition working with us, right?

23 MR. THOMPSON: That's correct. So we have one
24 site in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

25 MR. SAMUELS: So -- but we're hoping to expand

1 the program in the coming year. So like Nick said, it's
2 tough in the pandemic to get folks placed and keep them in
3 their sites.

4 So that is VISTA. And now we have Data Sharing
5 Network, and I'll let Shrabya lead us through that.

6 MS. POUDYA: Thank you, Eric. My name is
7 Shrabya Poudya. I'm the Project Manager for Data Sharing
8 Network at THN. So the Data Sharing Network has received
9 signed data use agreements from three types of CoCs.

10 This is the first cohort of CoCs to be
11 uploading in the warehouse, and the participants are
12 Balance of State Houston-Harris County CoC, and Fort
13 Worth-Tarrant County CoC. These two CoCs will be a
14 part -- they have uploaded data from 2012 through 2019 in
15 the warehouse.

16 In terms of upload, Balance of State in
17 Houston, they have been manually uploading into the
18 warehouse. As a matter of fact, [inaudible] has completed
19 their first round of the upload for this timeframe, and
20 Houston will do that.

21 For Tarrant County, it will be an ongoing
22 automated process, because TPXT [phonetic] has been
23 utilizing the platform for the past three years. So we're
24 very happy to share that.

25 Currently, we are working toward developing a

1 THDSN release of information. This is to protect privacy
2 and confidentiality. And this will be in addition to the
3 individual ROIs that each CoC has.

4 We are reviewing previous versions of the ROIs
5 to see firsthand the differences, similarities. And so
6 far, we have looked into ROIs of four CoCs, the three from
7 our first cohort and Austin.

8 HUD has approved us for direct teamwork in
9 order to assist with the project, so we will be utilizing
10 this resource to help us draft THDSN warehouse release of
11 information.

12 And finally, we are also working towards
13 forming a second cohort of our CoCs who will be uploaded
14 in the warehouse. For this, we'll be meeting with the
15 leads to answer the questions about the data use
16 agreement, and also will be conducting a demo to show the
17 utilization of the platform, you know, for the CoCs
18 themselves. So our hope is that we will be receiving at
19 least two more signed data use commitments in the next
20 couple months.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. SAMUELS: And I may have missed it, but
23 we -- HUD has approved us for direct TA ongoing with this
24 project, and that's a huge benefit as we work through
25 these release of informations. The paperwork for that is

1 very important, because while each HMIS, they get
2 ROIs. They get the release of information from the client
3 for us, you know, to access the data on the data warehouse
4 side to actually serve that person or that household
5 through the data warehouse.

6 We feel like we need an additional ROI, so we
7 make sure that, you know, we're keeping privacy rights in
8 place. And so that's what Shrabya is talking about, and
9 HUD is providing us a TA provider to help us through that.

10 We have already started seeing some of the
11 benefits from the data we have uploaded. We've seen a
12 little bit of movement between continuums of care, the
13 same households being in each continuum of care live in
14 their system, which shouldn't be the case. But we can
15 start to eliminate those duplications whenever we are able
16 to get the warehouse fully up and running.

17 And then hopefully, the utility for those
18 people experiencing homelessness will be there, once we
19 get those ROIs in place. Did you want to add anything,
20 Shrabya or Joe? Anything else?

21 MS. POUDYA: No, I'm good. I think we covered
22 it.

23 MR. SAMUELS: Does anyone have any questions?
24 Because I want to say one more thing about Data Sharing
25 Network, if not.

1 MALE VOICE: I have a quick question.

2 MR. DOYLE: There are several. So -- but do
3 you want to go first?

4 MR. SAMUELS: Well, I just wanted to -- I
5 wanted to say that Joe Schultz -- he's a VISTA member with
6 us. He's helped us tremendously with this project
7 throughout the year.

8 His service will be ending before our next
9 Interagency Council meeting, so I just wanted to publicly
10 thank him for all of his service to THN and to helping us
11 find funding and supporting the Data Sharing Network.

12 So thank you, Joe.

13 MR. DOYLE: Yes. Thank you, Joe. All right.
14 I've got a -- these are probably for you, Eric, but you
15 know, call on anybody you want to. But what about the
16 point in time counts?

17 MR. SAMUELS: So HUD has been issuing waivers
18 for continuums of care to pass -- well, not to conduct an
19 outdoor point in time count this year for obvious
20 reasons. And a lot of continuums of care are -- they're
21 taking HUD up on that offer.

22 So there will be -- the point in time count
23 this year will be a lot different than it has been in
24 years past. I think a lot of continuums of care --
25 they'll be using HMIS, the Homeless Management Information

1 System, to capture data on people that are in shelters and
2 housing programs.

3 I'm sure shelter staff will also help with
4 that. But then the outdoor count -- sometimes, in some
5 cases, I don't know that it will even be conducted. In
6 other cases, it may just be an observation count. It's --
7 the point in time count is never 100 percent accurate, and
8 far from it, actually.

9 This year, I think it will be even less
10 accurate. We will -- but you know, we'll -- there's a
11 good reason for that. You know, we want to make sure --
12 to keep people safe that are in camps, keep people safe
13 that are volunteering.

14 I don't want to put her on the spot, but I
15 think we actually have Sophia on here, so she might want
16 to jump in. But only jump in if you want to, Sophia.

