



Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless
Quarterly Meeting – January 25, 2022
Meeting Minutes

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

Members present:

#	Member Agency	Representative	Attendance (Yes/No)
1	Office of the Governor appointee, Cornerstone Network (TICH Chair)	Mike Doyle	Yes
2	Office of the Lt. Governor	<i>vacant</i>	n/a
3	Office of the Speaker of the House	<i>vacant</i>	n/a
4	Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)	Helen Eisert	Yes
5	HHSC	Suzie Brady	Yes
6	HHSC	Claire Irwin	Yes
7	Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)	Sherri Cogbill	Yes
8	Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)	Valinda Bolton	Yes
9	Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA), Housing Finance representative	Brooke Boston	Yes
10	TDHCA, Community Affairs representative	Naomi Cantu	Yes
11	Texas Education Agency (TEA)	Cal Lopez	Yes
12	Texas Department of Juvenile Justice (TJJJ)	Marqus Butler	No
13	Texas Veterans Commission (TVC)	Blake Harris	Yes
14	Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)	Shirley Jones	Yes

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

Advisory Members present:

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

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

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Mike Doyle called the meeting to order at via GoToWebinar 1:35 pm, confirmed a quorum was present.

Elizabeth Yevich introduced Sean Lonergan as the new Homeless Policy Advisor working under the Housing Resource Center. He will serve as administrative support for the TICH and will also work primarily on rewriting the new State Plan on Homelessness, also known as the Pathways Home report, which was initially released by TICH in 2012.

Elizabeth Yevich also shared that Naomi Cantu was promoted to Director of HOME-ARP at TDHCA. Rosy Falcon will fill the role previously occupied by Naomi Cantu as Homeless Programs Manager.

The final shift Elizabeth Yevich mentioned was Cate Tracz’s promotion to Director of Housing Stability Services at TDHCA.

II. Remarks from the Chair

Mike Doyle began the meeting having no opening remarks.

III. Approval of draft minutes from the October 19, 2021 TICH Meeting

Mike Doyle then called for a motion to approve the October 19, 2021 minutes. Naomi Cantu made a motion to approve the minutes, Blake Harris seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with no comments.

IV. Election of TICH Chairperson (*Voting Item*)

Mike Doyle stated that any nominations for the election of the TICH should be sent to either Elizabeth Yevich or Sean Lonergan for composition. Either Ms. Yevich or Mr. Lonergan will announce the nominations at the next quarterly TICH meeting in April.

V. Introduction of TDHCA's Homeless Policy Advisor

Elizabeth Yevich stated that this agenda item was previously covered during Welcome and Introductions.

VI. Updates from Member Agencies

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

- i. Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Annual Funds and ESG through the CARES Act**

Rosy Falcon first presented on ESG CARES Act funds. She indicated that TDHCA has expended \$46 million of the \$97 million allocation of CARES I/CARES II funds, placing the agency at a 47.8% expenditure rate. This rate is behind the expected 80% benchmark targeted for March 31, 2022, but is above the national average rate of ESG CARES Act expenditures, which stands at a 33.59%. Ms. Falcon also mentioned that the \$46 million in ESG CARES Act expenditures does not account for the \$4 million of draft expenditures that are undergoing the internal review process. She is confident that the sub recipients of the remaining ESG CARES Act funds will continue to expend these funds to close the gap on the desired 80% expenditure benchmark by the end of March, especially with the aid of expenditure extensions provided by the CARES team.

Ms. Falcon next provided an update on the regular ESG allocation. She indicated that 89% of the 2020 allocation was expended and 6.23% of the 2021 allocation was expended. She stated that active regular ESG grant allocations for 2021 will close out soon. Also regarding 2021 funds, Ms. Falcon announced that TDHCA will provide waivers for some of the 2021 regular ESG funds, suggesting that the Department may redirect those funds for Covid-19 response purposes or other objectives. Ms. Falcon's final announcement pertained to TDHCA's plan to review and revise the rules governing the general ESG application process.

