

# TICH Meeting Notes

February 11, 2011

10am-4pm TDHCA

**Present:** Brooke Boston (TDHCA), Beverly Donoghue (TWC), Mike Gerber (TDHCA), Mindy Green (TSAHC), Lance Hamilos (DARS), Belinda Heffelfinger (DFPS-APS), Ron Hieser (TEA), Barbara W. James (THEO), Karen Lashbrook (TYC), Amy Lee (DSHS), Dianna Lewis (CSH), David Long (TSAHC), Caitriona Lyons (HHSC-DIRA), Pam Maercklein (TVC), Ken Martin (THN), Melissa Mason (TCFV), Rebekah Mason (Lonestar Legal Aid), Becky Morales (HHSC-FVP), Ashley Schweickart (TDHCA), B.J. Wagner (TDCJ/TCOOMMI).

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

**Michael Gerber** gave a brief introduction and discussed how state agencies make a difference in homelessness. The key role of state agencies, he stated, is to coordinate money and resources while not interfering with local-level efforts. The purpose of the day's meeting is to use the collective wisdom of representatives in the room to coordinate better between agencies. **Michael Gerber** acknowledged **David Long** as the state's representative to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and mentioned his own meeting with USICH directors. At the state level, he argued, we need to set high standards for our work and find the best means for channeling scarce money.

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

## TICH STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

**Colin McGrath** gave a brief overview of the strategies and timeline within the plan proposal document. The strategies, he explained, are basic steps he thought TICH would need to take as it drafts a plan for the state. The timeline should structure and guide TICH's planning for the remaining year. All of this content is provisional, and needs revision. After this explanation, he and Stuart invited the group's input on the strategies.

### STRATEGIES

The group expressed interest in focusing TICH's work on two main areas: first, planning for helping individuals towards self-sufficiency and extended employment (sustainability) and second, building planning off of existing models, such as state and local plans. **Colin** noted that many state plans offer unsatisfactory models. **Otis Thornton** responded that pieces can nonetheless be gleaned from existing plans. For instance, he noted, Ohio has an excellent discharge plan for its criminal justice institutions that we could learn from. **Beverly Donoghue** noted that we could also use examples from Europe. **Ken Martin** noted that we have already used examples Europe: his subcommittee's

Housing Status Continuum comes from a similar continuum used by the European Union. Looking at other states, **Ashley Schweickart** added, allows us to see what is unique about Texas. **Michael Gerber** also noted that looking at the USICH's recommendations is important because this is likely where federal resources will be focused.

**Ken** noted that TICH should not talk about Healthcare Reform, but rather focus broadly on health services that individuals need. The council agreed.

The group added, consolidated, and revised items from the list of TICH's strategies. The final list of strategies is:

1. Identify state and local services;
2. Evaluate the impact of state services;
3. Assess local and state 10-year plans;
4. Evaluate the applicability of *Opening Doors*;
5. Streamline data collection (HMIS and PIT);
6. Define homelessness;
7. Streamline preventive services, which includes improving discharge planning;
8. Streamline supportive services;
9. Assess impact of lack of healthcare services; and
10. Anticipate shifts in federal and state policy.

Stuart then asked the council to identify the top five items TICH should prioritize. The council identified the following:

1. Homeless definition;
2. Inventory of services (scope and scale);
3. Data collection;
4. USICH collaboration; and
5. State and local plans.

**Ken** posed a question to the group: is our focus on state agency services or all services in the state? The general consensus was that TICH should first focus on state agency services, though later consider all services.

**Michael Gerber** mentioned **Ashley Schweickart's** development of an interagency resource guide. Such a resource allows us to see how agencies serve individuals in specific cases, clarifies what agencies do, and illustrates how they serve a client.

## TIMELINE

For the Housing Status Continuum, **Ken** explained that TICH needs to finalize a draft and get buy in; he wants to distribute the draft to the council to have it presented to member agencies. There needs to be a period of public engagement where TICH gets input on the definition. It was proposed to

have roundtables within the next month and finalize a draft by April so that by May we can report the definition to member agencies.