17 But there are continuums of care that will use
18 methods to estimate, you know, the population that's
19 outdoors. It's going to be a lot different. I mean, I'm
20 sure you've seen in Tarrant County, they're probably
21 already started making plans that are alternative to what
22 they've done in the past.

23 MR. DOYLE: And then my question is, how are
24 you -- how are we going to report that? I mean, it's got
25 to have an asterisk by it, but how are we going to -- when

1 we're asked, what was our point in time versus last year's
2 point in time, we're going to have to do something.

3 MR. SAMUELS: I think we're going to have to
4 qualify it. I mean, I think, we're going to report it to
5 HUD. Every CoC will report to HUD, the same way they have
6 every year. But I can't imagine that there would not be a
7 qualifier behind it.

8 Well, there will be. It's -- to a much bigger
9 extent, it's similar to after Harvey. I think some of the
10 numbers were a little different after Harvey. The
11 numbers, I think, will be a lot different this year.

12 In reality, I think the numbers will be higher
13 than what we count. I think -- honestly, I think they're
14 probably higher than what we count most of the time, but I
15 think the difference will be quite big. I think we're
16 just going to do the best we can to count those that are
17 staying in shelter, and if we're doing an observation
18 count, those that are outdoors.

19 When we -- if we can look at continuums of care
20 who are doing a good job with their shelter and housing
21 counts, and compare one year to the next, that might be
22 more of a direct comparison, but overall, I think we need
23 to realize that this is just a different year.

24 MR. DOYLE: So if somebody came up to you and
25 said, Eric, tell me, is homelessness up or down, based on

1 what you know right now, and the feeling you get from
2 around the state, how would you answer that?

3 MR. SAMUELS: That's a really tough question to
4 answer. I don't have the data to back me up. I know that
5 in some areas, outreach workers are outreaching to more
6 people than they ever have, but, you know, how much of
7 that is because shelters are decompressing, as opposed to
8 how much of that is because people are becoming homeless?

9 And I'm hoping it's the former, that you know,
10 the shelters just can't hold as many people, and that's
11 why more people are outdoors, but I really don't want to
12 guess about data behind it. So that's kind of a non-
13 answer for you.

14 But we haven't seen huge increases from what
15 we've seen, but we also don't have the data to say that
16 for sure.

17 MR. DOYLE: So it's just -- and this is not
18 that data-based, but do you just get a sense -- and I
19 would assume most people do -- that homelessness is up a
20 little bit?

21 MR. SAMUELS: Well, definitely, I get a sense
22 that homelessness is up a little bit, and -- you know, in
23 our communities -- I also think it's a lot more visible in
24 our communities because of that shelter decompression. So
25 I think that adds to that perception.

1 But I would imagine homelessness is up, and the
2 longer this goes on, the more it's likely to increase.
3 So --

4 MR. DOYLE: Okay.

5 MR. SAMUELS: -- I can't imagine it hasn't gone
6 up.

7 MR. DOYLE: A couple more questions. If
8 anybody has anything to say, just jump right in.
9 What about the conference?

10 MR. SAMUELS: We are planning for it still.
11 It's going to be at the Omni Galleria in Houston. We're
12 meeting with representatives of the hotel. We have a
13 hotel broker that we work with, as well, that we're
14 meeting with.

15 We will be sending out a survey to everyone who
16 has attended our conference in the past few years, and
17 those who might attend our conference, just to kind of get
18 a feel for what people are comfortable with. We're
19 planning on -- I mean, we're planning on having an in-
20 person, hoping that things go okay, but we're also
21 planning a virtual component to it.

22 So -- because we know people are probably going
23 to be a little nervous, even in October, to travel, so
24 we're trying to plan for all potential outcomes. But our
25 plan is -- we're not -- there's no cancellation yet,

1 nothing like that.

2 MR. DOYLE: And the dates?

3 MR. SAMUELS: I believe it's October 2nd
4 through the 5th. I can -- I'll send out the dates to
5 everyone.

6 MR. DOYLE: Okay.

7 MR. SAMUELS: We haven't really posted it yet,
8 because we're still working with the hotel. There is one
9 other option that we're looking at, and I don't want to
10 say this is what we're doing, but last year, when we ended
11 up canceling the conference, there was an option of moving
12 it to early in this year.

13 So we are looking at that as a possibility too,
14 moving it to early in 2022. But I'm still hopeful. I'm
15 an optimist. I'm trying to think that we're going to get
16 all these vaccines out, and we're all going to be happy to
17 travel and be together at the conference in Houston.

18 MR. DOYLE: Good. Okay. On the data
19 warehouse, how many continuums of care are participating?

20 MR. SAMUELS: Three right now. So Fort Worth
21 Balance of State and the Houston -- their three
22 counties --

23 MR. DOYLE: And how many --

24 MR. SAMUELS: -- those 200 --

25 MR. DOYLE: -- how many continuums of care are

1 there?

2 MR. SAMUELS: There are 11. I will say, this
3 is 220 counties that are covered out of 254, so it's a
4 pretty good coverage area.

