Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless
Quarterly Meeting

MEETING NOTES

1:00-3:00 pm
August 5, 2011
at
Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
221 E. 11th Street, Room 116
Austin, TX

Member Representatives Present: Artricia Allen (TDHCA), Stuart Campbell (TDHCA), Bill Carpenter (DSHS), Philip Cochran (TEA), Christina Courson (TYC), Beverly Donoghue (TWC), Mike Doyle (Governor's Appointee), Beth Engelking (DFPS), Lance Hamilos (DARS), Chan McDermott (HHSC),

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

Advisory Members and Guests Present: Krista Del Gallo (TCFV), Mindy Green (TSAHC), Tim Irvine (TDHCA), Barbara W. James (THEO), Dianna Lewis (CSH), David Long (TSAHC), Ken Martin (THN), Jo Kathryn Quinn (Caritas of Austin), Eric Samuels (THN), Ashley Schweickart (TDHCA), Theresa Tod (TNOYS)

I. **Welcome and Introductions**

II. **Public Comment**

No comment.

III. **Notification of Recent Appointments to TICH**

Tim Irvine appointed Stuart Campbell, Manager of Community Services, and Artricia Allen, HOME Division Single Family Programs Manager, as the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) representatives to TICH.

Stuart Campbell reminded attendees that members of the council should have decision making ability within the agencies they represent. If not, members should inform their agencies' decision makers about the meetings and the council's activities.

IV. **Discussion and Possible Action on the Election of TICH Chairperson**

Stuart Campbell stated that TICH needs to elect a chairperson.

Tim Irvine outlined the duties of the chair. The chair will communicate with staff periodically about meeting agendas and will serve as a filter to direct staff duties. Staff will give the chair logistical support; acting as TICH chair will not take much of an individual's time. The chair should advocate for homelessness-related issues as well as the work of the TICH.

Stuart Campbell asked members to consider whether they would like to serve as a chairperson and asked if members would rather wait until the October meeting to make any further decisions.

Council members decided to wait until the October 7th meeting to elect a new chairperson.

V. Subcommittee Reports

DATA SUBCOMMITTEE

Eric Samuels updated the council on the Data Subcommittee. The state agency survey is in progress. He compiled results from the 2011 point-in-time (PIT) count and has a provisional report. It is an overview of statewide PIT data. Continua of Care send PIT data directly to HUD. All CoCs sent their data to Eric Samuels to compile. THN will finalize and publish the report soon.

Theresa Tod noted that on the report Eric distributed, the numbers for homeless youth looked low. She suggested using the Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS) for data on all youth served in homeless services.

Eric Samuels agreed and explained that it is likely an undercount. As an example, he pointed out Austin's PIT data where the CoC reported only one unsheltered youth. On a given day, there are clearly more than one unsheltered youth in Austin.

HOUSING AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE

Mary Dodson stated that the Housing and Supportive Services Subcommittee met on June 8th. The subcommittee's priority was to go through their section of the plan. In terms of client outcomes, the subcommittee discussed whether the term "self-sufficiency" was suitable and decided that the phrase "live as independently as possible" or "achieve maximum independence" was more appropriate. The committee looked at ways to pair supportive services with housing.

Ashley Schweickart added that the subcommittee recommended adding a question to the state agency survey about current pairings agencies are using. The committee also discussed was for incentivizing developers to build extremely-low-income housing at an affordable rate—to make this development profitable.

Tim Irvine brought up the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. This year, there is a discussion feature on the TDHCA website about the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). He noted that it is hard to use the LIHTC for developing housing other than traditional housing. But TDHCA is looking to do more in the area of supportive housing. Subsidies are needed to make that kind of project successful, but this is hard to achieve right now. You cannot turn the LIHTC program into something it is not.

Dianna Lewis mentioned that the Corporation for Supportive Housing released an annual survey on Tax Credits for housing. Next week they will draft ideas on tax credits for the Texas State Housing Coalition and TICH.

PREVENTION AND DISCHARGE PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEE

Beverly Donoghue stated that the Prevention and Discharge Planning Subcommittee met on June 6th. The subcommittee reviewed the draft sections of the plan specific to prevention. Some edits were: be more proactive about proposing or facilitating research, piggybacking on existing collaborative groups, identifying additional data sources such as Emergency Shelter Grant Program (ESGP) data or 211 data, identifying additional barriers like stigma, legal barriers with employers and renters, and using a case management framework to focus on income, housing, and self-care for persons at-risk of homelessness. Additional risk factors included childhood experiences with homelessness and poverty. They discussed the need for TICH committees to coordinate well. They want to minimize redundancies. The subcommittee expressed a need for agency feedback before the plan's release for public comment.