Regarding a draft of the plan, Otis Thornton noted that his planning group in Fort Worth received better input once it had a working document. The second half of the Fort Worth plan is a grid of action items with a high, medium, and low investment scale—he suggested prioritizing the development of this part of the plan. He advised TICH to not fall into the perfection trap: with Fort Worth, they lost sight of their core purpose and did not hold true to their timeline. The main goal should be to get a plan out quick.

The council agreed, and Michael Gerber suggested April 1<sup>st</sup> as a deadline for completing the first draft of the plan. Roundtables and stakeholder input would occur after a draft had been circulated.

The council agreed that TICH should prioritize its stakeholder conference and soon review other plans.

Noting that the minutiae of a revised timeline may be too complex to develop at the moment, **Ken** suggested that TICH organize a smaller meeting to do so.

## WORKING LUNCH

TICH subcommittees presented on their recent work.

**Ken** (Statewide Definition/State Agency Coordination) distributed copies of his subcommittee's Housing Status Continuum and explained its purpose.

**Eric Samuels** (Promoting Data Integrity/Improve State Investment) distributed multiple documents from his subcommittee: a set of strategies and action items his committee proposes, a survey on services and data collection to distribute among state agencies, and a set of data on homelessness in 2010. **Eric** explained that HUD data standards will serve as a basis for developing standards for state agency reporting. As **Ashley Schweickart** has worked on agency coordination, he noted that we should seek her input on this project. **B.J. Wagner** of TDCJ and TCOOMMI added that TICH could add the criminal status of clients as a data standard.

**Beverly Donoghue** (Increase Prevention Activities/Improve Outreach and Education) distributed a document listing her groups goals and projects. After she noted that TICH needs a public figure (or figures) to champion its plan, **Eric** noted that we could look to HPRP results as a basis for this outreach. **Stuart** mentioned as an example that Robert Greehey of Valero has championed Haven for Hope's work to great success.

**Colin** (on behalf of Discharge Planning/State Investment) stated that the discharge planning subcommittee met and decided their work would involve all institutions in Texas. The subcommittee needed all stakeholders present at a meeting before moving forward.

## PRESENT AND REVIEW OUTLINE

**Colin** began by explaining the outline he developed. The structure draws from USICH's plan—*Opening Doors*—and from *Within Reach*, a blueprint which Stuart developed two years ago. The outline is structured to describe the scope and demographics of homelessness in Texas, describe the infrastructure Texas has for assisting individuals experiencing and at risk of homelessness, identify gaps in this infrastructure, and to then present solutions for closing these gaps. After this overview, he asked for the council's input on the outline.

**Lance Hamilos** had the idea of adding columns to Part I (2)—Contributing Factors to Homelessness—to include the resource needed for each case and the agency or resource that could meet the need.

**Otis Thornton** observed that the outline did not consider enough leadership, education, and advocacy; the plan should involve a thoughtful reflection of outreach. He asked: "Is this a Texas or a state of Texas plan?" Meaning, will it reflect the perspective of Texas as a whole or that of state agencies?

**Dianna Lewis** stated that within local continua, groups have developed their own plans: their issue is what to do locally when faced with the state's constraints. We need a dialogue with local level communities to hear what they think the state can do better.

**Ken** noted that for now, we should concentrate on state agencies; in the next phase we can work towards integrating the state, local, and nonprofit sectors into a seamless service continuum. **Stuart** added that to develop partnerships we should hold hearings for gaining local input. **Otis** emphasized this point, explaining that as TICH develops a plan that focuses its attention on state agencies, it should not forget to encourage interaction between the local community and the private sector. For instance, we need a public-private partnership and strategy focused on improving employment.

**Ken** suggested that we make Part V of the outline our first priority. **Stuart** agreed that we need names and dates down on paper. We need to identify gaps and map out steps for closing them. However, he pointed out that we needed goals and objectives identified prior to laying out the steps to achieve them.