5 MR. DOYLE: 220 out of 254?

6 MR. SAMUELS: Yeah. Amarillo -- we're in talks
7 with the City of Amarillo about the data sharing
8 agreement. As Shrabya pointed out, we're also talking to
9 a few other CoCs. I don't really want to name them,
10 because they haven't gone so far as to actually send us
11 back remarks about their agreement.

12 Well, I guess El Paso also falls into that
13 category. They're -- we're talking through the agreement
14 with them, and hoping they'll sign soon.

15 MR. DOYLE: So --

16 MR. SAMUELS: It is good participation.

17 MR. DOYLE: -- have you thought through how
18 you're going to report that?

19 MR. SAMUELS: Report --

20 MR. DOYLE: The aggregated data from the CoCs?

21 MR. SAMUELS: Yeah, yeah. So what we'll do is,
22 we'll have a public dashboard that just has aggregate data
23 on the state level. So we'll look at -- you know, if we
24 can identify the number of people who are homeless and the
25 different categories, it probably won't be on any given

1 day.

2 It will probably be, like, a month, every month
3 a report, or something like that. We'll look at things
4 like migration. We'll look at subsets of the
5 population.

6 But within each continuum of care, they'll be
7 able to look at just their data, and then access the data
8 warehouse on approval from the clients that they're
9 serving. We're not going to use the warehouse as a way to
10 compare CoC versus CoC from the state level. We really
11 want to just look at everything in aggregate, or aggregate
12 as a state or region, but not CoC by CoC.

13 MR. DOYLE: Okay. Anything else?

14 MR. SAMUELS: What would be great -- I'll say
15 one more thing. What I would love, and I wish we were up
16 and running for this, for the vaccination coordination,
17 because what I'm really worried about is people
18 experiencing homelessness get their first vaccine.

19 If they're doing the two shots, they get their
20 first vaccine. We can record that in HMIS because, you
21 know, we're allowed to, because of the special rules
22 around COVID. We record that, and then we -- you know,
23 they're supposed to come back in for their second one, but
24 then we can't find them. So I'm worried about that.

25 I think this system, if it were up and running,

1 would certainly help with that. I'm hopeful that our HMIS
2 programs within each continuum of care can do that though,
3 and I think many of them will try. And hopefully, they'll
4 be successful.

5 MR. DOYLE: Good, good. All right. Anybody --

6 MS. CARDONA-BEILER: I have a question, if I
7 may?

8 MR. DOYLE: Yes.

9 MS. CARDONA-BEILER: Thank you. Thank you,
10 Eric and your team, for the work that you're doing to
11 advance the data sharing agreement. I have a couple of
12 follow-up questions to that. That is a hugely important
13 initiative, and I -- my first question is, what are the
14 obstacles that you are finding in expanding the data
15 sharing agreement with other CoCs? That's my first
16 question.

17 And the second question is, how can we support
18 the effort so it's beyond the CoCs, and actually
19 incorporating that sharing agreement with participating
20 agencies? And primarily, I'm thinking about the Veterans
21 Commission. I'm thinking about HHSC.

22 That is extremely important information that
23 should be coordinated. So I know that's a big
24 undertaking, but I'd be very curious in terms of the
25 obstacles you're facing at this point. What can we do to

1 support? And what is the next iteration with the State
2 agencies that are part of the continuum?

3 MR. SAMUELS: So the biggest obstacles would be
4 continua signing the data sharing agreement. It's
5 really -- it's the language within the data sharing
6 agreement. It's pretty -- you know, it's pretty strong.
7 It really is clear about, you know, just -- dispute
8 resolution process, the indemnification clause.

9 These -- we -- I think we have a lot of
10 continuums of care that are just a little hesitant to sign
11 this type of agreement without getting some legal
12 interpretation. So I think we're in that process of them
13 doing that.

14 We did have a law firm write it up for us,
15 so -- that specializes in data sharing agreements. So we
16 feel strongly that it's a good agreement. So that's the
17 big holdup there, but I think we're getting through
18 that. But you're right.

19 We want to -- eventually, we want to be able to
20 allow access or get data sharing agreements in place with
21 these other sectors that homelessness intersects with. So
22 health care, mental health care. Now -- and that is still
23 the ultimate goal, to get to that stage.

24 That is a much higher bar in terms of
25 agreements and data sharing agreements. Communities have

1 done it, so it's not like it's unheard of, so I think that
2 we can accomplish that, but I think we probably have to
3 focus on those communities that are most willing to do it
4 in the beginning.

5 Fort Worth is one that they have -- their
6 continuum of care works with their local county hospital,
7 John Peter Schmidt Hospital, very closely. I think that's
8 a group that we can work with in the future. And I think
9 there are other stakeholders we can work with.

10 I think county -- our county jails, our
11 correctional institutions -- that's another area that we
12 can really work with in terms of data sharing, because it
13 would be huge if we could, in those cases, identify
14 someone who is homeless before they enter, say, Travis
15 County Jail, and be likely to become homeless after they
16 exit.

17 We can have that data on that person ready to
18 go when that person exits that correctional facility, and
19 give that person service and hopefully shelter and housing
20 right away. That would be better for that person and the
21 community overall.

22 So --

23 MS. GONZALEZ: Eric?

24 MR. SAMUELS: -- I would love you getting that,
25 those agreements in place.

1 MS. GONZALEZ: Eric, if I could touch base with
2 somebody about this, we at Meadows do a lot of work
3 with -- we have a -- we're working with HMIS in a couple
4 of different localities right now, but we're checking it
5 directly, which has not been a joy.