Chairman Doyle asked whether the Emergency Rental Assistance Programs I and II ran through TDHCA or if they were routed directly to individual cities. Ms. Falcon answered that they ran through TDHCA. Chairman Doyle asked a follow-up question regarding whether there will be a report on the allocation of these funds since he was under the impression that once 75% of funds were allocated by a certain date, localities could reallocate the remaining funds to housing stabilization programs. At that point Brooke Boston stepped in to clarify that the State has expended all ERA funds with the exception of funds reallocated for housing stabilization services, the details of which Cate Tracz will elaborate on later in the meeting. Follow-up discussion ensued.

- ii. Homeless Individual Camping, HB1925 Update**

Elizabeth Yevich provided an update stating that the Housing Resource Center has not received any individual camping plans to date, so there are no new developments since October's meeting.

Chairman Doyle asked whether TDHCA is in communication with the Office of the Governor's (OOG) policy point people about OOG's opinion of the camping. At this point Ms. Yevich turned the question over to Brooke Boston, who answered that TDHCA is aware of

OOG's opinion and that TDHCA assumes that localities will submit plans in accordance with OOG's guidance. Follow-up discussion ensued.

iii. **HOME-American Rescue Plan (ARP)**

Naomi Cantu next presented an update on the HOME-ARP Program. Ms. Cantu began her presentation stating that the Program is in the public comment period until January 31, 2022. She followed by providing a brief summary of the draft plan outlining its four activities, which include non-congregate shelters, affordable rental housing, nonprofit capacity building, and administration and planning.

Presentation highlights included that: HOME-ARP affordable rental housing funds will be made available to persons experiencing or at risk of homelessness as part of its qualified population; the draft plan may be submitted to the Board for approval as early as February 10, 2022, and, once approved, submitted to HUD for a 30 day review period; and TDHCA anticipates Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) this Spring. Details regarding activity funding amounts, qualified populations, allowable fund request amounts, and other pertinent program details can be found at the following link on pages 8-15:

<https://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/tich/docs/handouts-220125.pdf>

Helen Eisert from HHSC asked about uses for HOME-ARP funds directed towards capacity building, as outlined in the presentation. Ms. Cantu responded with examples of uses, including compensation for new hires, staff development or education, training, travel, and equipment or supplies.

Following this presentation Ms. Yevich indicated that two additional TICH members had joined the meeting and read into record that TICH members Valinda Bolton and Shirley Jones were present.

iv. **Emergency Housing Vouchers**

Spencer Duran, Director of the Section 811 Program at TDHCA, next presented on the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) Program. The EHV Program is funded by HUD and is composed of Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers that are provided to public housing authorities (PHAs). EHV's are limited to four target populations, including people experiencing homelessness, people at risk of homelessness, persons fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, and those who are recently homeless.

Mr. Duran also mentioned that PHAs are required to partner with Continuum of Care organizations, where CoCs identify members of the eligible target population, provide referrals to the PHA, and then coordinate services. Mr. Duran emphasized two CoC agreements of this type in the pipeline. The first agreement is between the Texas Homeless Network (THN) and the Heart of Texas Homeless Coalition for the purpose of developing strategies ensuring that survivors of domestic violence and related target populations are served.

The second agreement between THN and TDHCA allocates 380 EHV's to THN. TDHCA also has 50 EHV's contracted to Heart of Texas Homeless Coalition, along with a draft contract amendment in place to increase that amount to 75, for a grand total of 455 EHV's committed to CoCs thus far.

There are no households served yet, but THN made 15 referrals to TDHCA's Section 8 Program, applications of which are under review. There is also a balance of 343 EHV vouchers that were rejected by PHAs from around Texas that were returned to TDHCA, which Mr. Duran hopes TDHCA's EHV Program will reallocate to PHAs in Texas that have demonstrated success with the EHV Program.