Mike Doyle added that the subcommittee discussed discharge planning from jails and hospitals. He noted that hospitals are discharging persons to homeless situations, but when asked, hospital personnel state that they are discharging persons to a permanent address. The addresses, however, are addresses for emergency shelters, indicating individuals are exiting hospitals to homeless situations. Women leaving prison have difficulties because if they were not homeless prior to entering prison, they do not meet HUD's definition of homeless. They may have no

place to go other than back to an abuser or a pimp, but they are not considered homeless, so they are not eligible to participate in homeless services.

Stuart Campbell asked whether this is results from lack of education or reflects the conscious use of a loophole. **Mike Doyle** expects this is conscious, but not malicious. There is very little housing available to homeless persons after they leave a hospital, especially if they need assistance with medical needs. This leads to persons returning to the hospital for further care.

Eric Samuels asked if there is any information about time elapsed between instances of hospital recidivism.

Mike Doyle responded that the cost study in Fort Worth looks at hospital visits, but does not report on the length of time elapsed between admissions.

Mike Doyle emphasized that a major issue is the inability to classify people as homeless if they have no place to go after exiting an institution. He will talk with HUD personnel about this problem next week. About 23,000 persons were released from prison to Tarrant County this year. Most will stay in an extended-stay hotel because this is the only place that will take them.

Ashley Schweickart said that persons with disabilities who are exiting nursing homes work with a "relocation specialist" to find housing. A similar process could be used for persons in homeless situations.

Ken Martin said that the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) hired 64 case managers with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to work as reentry specialists. **Mike Doyle** said that the agency placed the case managers in six re-entry points. But this funding is ending, and TDCJ will be lucky to keep one or two posts. **Ken** thought data on how well the re-entry specialists program worked would be useful for the council.

INFRASTRUCTURE SUBCOMMITTEE

Ken Martin said the Infrastructure Subcommittee worked on their section of the plan. He noticed that the committees interlocked and discuss some of the same things. His charge is to coordinate all of these items. TICH needs to promote systems change, not only laterally (within state agencies), but also holistically, (between state agencies and nonprofit agencies).

Tim Irvine referred to Mike Doyle's point about people leaving an institution and becoming homeless. In every process, we need to remove inefficiency by minimizing the number of "hand-offs" of persons from one system to the next. The real potential driver for change is economic. We need state fiscal leadership to reduce hand-offs because they slow processes, and they cost more money.

Ken Martin agreed, and added that permanent housing, or some other stable housing situation, is necessary to help minimize recidivism. **Tim Irvine** added that housing is not just shelter; it provides stability and helps person re-enter their communities.

Mike Doyle pointed out that there are many shelter and housing beds available outside of the traditional social service delivery system, through faith-based groups. Someone needs to connect the two.

Stuart Campbell added that he has been told that many of these smaller providers lack the capacity to address the entire issue of homelessness. **Eric Samuels** observed that the Infrastructure Subcommittee needs to keep faith-based services in mind.

Ashley Schweickart added that when she observed the state's recovery planning, she saw how the faith based community was ready to be first responders. An instance of homelessness is a disaster, and the faith-based community can address it as such; we need to embrace a first-response mentality.

VI.   State Plan to End Homelessness

Beverly Donoghue thanked Colin McGrath for all the work he has done to research data, facilitate committees, and write the plan.

Colin McGrath gave an overview of the where the state plan stands. He noted that with Eric's updated data, many of the facts in the plan are out of date since they were based on the 2009 PIT count. In comparing Texas's PIT data to national data reported in the *Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress* (AHAR), he saw that Texas' data resembles data from the rest of the country. Texas is similar on measures of chronic homelessness and family homelessness. But family violence is more frequent among persons experiencing homelessness in Texas.

Colin McGrath discussed statistics from the plan and outlined the plan's goals and objectives:

DATA, RESEARCH, AND ANALYSIS
Goal: Strengthen Texas's capacity to systematically gather, analyze, and report precise data on homelessness.
- Objective 1: Evaluate the quality of homelessness-related data.
- Objective 2: Facilitate coordinated data collection policies and procedures for all sources of data.
- Objective 3: Coordinate timely data collection, reporting, and analysis.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES:
Goal: Increase housing options for homeless individuals and families who face multiple barriers to secure housing.
- Objective 1: State agencies identify individuals and families experiencing homelessness and prioritize their housing stability.
- Objective 2: Increase the supply and availability of affordable and permanent supportive housing units in Texas.
- Objective 3: Promote the strategic pairing of state agency and private sector resources to increase supportive services linked with affordable housing units.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION
Goal: Develop a statewide crisis-response mechanism that identifies at-risk individuals and families and prevents them from becoming homeless.
- Objective 1: Refine and promote a definition of "at-risk" of homelessness that fits Texas.
- Objective 2: Increase awareness of opportunities for preventing homelessness among state agencies.
- Objective 3: Increase the coordination of state agency services to enhance the state's preventive capacity.
- Objective 4: Increase the capacity of state institutions to prevent instances of homelessness and shelter use upon discharge from facilities.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE
Goal: 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.
- Objective 1: Increase coordination and communication between state agencies through promoting a common language for communicating information on homelessness.
- Objective 2: Increase coordination and communication between local, state, and federal government and non-government entities.
- Objective 3: Raise awareness of homelessness among state agency boards of directors, executives, and other decision makers.

Colin McGrath added that the plan will soon be ready for public comment. He then invited attendees to comment on the plan.

Bill Carpenter asked about Prevention Objective 4. He thought that it would not be cost-effective for state hospitals, and doctors are not allowed to keep people in a hospital if they no longer NEED to be in the facility.

Colin McGrath clarified that the objective was not encouraging longer hospital stays or inappropriate actions, but rather that it is calling for adequate housing services for persons exiting from facilities at an appropriate time. The plan emphasizes cost-effective practices.

Cristina Courson noted that when youth leave Texas Youth Commission facilities, TYC tries to house youth in halfway houses until they find a permanent placement. TYC has housing liaisons, but they could use funding and a ready database of available housing their re-entry workers can use to find housing for youth.

Stuart Campbell added that TICH still needs to finalize details about releasing the plan for public comment.

Jo Katherine Quinn had a few comments. Regarding prevention, she asked about using Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Assistance as a housing allowance. Second, she asked about the possibility of the Childcare Development Funds (CCDF) that the Texas Workforce Commission receives prioritizing homeless children.

Colin McGrath responded that TANF Emergency Assistance was already in use in Texas. Emergency Assistance is established under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act, and in its TANF state plan, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) assigns administration of IV-A funds to the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). DFPS uses TANF IV-A Emergency Assistance for foster care. Therefore, it is not available for new homeless services, though the funds help prevent youth homelessness through supporting foster care.

Dianna Lewis asked how people should submit their comments on the plan. **Colin McGrath** said that depends on the nature of the comments: if they are global comments, then a written response is appropriate; if the comments involve specifics about certain sentences or paragraphs, then documenting markups using the track changes function would be best.

Philip Cochran thanked TICH for including the Texas Education Agency's (TEA's) information in the plan. **Colin McGrath** thanked Philip for submitting their additions.

Dianna Lewis stated that although the council does not want to tell state agencies what to do, we want a meaningful document. Perhaps we could include statements that say by a certain date, an agency should accomplish a given objective.

Tim Irvine added that each representative to the council is asked to review the plan with his or her agency's staff members and send comments to Colin. This will avoid any surprises to agency staff, especially decision makers.

Bill Carpenter suggested including information about the SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) program in the plan. **Ken Martin** added that if case managers follow the program, they can assist people to obtain SSI or SSDI benefits within 90 days. That time frame is dramatically shorter than the usual two- or three-year application process, and obviates the appeals process.

VII.   Update on Survey of Available Homeless Services at State Agencies

Colin McGrath updated the council on progress with the state agency survey. He stated that responses to the survey are due September 16.

Theresa Todd asked if the survey is comprehensive enough to obtain information about subpopulations served, specifically youth. **Stuart Campbell** explained that though the actual survey is not, the follow-up interviews will allow us to gather this information.

Beverly Donoghue asked if Colin would like agencies to report the number of persons served divided into groups such as adults, youth, and children. **Colin McGrath** said this would be helpful if possible.

Theresa Todd explained that 16-24 years of age is a typical range for considering persons to be homeless youth.

VIII.   HMIS Data Warehouse Project

Stuart Campbell gave an overview of recent progress toward developing a Data Warehouse to collect, analyze, and report statewide data about homelessness. TDHCA held an HMIS data warehouse conference in May, and representatives from Continuum of Care lead agencies and HMIS system administrators from around the state participated. Two conference calls and one in-person meeting are scheduled over the next few months, and topics to be addressed include formal commitments to the process by every CoC, funding, vision, goals, and governance.

IX.   Adjourn

Next Meeting: October 7, 2011