6 So if we could help facilitate expansion of
7 this, we're happy to, since we're already working in this
8 area.

9 MR. SAMUELS: Well --

10 MS. GONZALEZ: And can I ask if -- yeah.

11 MR. SAMUELS: We've also -- yeah, you can work
12 with -- well, it's actually -- Shrabya's contact would be
13 a good place to start.

14 MS. GONZALEZ: Okay.

15 MR. SAMUELS: And Shrabya --

16 MS. GONZALEZ: And is there a timeline -- I'm
17 sorry.

18 MR. SAMUELS: Her email --

19 MS. GONZALEZ: Is there a timeline for the
20 deployment of the public dashboard?

21 MR. SAMUELS: I have -- so these are decisions
22 that I would love to just make on my own, but we are
23 governed by a Data Sharing Network board, so that will be
24 determined by them. I would love to have at least a few
25 more continuums of care participating before we start

1 making things public, because the data would be a little
2 too limited at this point.

3 I was going to say, though, thank you for
4 offering support, and Meadows has offered financial
5 support recently in the form of a grant. So thank you for
6 that.

7 MS. GONZALEZ: I wasn't aware of that, but I'm
8 happy --

9 MR. SAMUELS: No. Yeah. Just before the end
10 of the year, last year.

11 MR. DOYLE: Okay. Any other questions for THN?
12 (No response.)

13 MR. DOYLE: Sounds like y'all aren't quite
14 busy, Eric. You might want to consider taking on a part-
15 time job or something.

16 MR. SAMUELS: Yeah, yeah. I need that. Well,
17 I have a part-time job as a teacher, a math teacher.

18 MR. DOYLE: Okay. We're going to go to member
19 updates. So we're going to start with TDHCA. So I think
20 that, Naomi, you're up first, are you not?

21 MS. CANTU: Yes, I am. You can all hear me, I
22 think? Okay. Great. All right.

23 So we do have a lot of updates for Emergency
24 Solutions Grant - Coronavirus Relief. We call it ESG
25 CARES. So we receive -- again, for context, we receive

1 usually about 9 million in ESG funds annually, pre-COVID.

2 With COVID, we got about \$97 million. We had
3 programmed 33 million in July, in April and July. And the
4 last bit of funding -- not a bit, 64 million -- was
5 approved by our board in January, January 14, so just last
6 week.

7 So we have many more providers coming online
8 very soon. We're working on getting contracts out this
9 and early next week for those contracts, and working to
10 get that funding into the communities for Homeless
11 Prevention and Rapid Rehousing. We did focus that
12 assistance on those two activities, again, Homeless
13 Prevention and Rapid Rehousing.

14 We are also keeping an eye on the eviction
15 moratorium, which affects our eligibility requirements for
16 some of our Homeless Prevention plans. So persons who
17 would otherwise qualify for Homeless Prevention may have
18 another resource through the eviction moratorium and not
19 qualify for assistance yet, but would qualify if nothing
20 else changes in their situation, and as the moratorium is
21 set to expire.

22 As a reminder, we do have up to six months of
23 rental arrears available through ESG CARES that will help
24 once the eviction moratorium does expire. Some key
25 changes for ESG CARES II is that there is only 12 months

1 of assistance available in rental assistance.

2 That's different from our annual and ESG CARES
3 fund. So just 12 months, which is still quite a long
4 time, but it is different, because ESG annual and ESG
5 CARES I is up to 24 months within a three-year period.
6 But six months of rental arrears on top of that 12 months
7 for a total of 18 rental assistance within a three-year
8 period for ESG CARES II.

9 I do want to thank all of the CoC agencies for
10 helping us distribute the funding. We were able to get
11 funding in each CoC region with both ESG CARES I and II,
12 and that is wonderful to have coverage throughout the CoCs
13 in Texas, which we have 11. And also a special shout-out
14 to Texas Homeless Network that did special coordination to
15 make sure that we have coverage in every county in Texas,
16 which is 254 counties.

17 So we have a way to connect persons with
18 resources in their communities for ESG, whether shelter or
19 rental assistance in every county. And THN has worked to
20 create a coordinated entry for many counties that aren't
21 covered without the CARES funding.

22 And one organization, actually located in San
23 Antonio, called Endeavors, or Family Endeavors, is working
24 on rental assistance in, I believe, 96 counties in Texas,
25 to be able to provide rental assistance in those areas.

1 So that was a wonderful partnership to have and to be able
2 to reach those areas that are traditionally underserved.

3 So, again, we're working to get these contracts
4 up and running. We have an orientation next week, getting
5 contracts out in this next week.

6 Any questions about ESG CARES II or I?

7 MR. DOYLE: Naomi, I'll ask a question, but
8 it's kind of just related to Fort Worth.

9 MS. CANTU: Sure.

10 MR. DOYLE: We just received a training, all
11 right? Some of the agencies just received a training
12 yesterday. Is there going to be any kind of no-cost
13 extensions available at the end of this time period?