Tonya Lavelle submitted a question asking why the EHV vouchers were returned. Mr. Duran clarified that the vouchers were not returned, rather they were rejected by PHAs that did not want to participate in the EHV Program. Brooke Boston stepped in and further clarified that TDHCA asked HUD if they could directly distribute the extra EHV vouchers to PHAs that would use the vouchers, but HUD stated that they could not ensure that these rejected vouchers would stay in Texas. As a result, Program administrators are seeking to ensure that these vouchers are reallocated to PHAs within Texas.

Helen Eisert asked a second question regarding reasons for PHAs declining EHV vouchers. Mr. Duran suggested that one potential reason was the need to leverage significant outside funding to ensure sufficient capacity to fund services for the provider.

Blake Harris from the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) asked a final question regarding the reason for differentiating between recently homeless and homeless in terms of target population. Eric Samuels from THN stepped in to clarify that the distinction allows homeless response systems to open up spots for people to move into the appropriate housing option as dictated by their needs.

v. **Housing Stability Services Program**

Cate Tracz, Director of Housing Stability Services (HSS) at TDHCA, next presented on the new HSS Program's pandemic relief efforts. TDHCA's organization of HSS began in early to mid-2021. HSS provides grants and assistance to local nonprofits, communities, and other eligible organizations to assist income-eligible households to help them obtain or maintain stable housing. Eligible activities this program provides include eviction prevention and diversion, case management related to housing stability, housing counseling, employment assistance, child care expenses, and moving assistance. The HSS program can also provide sub-recipients with rent and utility deposits, landlord incentive fees, and short-term hotel and motel stays. Ms. Tracz clarified that HSS is not a direct rent or utility assistance program; it is distinct from such programs as Texas Rent Relief and Emergency Rent Assistance.

To qualify for HSS assistance, eligible households must be at or below 80% of Area Median Income (AMI), demonstrate being either at risk of homelessness or having housing instability, and show financial hardship due either directly or indirectly to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The HSS Program is sustained by up to 10% of Texas' ERA I and II funding allocation. The ERA I allocation must be fully expended by September 2022, while the ERA II deadline must be fully expended by September 2025. ERA I funds were awarded to 27 sub-recipients thus far, including local nonprofits mostly composed of homeless service providers, along with some community action agencies and a Council of Government (COG). These contracts total over \$51 million of HSS support.

Another \$20 million in ERA I funds was awarded to the Texas Access to Justice Foundation (TAJF) to provide legal services that include housing-related legal services, eviction diversion

assistance, and housing clinics where an individual can speak with an attorney about their housing instability. TAJF sub-awarded these funds to 11 legal aid and legal services providers around Texas. HHS awarded the last portion of the ERA I funds to the TVC, supporting the administration of two full-time homeless veterans coordinators within their Veterans Mental Health department. Cumulatively, ERA I sub-recipients have provided assistance to over 7,000 households.

Regarding ERA II fund distribution, Ms. Tracz stated that HSS is still in the planning and awarding phase. HSS has provided ERA II funds to THN to assist administration of the EHV Program and intends to continue support of the TAJF and TVC, with awards still pending approval at TDHCA's February Board meeting. For the remaining \$84 million in ERA II funds, HSS completed its NOFA process and will take awards to TDHCA's March Board meeting. Ms. Tracz mentioned that HSS has received more than double the amount of requests for funding that are available for these remaining ERA II funds.

Following this presentation Valinda Bolton of DFPS asked whether HSS could share a list of organization providing ERA funds that could be shared with caseworkers to connect clients eligible for these funds. Ms. Tracz responded with a link to the details of the HSS program.