**Melissa Mason** commented that for stable housing, a goal could be homeownership. Funding exists to help people achieve homeownership, and many problems revolve around the unpredictability of landlords; housing could be the most sustainable goal. **Stuart** responded that other basics like

financial literacy are also important components to address. **Rebekah Mason** was nervous about placing homeownership as a primary goal. **Stuart** accepted this concern and stated that we could consider this option as a part of a larger box of tools.

One member commented that there should be an education and self-sufficiency piece that can help individuals to work themselves out of their situation. **Stuart** responded that the goal of the plan is a paradigm shift to emphasize how to support somebody's path towards self-sufficiency. The document's goal could be to promote this way of thinking.

Regarding writing down action steps, **Ken** suggested that we would need another work day to go through each step, and we need all state agencies to have input with this. He suggested that maybe Colin put together the beginning of this action plan and then have an afternoon of input into this section.

## COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

**Stuart** initiated the next section of the meeting: the goal here is to figure out how we should revise our subcommittee structure to better serve our goals and strategies. The council listed all tasks and activities each subcommittee was involved with.

Definition/State Agency Coordination: definition/housing status, state services, coordination of services, data.

Data/Investment: data collection and integrity, commonalities in data, uniformity of data, data quality, performance measures, costs, gaps, state investment, using data effectively.

Prevention/Education: clarify prevention activities, identify risk factors, identify services and gaps, research projects, publish best practices, outreach, identify funding services, develop a prevention toolkit, training opportunities, pilot project to evaluate one or more prevention projects, methods for outreach, identify best models and expand awareness of models, and develop strategies to promote outreach.

Discharge/Supportive housing: Identify target populations, review existing plans, evaluate state laws, plan for developing supportive housing, study financing mechanisms, and look at services available to people once they are housed.

Within this discussion, **B.J. Wagner** noted that for discharge planning, we might need TCJS's representation on TICH because TDCJ is not involved with the county jail system, especially in rural counties where there are fewer social workers.

**Ashley Schweickart** observed that the pair between discharge planning and supportive housing may not be suitable. She then asked whether the eleven goals and strategies actually fall in any

grouping, noting that the more we fragment these items, the less cohesion we will have. **Ken** asked about having an ad hoc group to update TICH's legislation.

**Otis** explained two ways to organize committees: one, organize by specific population, though this is not the most successful model; or two, organize around strategies for ending homelessness.

The council decided to rework its current subcommittee structure. The subcommittees will follow focus areas outlined by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH). The subcommittees will be divided along the following thematic areas:

1. Close the front door (prevention);
2. Open the back door (affordable housing);
3. Maximize resources (build the infrastructure);
4. Improve data (plan for outcomes).

The council decided to also add a small, ad hoc coordinating committee.

**Otis** suggested that we write a charge to the committees that reminds each of urban and rural issues and urges them to be mindful of the subpopulations we address.

**Ashley** added that the coordinating committee should meet on an ad hoc basis and will serve an administrative role. **Otis** noted that for Fort Worth, the coordinating committee also served as a writing and editing committee.

## NEXT STEPS

Stuart initiated the next section of the meeting, and stated that it would be better to develop research plans and detailed steps for the timeline after the meeting—here the council should just identify major items. The council identified the following:

1. Form new committees, 2/15;
2. Receive feedback on plan outline, Housing Status Continuum, and data-collection survey by 2/25;
3. Distribute research items among subcommittees, 2/25;
4. Hold conference for Continua of Care HMIS administrators, 3/9, or afternoon of 3/8 at the time of THN's Lobby Day (coordinating committee will set the agenda);
5. Complete draft one of the plan, 4/1;
6. Hold hearings/roundtables/bulletin board (throughout May, and by May 30 have ideas for incorporating changes based on this feedback);
7. Review, edit, and rewrite plan;
8. Final plan by November.

Colin will distribute an email with documents we need input on. Council members will have until February 25<sup>th</sup> to submit their comments.