14 MS. CANTU: The training.

15 MR. DOYLE: On ESG -- on the CARES Act II?

16 MS. CANTU: Was this from the State?

17 MR. DOYLE: No, from the -- Fort Worth.

18 MS. CANTU: From HUD directly, or from the City
19 of Fort Worth?

20 MR. DOYLE: City of Fort Worth. Yeah.

21 MS. CANTU: Oh, okay. So I can't speak
22 directly to their program because they get ESG CARES funds
23 directly from HUD, but that is -- are you speaking about
24 the disease mitigation training offered?

25 MR. DOYLE: No.

1 MS. CANTU: So that is -- yeah. It's one
2 unique activity allowed through ESG CARES -- is HUD
3 created a new activity for disease prevention and
4 mitigation, which is exciting to have that available to
5 our subrecipients.

6 We have a few ESG subrecipients taking
7 advantage of that training, not many, but we do have some
8 happening. I can't speak directly for HUD programs or --
9 sorry, for Fort Worth, their ESG CARES program.

10 MR. DOYLE: Okay.

11 MS. CANTU: All right. That's all I have.

12 MR. DOYLE: Okay. Brooke?

13 MS. BOSTON: All right. Let's see. Okay. So
14 I want to make sure. You can hear me, right?

15 MR. DOYLE: Yes.

16 MS. BOSTON: Okay, thanks. So first, I'll just
17 give you an update on Community Development Block Grant
18 CARES funds. You've probably heard in the news about the
19 new rental assistance fund, and I'll actually talk about
20 that in a minute.

21 But as soon as we heard about that fund, we
22 almost immediately decided to do a plan amendment for our
23 CDBG funds because, as you may know, our original CDBG
24 plan was to use most of the money for rental assistance,
25 and the amount of this new assistance was so big that

1 we -- that almost immediately made us realize there might
2 be another, more pressing use for the CDBG funds.

3 So what I'm about to describe to you, of the
4 plan uses for the CDBG, are based on that amended version
5 of what we're doing with the funds. So first, at the time
6 that we learned of the new rental assistance funds, we
7 already had indicated to larger entitlement cities in
8 Texas that they could use our funds for rental assistance
9 for a program that -- it's called T-E-R-A-P, TERAP, and
10 it's the Texas Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

11 And because we had already asked for their
12 applications, and they actually came in, like, the day
13 after the announcement of the new rental assistance, we
14 did go ahead and proceed with those contracts. So 45
15 cities totaling about 40 million have contracts to still
16 do rental assistance under CDBG.

17 And those contracts are already out. They are
18 not all back. And they -- depending on each of the
19 cities, those programs are rolling out in roughly the next
20 two to six weeks. Couple of outliers on either end, but
21 that's roughly the timeline.

22 All of those cities' contracts also have a
23 requirement that 10 percent of the funds be used for
24 eviction diversion. So Texas already had been doing a
25 small eviction diversion pilot that we have funded with

1 Community Services Block Grant funds, and we were just
2 kind of testing it out, seeing how it worked, in
3 collaboration between provider and the courts and the
4 landlords. So this fund now expands that eviction
5 diversion activity into the 45 cities who are getting that
6 assistance.

7 Additionally, so -- was there a question?

8 MR. DOYLE: Yeah. I've just got one quick
9 clarification. The eviction diversion is still just
10 rent. It's not -- or can it be mortgages?

11 MS. BOSTON: It's still just rent.

12 MR. DOYLE: Okay.

13 MS. BOSTON: But that's a perfect segue. The
14 rest of the funds or a large chunk of the funds that had
15 originally been planned for rental assistance were
16 reprogrammed to mortgage assistance. So households who
17 still meet the requirements of being 80 percent or below
18 AMI are able to get assistance with their mortgage.

19 We'll have subrecipients for this program.
20 It's not being directly administered, and the NOFA for
21 that should go out in the next couple weeks. So I've
22 already reviewed it. So it's just kind of going through
23 internal routing at this point.

24 So it looks good for that, to get out and
25 moving. That's about \$68 to \$70 million. Applicants can

1 be cities, counties, or local and regional nonprofits.
2 And we specifically are focusing on regional nonprofits
3 like COGs or community action agencies because we want to
4 see full state coverage.

5 And so in any given state service region, we're
6 making some funds available regionally, and we're making
7 some funds available for cities, counties and local
8 nonprofits, but we're keeping a portion of the funds
9 specifically for a provider to come in and give us that
10 full region coverage.

11 Then we programmed \$5 million of the funds for
12 providers of people with disabilities. And that's a kind
13 of an amorphous term, but I think maybe, like, home- and
14 community-based service providers, group homes, those
15 kinds of organizations -- they can come in and get
16 reimbursed for expenses associated with pandemic response,
17 which could include if they had to staff up, if they
18 needed to pay more to retain staff, if they had PPE
19 expenses, or if they had expenses associated with
20 quarantining individuals. So for instance, if you needed
21 to have a -- one of the residents of a group home and a
22 care worker for them both be in a hotel, it would cover
23 costs such as that.

24 Then \$20 million is going toward food bank
25 expenditures. And then last, but not least, two small but

1 important pots of funds: One is focused on broadband
2 planning. And then new, based on the new amendment that
3 we just took, was the addition giving the State
4 flexibility to use funds to support statewide HMIS
5 coordination and data warehouse initiatives, if the State
6 chooses to do that.