(b) Other Agency Updates

i. Texas Education Agency

Upon request by Chairman Doyle for other agency updates, Cal Lopez of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) volunteered to provide updates regarding the American Rescue Plan for the Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) fund. TEA awarded ARP-HCY funding to school districts and educational service centers in order to address the unique needs of students experiencing homelessness due to the Covid-19 pandemic by increasing eligible recipients' staff capacity and providing additional wraparound services.

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) administered \$81.3 million in two phases to TEA, the first phase of which totaled \$20.3 million. ED requires that 75% of this funding must be awarded to school districts. In response to this requirement, TEA allocated \$16.7 million, or 82%, of this funding to its new competitive grant Local Education Agencies (LEAs). TEA directed the remaining \$3 million in funding to all 20 of Texas' Regional Education Service Centers that will be awarded over a three-year period.

TEA is finalizing the second phase of ARP-HCY funding, which totals \$61 million. TEA allocated \$55 million, or 90%, of this second phase's funding to school districts to ensure the majority of Texas school districts receive ARP-HCY grants. Eligible school districts with an individual or shared service entitlement of \$5,000 or above is eligible for this grant. TEA anticipates releasing this grant in three to four weeks, and applications will become available via TEA's e-Grant system. ARP-HCY funding will be a one-time application and one-time Notice of Grant Availability (NOGA) over the three-year grant period.

ii. Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS)

Fedora Galasso, Executive Director with Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) made several announcements involving TNOYS following Catherine Bialick's presentation and discussion. The first announcement indicated Ms. Galasso's excitement regarding the partnership between TNOYS and TEA in developing the Texas Education for Children and

Homeless Youth Program, more information of which will become available at the TICH quarterly meeting.

Her next update pertained to collaboration between TNOYS and the U.S Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) to inform the drafting of the Federal Strategic Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness, which will be released to the public next month. Ms. Galasso announced that the new plan will pay special attention to the youth population, and will be informed by organizations that provide direct service to youth experiencing homelessness and by young people with lived experiences of homelessness.

Ms. Galasso's next update pertained to the relaunch of Texas' Statewide Collaborative around Youth Homelessness, which last met in 2018. The meeting is planned for February 23, 2022 from 1:00 to 3:00pm Central Standard Time. It will focus on the various cross-systems that affect youth experiencing homelessness, including youth aging out of care and youth who are exiting justice systems, among other intersections. The five Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project sites in Texas are located in Austin, Waco, San Antonio, Houston, and Fort Worth.

Ms. Galasso's then announced that TNOYS is still recruiting for Americorps members that are focused on working directly with youth services provider organizations, many of which are youth homeless shelter organizations. These positions are also specifically targeted for young people with lived experiences who can provide near-peer learning on the ground at organizational host sites. She also announced a new position posting for a policy manager focused on uplifting policies and practices to serve youth experiencing homelessness in Texas.

iii. **Texas Veterans Commission (TVC)**

Blake Harris followed Ms. Galasso's updates to provide updates from the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC). The first announcement was that TVC worked with TDHCA to hire two Homeless Veteran Coordinators within the Veterans Mental Health Department (VMHD). These positions will assist working with veterans or veteran families that are at risk or experiencing homelessness.

Dr. Harris also clarified that TVC is separate from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), though TVC and VA work closely together on local coalitions that include the Military Veteran Peer Network, VMHD, Justice-Involved Veterans program, Community Faith-Based Partners program, among other coalitions.

VII. Update from Texas Homeless Network (THN)

i. **VISTA Project**

Eric Samuels stepped in for Nicholas Thompson to present updates on THN's VISTA project. The project is in its final year of grant funding and is starting another grant funding contract in May 2022. THN's VISTA team is composed of six members working with local homeless coalitions, as well as on coordinated entry and communications. Two additional members are expected before May 2022. For these positions, THN is seeking members across the Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoS CoC), and is waiving the fee outside sites typically have to pay. Mr. Samuels advised that THN's new VISTA project manager, Lisa Albracht, will join the next TICH quarterly meeting, and she will be introduced at that time.

