

TICH Meeting Notes

April 8, 2011

1-3pm TDHCA

Member Representatives Present: Stuart Campbell (TDHCA), Philip Cochran (TEA), Belinda Heffelfinger (DFPS-APS), Caitriona Lyons (HHSC-DIRA), Pam Maercklein (TVC), Melissa Mason (TCFV)

Staff Present: Stuart Campbell (TDHCA), Mary Dodson (TDHCA), Colin McGrath (TICH/TDHCA)

Advisory Members and Guests Present: Mindy Green (TSAHC), Barbara W. James (THEO), Dianna Lewis (CSH), David Long (TSAHC), Ken Martin (THN), Eric Samuels (THN), Ashley Schweickart (TDHCA)

Present By Phone: Beverly Donoghue (TWC), Karen Lashbrook (TYC), Chan McDermott (HHSC), April Zamora (TDCJ/TCOOMMI)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Attendees introduced themselves. **Stuart Campbell** delivered an overview of the day's schedule and outlined the day's goals.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

DATA

Eric Samuels gave a brief update. The subcommittee has completed a survey that TICH member agencies will help complete.

PREVENTION

Colin McGrath explained that the prevention subcommittee had focused on developing objectives and action items for the plan. Discussion focused on how to define "at risk of homelessness."

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ken Martin explained that much of the infrastructure subcommittee's work will rely on results from the agency survey the Data subcommittee completed. The subcommittee spent its meeting developing objectives and action items.

HOUSING

Mary Dodson outlined topics the housing subcommittee focused on in their meeting, including strategies for increasing the availability of affordable housing.

Ken Martin voiced concern that the subcommittee, and the plan, focus on permanent supportive housing and not on transitional housing. Rural communities, he explained, need this resource. **Mary** stated that federal policies are moving away from transitional housing. **Dianna Lewis** wondered whether transitional housing methods reflect the actual needs or rather reflect a community's expected needs. **Eric Samuels** noted that there are two different concepts for permanent supportive housing (PSH): PSH for long-term and short-term residents. He suggested that emergency shelters shift towards becoming transitional housing. **Stuart** added that HUD does not support transitional housing in some of their programs, but emphasized that we need to look at what Texas needs. We need to include transitional housing in the plan as a need that should be addressed. **Ken** added that failures associated with transitional housing often result from the wrong individuals—chronically homeless persons—using transitional housing. Transitional housing works best for brief, periodic instances of homelessness, which are more common to rural areas. **Eric** noted that in the Balance of State, providers ranked transitional housing as the highest priority. **Melissa Mason** explained that transitional housing works very well for family violence victims. **Ken** stated that he usually uses the term “supportive housing” instead of “permanent supportive housing” to avoid distinguishing between long-term and shorter-term housing. The housing is available to people as long as they need it. **Ashley Schweickart** noted that the subcommittee's discussion did not include transitional housing because they focused on strategies for developing affordable housing.

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Stuart Campbell mentioned the new Coordinating Committee had formed and met the previous week. They reviewed the plan and made suggestions for revisions.

TICH RETREAT – STATUS REPORT

Stuart walked the council through the next steps TICH had established after the February 11th meeting. TICH has stayed on target with most of the steps. TICH formed new committees, received feedback on working documents, distributed research items among subcommittees, and completed the first draft of the plan. The CoC/HMIS conference is delayed but will occur in late May. HUD has promised technical assistance funding to have Ray Allen from Community Technology Alliance facilitate the meeting and give a presentation. TDHCA staff will invite personnel from HUD to attend and speak about HMIS from their perspective. **Eric** suggested finalizing the date as soon as possible.

The council is ready to begin holding public hearings, as planned during the last meeting. **Dianna** asked whether holding hearings in May would be feasible. The council agreed that the hearings would have to wait until June. **Barbara James** noted that her agency (Texas Homeless Education Office) had some travel money that may be available to help finance some of the hearings. **Dianna** suggested that local CoCs host forums. **Mary** observed that this approach would emphasize links between local and state entities. **Barbara** suggested using local homeless coalition meetings for holding forums to receive input for the plan. **Stuart** noted that he had been thinking of official public hearings, but that these options would also work.

STATE PLAN UPDATE

Colin gave an overview of the draft plan. The four goals are:

1. Strengthen Texas's capacity to systematically gather precise data on homelessness,
2. Increase housing options for homeless individuals and families who face multiple barriers to secure housing,
3. Develop a statewide crisis-response mechanism that identifies at-risk individuals and families and prevents them from becoming homeless, and
4. Increase communication and collaboration between all service providers and units of government in order to sustain TICH's planning efforts and aid in the implementation of this plan.

Colin explained that the current draft of the plan contains only two sections. The final plan will have two or three more sections. The new sections will contextualize the goals and strategies. One section will report on demographics of homelessness. Another section will report on available services.

Ken urged the council to think of the plan holistically. He added that while the plan will explain what needs to happen, maybe a nonprofit such as Texas Homeless Network (THN) should then produce a separate document that reports on what the plan would cost.

Dianna asked whether the objectives would eventually offer more specificity. **Colin** replied that the plan will offer much more specificity, but TICH must first gather more information, especially through the agency survey.

The council decided to give members two weeks to submit their feedback on the plan.

AGENCY SURVEY TOOL

Colin described the process for completing the state agency survey. It will follow two steps: first, agency representatives will gather intake paperwork and datasets and submit the documents to TICH; second, agency representatives will organize staff and schedule a meeting time for

completing the survey in person with TICH representatives, most likely Eric Samuels and Colin. **Pam Maercklein** asked whether the survey was for only member agencies or all state agencies. **Stuart** responded that it would include non-member agencies. The Department of Agriculture, for instance, has programs that serve homeless children in schools (through free and reduced-price meal programs) but may not recognize this function. Agriculture is not a member of TICH. We need to survey such agencies.

Ken suggested sending a short questionnaire to all agencies asking if they provide any homelessness-related services. Some members thought that too many agencies would respond “no,” not realizing that they actually did have relevant services. The council therefore decided to just administer the survey.

Barbara illustrated how simple phrasing of questions can lead organizations to recognize that they serve individuals who are homeless. In education settings, high mobility and extreme poverty individuals are considered homeless. In a meeting she asked educators if they served homeless students. Nobody raised their hand. When asked if they served children who were highly mobile and extremely poor, many indicated that they did.

Given the demands legislative session places on data staff at state agencies, the council decided to delay the survey until June when the regular session concludes.

TIMELINE

April 22: Final comments on the plan’s draft
End of May: HMIS Conference
June: Public hearings and agency surveys
July: Continue with public hearings and agency surveys
August 5: Next TICH meeting