7 So that's CDBG. Any questions about that?

8 MR. DOYLE: Will that affect the data warehouse
9 that THN talked about earlier?

10 MS. BOSTON: We have been coordinating --
11 yes. So Eric actually came and commented on the plan
12 amendment and was supportive of it. It essentially
13 would -- if the State elects to use it this way, it would
14 provide funds that could support the initiative that Eric
15 has been working on.

16 MR. DOYLE: Great.

17 MS. BOSTON: Yes. So the new money -- so
18 the -- there's not, like, a federal name for this money,
19 and everybody seems to have a different name for it.
20 We've been using, in terms of the funding source, the
21 acronym, C-R-B-R-A, which is Coronavirus Relief Bill
22 Rental Assistance.

23 Some of the federal agencies are just calling
24 it, ERA, Emergency Rental Assistance, but since so many
25 entities had already, you know, popped out programs with

1 that acronym in it for Emergency Rental Assistance before
2 the bill, that seems to just make it murky.

3 So now we're just calling it CRBRA as a funding
4 source, although I think when we release the program
5 itself, it maybe something catchier than that. So the
6 program was 25 billion nationally. The program is
7 administered by Treasury.

8 The Governor designated TDHCA as the recipient
9 agency. The amount that was estimated for Texas was 1.94
10 billion. Fifty-five percent of that goes to the State to
11 be administered, which is TDHCA, and then the other
12 45 percent was eligible for local communities with
13 populations above 200,000 to apply.

14 There are 38 of those communities that fit that
15 bill. We don't know yet all of which Texas locals have
16 applied for that. I've been reaching out to them little
17 by little, and of all of them that I've reached out to who
18 have gotten back to me, none have declined the funds. So
19 the State portion, the 55 percent, 1.281 billion, and
20 then, of course, if any of the locals decline, our amount
21 may go up.

22 So what are the funds for? It's -- 90 percent
23 of the program funds can go for households at 80 percent
24 of AMI or below. The households -- there's a couple of
25 other prongs of what a household needs to -- what

1 attribute they need to qualify.

2 One of those prongs is that one or more members
3 of the household have qualified for unemployment or
4 they've had a reduction in income, experienced costs or
5 experienced financial hardship from COVID. So I don't
6 think that prong will be hard for folks to meet.

7 The next prong is that, to get assistance, you
8 also -- the household either has to be at risk of
9 homelessness or housing instability as evidenced through
10 an eviction notice or past-due notice or rent notice.
11 Which I think for most of these households, that would not
12 be a challenge for them, or if they don't have that, if
13 they're living in unsafe or unhealthy living conditions,
14 they can also get assistance.

15 We have not -- Treasury has not yet defined
16 what unsafe or unhealthy housing conditions is or what
17 that looks like, and we're starting to try and figure that
18 out in case Treasury gives no guidance. But I don't have
19 an answer for that part yet.

20 So the assistance itself can provide for up to
21 15 months of rent, rental arrears, utilities, utility
22 arrears, or other expenses related to housing, as defined
23 by Treasury. So while the program can help for up to 15
24 months, realistically, we think most households would get
25 roughly eight to 10 months of assistance, depending on the

1 amount of arrears they've had.

2 That's based on the deadlines associated with
3 the program, which I'll talk about in just a minute. The
4 other -- Treasury has not defined yet what those other
5 housing expenses are. We have participated quite a lot,
6 between Bobby and myself, in different national calls and
7 conversations through state associations and directly with
8 Treasury, trying to tell them where we need the guidance
9 the most and the fastest.

10 And one of the things we've requested is that
11 they allow late fees to be an eligible expense under that
12 "other" category. We feel like, if it's not clearly told
13 to us by Treasury that we can, then unfortunately we don't
14 think we can under some other federal guidelines. So
15 we're hopeful that they will do that.

16 So then 10 percent of the funds -- so all of
17 that that I was talking about was 90 percent -- and then
18 10 percent can be used jointly for all of the
19 administrative expenses of doing this, and housing
20 stabilization services. We're not sure yet what we're
21 doing with that part, partly because we don't know yet
22 what portion we need for admin, and also because Treasury
23 has not released very much guidance on how broadly or
24 narrowly they or we can define stabilization services.

25 So we're working on it a little bit, but we're

1 focused mostly on the 90 percent, you know, this week.
2 Landlords will be able to apply on behalf of their
3 tenants, and we're really hoping to push that and
4 encourage that and make the program usable. I think that
5 would be a win for all parties involved, if landlords can
6 do this on behalf of their tenants.

7 However, tenants of course can still apply
8 themselves. Payments go directly to landlords and
9 utilities, unless they are unwilling to receive payment,
10 in which case we can pay a tenant so that they can still
11 resolve the arrears. Our rough guess at this point,
12 without different Treasury interpretations affecting my
13 very back-of-the-envelope estimates, is that the program
14 will probably help 70- to 80 thousand households.

15 There's a couple other things. There's a
16 priority population written into the bill. The priority
17 population is that a household is either at 50 percent of
18 AMI or a household has both of these next two things:
19 they have -- a member of the household is currently
20 unemployed, and a member of the household has been
21 unemployed for at least 90 days. It could be the same
22 person, but it could also be two different people who help
23 meet that test.