ii. **Texas Homeless Data Sharing Network Project**

Eric Samuels next provided an update on the Texas Homeless Data Sharing Network (THDSN) project. Mr. Samuels began this update by introducing Aubrey Fetzer, the THDSN VISTA, who is working with Mr. Samuels on this project. Mr. Samuels then provided an update on developmental and governance capacity work related to THDSN. THDSN is in Phase II of implementation, where it is using applicable data to help clients gain access to services. Mr. Samuels cited one example of Phase II's success in El Paso, where data from THDSN helped a veteran experiencing homelessness by verifying that he was homeless and a veteran from the Coalition for the Homeless community. As a result, he was able to gain access to veteran administrative supportive housing.

Regarding governance, Mr. Samuels reminded TICH that THDSN is composed of every CoC, with each CoC on average having one representative and one seat available for a person with lived experience. Seven CoCs covering 90% of Texas are participating in THDSN, and Mr. Samuels hopes to have the Austin and Brazos Valley CoCs join soon. THDSN is also updating a public-facing dashboard.

Ms. Fetzer then stepped in for Mr. Samuels to speak further on THDSN updates. One of Ms. Fetzer's main projects focuses on outreach for persons with lived experience and attracting anybody who wants to attend THDSN Board meetings even if they are not a CoC representative. Ms. Fetzer is working on a visual resource to attract members of each of these potential participant groups.

Ms. Fetzer next spoke on THDSN funding. THDSN has submitted grant applications for the Amazon Health Equity Grant, the Meadows Foundation Grant, and the Applied Materials Grant over the past couple months, all of which THDSN hopes to hear decisions in the near future. Ms. Fetzer announced that THDSN is in the process of submitting applications for additional grants as well.

Mr. Samuels stepped in to clarify that, if awarded, THDSN is seeking to send this grant funding to participating CoCs in order to improve data sharing capabilities. THDSN also seeks this funding to supplement a lead case manager's salary to help THDSN identify frequent users and target those users for partnership between the Homeless Response System and public health system, most likely for emergency room expenses. Because THDSN is a recipient of State funding, it will continue to operate until the end of 2022.

Mr. Samuels also announced that THDSN received support from the Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation (TSAHC) for hiring a project manager and will start interviews for the position next week. He also stated that THDSN plans to make public a dashboard that viewers can use to look at homelessness across Texas. Viewers will be able to toggle by time periods, subpopulations, and racial composition.

Following this presentation Chairman Doyle asked what is keeping the Austin CoC from joining THDSN. Mr. Samuels answered that it's likely due to a lack of capacity. He elaborated that the other remaining CoCs that have yet to join, which include Brazos Valley, Wichita Falls, and San Antonio, also lack the capacity to fully participate in THDSN at this time. Mr. Samuels added that the San Antonio area CoC also has a lead agency that is distinct from its Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) lead agency, which further complicates their ability to commit to THDSN.

Helen Eisert asked a second question seeking to clarify whether the potential funding for a lead case manager position applies to all CoCs participating in THDSN. Mr. Samuels confirmed that this was indeed the case; the funding would supplement the salary of each lead case manager position among participating CoCs.

VIII. Guest Presenter (HHSC) – Catherine Bialick, Senior Advisor, Office of the State Forensic Director, Texas Health and Human Services

Catherine Bialick, Senior Advisor in the Office of the State Forensic Director at HHSC, next presented on housing-specific issues involving the intersection of behavioral health and justice systems and the statewide strategy in responding to these issues. Ms. Bialick's presentation first provided an overview of a statewide Strategic Plan, entitled the "Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council Behavioral Health Strategic Plan," that brings together behavioral health and justice system stakeholders to improve diversion and early intervention efforts in each respective system at state and local levels. The plan is still pending publication.