24 The prioritization will be handled -- and
25 this -- TDHCA has decided that the priority will be

1 handled by saying that all -- every application received
2 in the first 14 days -- we will first review only those
3 that meet the priority test. And only then, after all of
4 those have been processed, will we then go and help the
5 other applicants who came in during those first 14 days.
6 And then, of course, after the 14 days, if there's still
7 funds, we will then -- we'll take them in first-come,
8 first-serve order.

9 Additionally, in the midst of all this pot, we
10 are making sure that we are doing a set-aside for eviction
11 diversion, so that that program can finally expand beyond
12 the 45 cities I mentioned a minute ago and become fully
13 statewide. So one of the most -- I guess, awe-inspiring
14 things about this money is the timing. It's really short,
15 which makes the money very daunting.

16 All of the funds have to be obligated by
17 September of this year, and all of the funds be expended
18 by December of this year. And from the perspective of
19 someone who cares a lot about the end recipients of the
20 money, I'm glad it has that timeline, but from the
21 perspective of administering a program and getting that
22 much money literally out into hands, that is a challenge.

23 So we're up for it. We're excited, and I think
24 we've figured out a way to do it, but it's fast. So we --
25 the natural time in question -- everyone asks me so far,

1 when I've talked to people about this is -- so when does
2 the system for this go live?

3 And I hate my answer, which is that I don't
4 know yet. And I don't even have a really great estimate,
5 but I can at least tell you why I don't have a good
6 estimate, which is two things. One is the Treasury
7 guidance is needed on several things that I had alluded
8 to, as well as other factors, kind of -- that relate to
9 the program.

10 Treasury did release guidance, some guidance,
11 through a frequently-asked questions document two days
12 ago. Not only was it not -- it didn't answer all the
13 questions we needed, but it also answered them in ways
14 that most of the State HFAs, myself included, do not feel
15 like are beneficial or helpful in getting these funds out.

16 Examples are -- they have pretty onerous
17 certified mail requirements, and in this virtual day and
18 age, I couldn't believe they were even using certified
19 mail. So, you know, there's some very burdensome source
20 documentation requirements from the households relating to
21 their income.

22 And then they're also not allowing categorical
23 eligibility, even though our program design had kind of
24 already been planning on saying, you know, if you're a
25 household of six or fewer and you already qualify for SSI

1 or LIHEAP, we know that you would meet our tests too, so
2 we'll just accept that. And it's not clear that they are
3 going to allow that.

4 So there's some things that we are hopeful the
5 new administration may change what had just been
6 released. So that's one reason why we can't roll forward
7 yet. And the other is, of course -- so the program is
8 going to be directly administered by TDHCA, meaning
9 tenants and landlords apply directly to us.

10 We're not using subrecipients. But that does
11 mean we're using a vendor, most likely for not only the
12 system to be the interface for us, but also the
13 staffing. And so that vendor selection has to still
14 occur. We are doing interviews next week, so we've been
15 moving pretty rapidly on this front end of this vendor
16 identification.

17 But in spite of the fact -- the good thing is,
18 most of the vendors are not having to start from zero with
19 the system, because rental assistance systems have existed
20 for a long time. But they are having to make it more
21 usable for landlords, which is not a function that they
22 all necessarily had before, and there was not as much of a
23 component for utilities being requested and paid for.

24 So we -- you know, so the vendors who we select
25 will need a little bit of time to tailor a system to do

1 this for us. So that's why we don't know exactly when the
2 program will roll out. I think in another two weeks I
3 could answer that question much better.

4 And I guess I would just say, the only other
5 kind of big piece of this is, of course, how do you get
6 the word out about this? And we are planning on doing a
7 very broad and deep outreach and marketing initiative to
8 make sure that -- my goal is that really any Texan has
9 heard about this.

10 We've heard from some other states that they
11 are not -- that they have not gotten sufficient
12 applications to use their money on other program funds for
13 rental assistance, and so we don't want that to be our
14 problem. I would rather have more applications, and then
15 just make sure we're ramped up in a way to process those,
16 than not get enough and really struggle to get the money
17 even applied for.

18 So there is going to be the tenant side of that
19 which, of course, is, you know, just trying to flood
20 different markets, making sure, you know, it hits on the
21 internet, and Google search ads, and all that kind of
22 stuff, where you or I would see the ads. You know, that's
23 where we want them, you know, the users and eligible
24 clients.

25 We, of course, are going to try and make

1 efforts to tailor it to different language populations, to
2 you know, low income populations, hard-to-serve
3 populations. We are planning on trying to collaborate
4 with 2-1-1, community action agencies, utility providers,
5 any way we can get the word out to the low income
6 community.

7 And then, additionally, because landlords being
8 engaged on this and being willing to apply on behalf of
9 their tenants can make the program much easier for the
10 landlord to get paid, for the tenant to get the
11 assistance, and for TDHCA and our vendor. So we really
12 want to do a concerted effort on also reaching out to
13 landlords and making sure they're trained on how to apply
14 and use the system to, let's say, do batch applications
15 for a whole property in which there may be, let's say, 20
16 or 30 clients who all meet these requirements.

17 So we'll coordinate with the Texas Apartment
18 Association, Rural Rental Housing Association, Texas
19 Affiliation of Affordable Housing Providers, and you know,
20 do what we need to in that regard as well. So that's it.