Ms. Bialick next detailed challenges and potential solutions discussed by stakeholders concerning the cyclical relationship between housing stability and justice involvement. One challenge working groups discussed was law enforcement procedures contributing to arrest for behaviors associated with experiencing homelessness, such as criminal trespass. Other challenges mentioned included how lack of stable housing acts as a risk factor for justice involvement and reduces courts' willingness to divert people from jail or prison. Upon reentry, lack of stable housing contributes to supervision failure and increases a person's risk of recidivism. When the relationship is flipped, criminal history acts as a barrier to individuals and families securing and maintaining stable housing. This cycle is exacerbated when an individual has a mental illness, substance use disorder, or intellectual and developmental disability (IDD).

Through a survey of relevant stakeholders, Ms. Bialick communicated two housing-specific strategies most popular among those surveyed that could address these challenges and inform the Strategic Plan. The first strategy was promoting collaborative work among local and private stakeholders to expand housing options, with special attention towards landlord criteria and transitions between institutions to the community. Ms. Bialick defined housing option in this case as step-down and transitional housing, adult residential settings, and sober living and recovery home options.

The second strategy supported the promotion of dedicated positions at Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs), Local Behavioral Health Authorities (LBHAs), and Local Intellectual and Developmental Disability Authorities (LIDDAs) to provide housing navigation, employment, transportation, and education services for people with mental illness, substance abuse disorders, and IDDs.

Ms. Bialick continued by discussing the Strategic Plan and its five overarching goals. The first goal focuses on crisis and diversion, the second on coordination, collaboration, and accountability, the third on CoC and support services, the fourth on strengthening state hospital and community-based forensic services, and the fifth on expanding training, education, and technical assistance. HHSC plans to launch the Texas Behavioral Health and Justice Technical Assistance Center to support implementation of the Strategic Plan.

To conclude her presentation Ms. Bialick mentioned HHSC's partnership with TDHCA and TSAHC in developing a Community of Practice hosted by the Council for State Governments Justice Center and the Corporation for Supportive Housing earlier this year. This partnership was formed to develop strategies

for expanding housing options for people with complex health needs leaving the justice system. She indicated that the HHSC is still awaiting the Texas report which outlines these strategies discussed by the Community of Practice.

Following this presentation Chairman Doyle asked Ms. Bialick whether she is familiar with the Mental Health Jail Diversion Program in Tarrant County that opened two weeks prior to this TICH meeting. Ms. Bialick indicated she is familiar, but is not involved with the program. Follow-up discussion ensued.

Fedora Galasso of TNOYS asked whether this Strategic Plan examines interactions between youth experiencing homelessness and the intersection between the behavioral health and justice systems. Ms. Bialick responded that the Strategic Plan examines strategies specific to reducing and preventing justice system involvement for youth along with the provision of substance abuse services tailored to youth. The report also directed special attention to veteran populations and people with IDD.

Ms. Galasso followed up with an additional question asking when the Strategic Plan will be published and if the PowerPoint can be shared. Ms. Bialick indicated that the Strategic Plan should be published by March or April 2022. Jeremy Stremmer stepped in to announce that the PowerPoint will be circulated to everyone on the TICH as part of the meeting materials.

Naomi Cantu asked a question regarding how the new Texas Behavioral Justice Center will be funded. Ms. Bialick answered by clarifying that HHSC received a grant to launch the center itself, and that its services will be managed by HHSC and its state agency partners. Ms. Cantu followed up with a question asking whether legal aids will be included among HHSC's partners. Ms. Bialick answered that they were not currently included, but that she will make a note to consider such a partnership.

IX. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

X. Closing Comments

Chairman Doyle closed by thanking Elizabeth Yevich for her time serving as TICH administrative support, and remarked that he looks forward to working with Sean Lonergan, who will serve as TICH administrative support moving forward.

He then indicated that the date of the next meeting will be scheduled for April 2022, and concluded the meeting wishing that everyone stay safe and keep up the good work.

XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:11 p.m.