21 MR. DOYLE: I think that's enough. Boy, that
22 sounds phenomenal. I'll be interested to see how that's
23 marketed, how you can get it spent so quickly. But
24 that -- can you say that all of this new money that
25 becomes available through you guys, to the cities and

1 who -- other places, is really designated to keep people
2 from losing their homes and becoming homeless or losing
3 their housing?

4 MS. BOSTON: Yes, yes. I think there's a huge
5 focus on preventing it, but I would guess -- that's the
6 biggest focus, yes. I would note, though, that as it
7 related to unsafe housing, it also can let them go into a
8 new unit.

9 MR. DOYLE: That's good.

10 MS. BOSTON: Yeah.

11 MR. DOYLE: And this landlord thing ought to be
12 a boon if it's presented properly. I mean, that helps the
13 loss of income from the apartment owners and the renters.

14 MS. BOSTON: Exactly, exactly. And I think
15 they will be on board. I mean, Texas Apartment
16 Association, right within 12 hours of passage, was
17 reaching out to me.

18 And I've been in communication with them very
19 regularly. So they're excited. They want to, you know,
20 get it moving. So I don't think that that will be a
21 problem.

22 I think we're going to strive to make sure we
23 can hit mom-and-pop landlords who aren't necessarily
24 members of TAA, but definitely house a lot of, you know,
25 the people who rent, and so I think making sure we can

1 reach them and make it usable for them, as well, will be
2 important.

3 MR. DOYLE: Very good. Well, sounds like
4 you're going to be busy.

5 MS. BOSTON: I think so.

6 MR. DOYLE: All right. Thank you, Brooke.
7 Appreciate --

8 MS. BOSTON: You're welcome.

9 MR. DOYLE: -- that very much. Any questions
10 for Brooke?

11 (No response.)

12 MR. DOYLE: All right. Any other agencies want
13 to give an update? And remember, highlight COVID and
14 homelessness that you're experiencing in your agency as
15 much as possible. Anybody else?

16 MS. LOPEZ: This is Cal. I just wanted to give
17 a brief update on our data. It won't even take but five
18 minutes.

19 MR. DOYLE: Okay.

20 MS. LOPEZ: Since you were talking about data,
21 I wanted to let you know that we did receive our official
22 2019-20 school year homeless identification numbers, and
23 those numbers were 111,401 students. There was a slight
24 decrease of about 2,000 students, but given that school
25 buildings were closed from March 'til the end of the

1 school year, we feel that our districts did a great job of
2 still identifying our students and families.

3 We -- on October 31, all districts submitted
4 what we call snapshot data, and the agency is still in the
5 process of going through that data and finalizing that.
6 That's usually released here in about February, and that
7 will also give us a better indicator of what the numbers
8 were for identification for this school year.

9 So I just wanted to let -- you know, share that
10 information with you. I also wanted to let you know that
11 we're in the process of developing our competitive grant.
12 We're in the third year of our final competitive grant
13 cycle, and the new grant, we're estimating, will be
14 released -- the application, at the end of February, and
15 we'll be competing -- approximately \$7.7 million to our
16 local school districts, charter schools and our Education
17 Service Centers.

18 And so hopefully, by the time we have the next
19 meeting, that will be up and open. We'll be providing a
20 training, what we call an applicant's webinar, once that
21 application is released, in which we'll be walking down
22 all the program guidelines, the application requirements,
23 the reporting requirements, for anybody who is eligible to
24 apply.

25 And then I also wanted to let you know that we

1 are in the planning stage for our next summit. We are
2 targeting a date in the last week of July, and we're
3 anticipating to move forward to continue with a virtual
4 summit, given that it will be in July and everything going
5 in with COVID-19.

6 So I just wanted to give that brief update.

7 MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Cal. Very --

8 MS. LOPEZ: Sure.

9 MR. DOYLE: -- interesting. Anyone else?

10 (No response.)

11 MR. DOYLE: All right. Is there any public
12 comment?

13 (No response.)

14 MR. DOYLE: All right. I don't have any
15 closing comments, except you guys are doing a great job.
16 I know that this is a tough time, but man, there are
17 opportunities out there to keep folks from losing their
18 housing, and work is a big part of it.

19 So just keep up the good work. Anybody else
20 have anything in closing?

21 (No response.)

22 MR. DOYLE: Thank you for helping me make my
23 meeting, my other meeting. And we are going to have
24 another meeting. I think it is in April. And we will be
25 getting to you those dates, and how it's going to be done,

1 probably by this webinar or WebEx, or whatever it is
2 again.

3 But we'll let you know probably in February
4 about those dates. Okay. Elizabeth, we did it.

5 MS. YEVICH: We did it. Thank you, Mike.

6 And I'll be in touch. If anyone has any
7 questions, you have my email. I'm always here. Thank
8 you.

9 MR. DOYLE: Thank y'all.

10 (Whereupon, at 11:03 a.m., the meeting was
11 adjourned.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MEETING OF: Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless
LOCATION: Austin, Texas
DATE: January 21, 2020

I do hereby certify that the foregoing pages,
numbers 1 through 46, inclusive, are the true, accurate,
and complete transcript prepared from the verbal recording
made by electronic recording by Nancy H. King before the
Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

DATE: January 25, 2021

/s/ Adrienne Evans-Stark
(Transcriber)

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