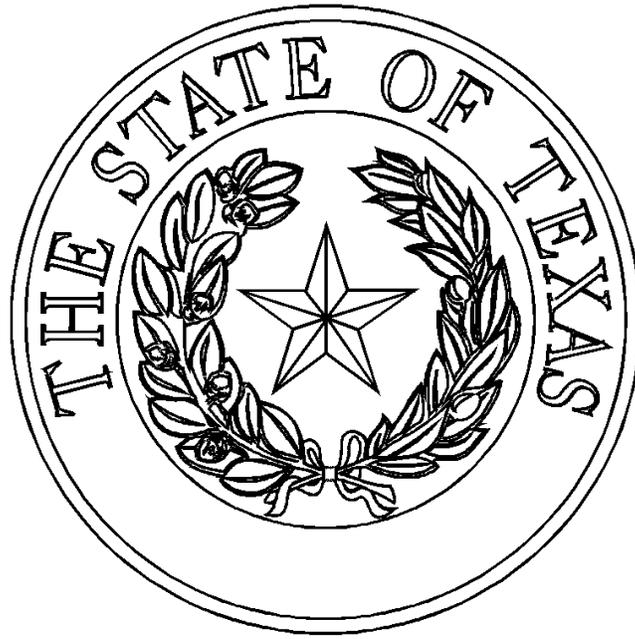


TEXAS INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR THE HOMELESS



Annual Report

2015

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Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless (TICH)
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INTRODUCTION

This report is the progress report of the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless (TICH), required by Texas Government Code §2306.908.

In 1995, the 74th Texas legislature established the TICH. Legislation requires TICH to coordinate the state's resources and services to address homelessness. TICH serves as an advisory committee to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA). Representatives from eleven state agencies sit on the council along with members appointed by the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives.

This report is provided to the governing body of each agency currently represented on the TICH, which includes the following, per §2306.903(a):

- Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs;
- Health and Human Services Commission;
- Department of State Health Services;
- Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services;
- Department of Aging and Disability Services;
- Department of Family Protective Services;
- Texas Workforce Commission;
- Texas Veterans Commission;
- Department of Criminal Justice;
- Texas Juvenile Justice Department; and
- Texas Education Agency.

The 84(R) Texas Legislative Session's Senate Bill (SB) 607, authored by Senator Hancock, passed both chambers and was signed into law on June 1, 2015. SB 607 amends §§2306.903(a), 2306.904(e), 2306.905 and 2306.906(b) of the Texas Government Code.

SB 607 amends §2306.905, which specifies that the TICH and each of its members may seek program or policy guidance assistance from the Texas Homeless Network (THN) in accomplishing the TICH's duties. THN is a nonprofit organization that assists homeless service providers in receiving and managing HUD grants, administering services, and gathering data.

SB 607 amends §2306.906(b), which requires each member agency to contribute resources to the TICH unless the agency certifies in writing that it is unable to commit resources during that fiscal period.

Finally, SB 607 amends §2306.910 to allow members to attend the TICH meetings by teleconference if the member resides 20 or more miles from the local of the meeting. The attendance by teleconference will allow the TICH member to be counted toward quorum requirements.

This report is organized based on the nine specific duties of the TICH per state law. This report covers progress made on each of these assigned duties since the last report of the TICH. As a companion to this report, TICH works

under the framework of *Pathways Home*, which TICH released as a proposed policy framework for coordinating state administered programs with local service providers in Texas. TICH intends for *Pathways Home* to address most of the duties required under its statute.

ACTION ON STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

(1) Survey Current Resources

During 2015, TICH sub-committee members met on several occasions and determined a need for further information from state agencies, especially concerning the housing status of clients served with state funds and how the state agencies define homelessness or if they have a definition of homelessness, at all. Sub-committee chairs plan to meet in the winter of 2015 to decide on the questions to be asked and the method of distribution of the survey questions. Administration of the survey to state agencies will occur early in 2016 with a target date for completion the end of the first quarter of the calendar year.

THN, a TICH Advisory Council member, partnered with TDHCA in 2015 to conduct an assessment of the eleven Continua of Care (CoC) in Texas to determine readiness for the CoC to be a Collaborative Applicant for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Homelessness Assistance funds and readiness and ability of the CoCs to distribute and manage State Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding. The assessment phase was completed, and one of the eleven CoCs is prepared to serve as a collaborative applicant and two of the CoCs are prepared to distribute and manage State ESG funding for 2016 ESG funding. Additionally, THN continues to provide training and technical assistance where needed to help ensure the CoCs meet HUD and TDHCA requirements for CoC and ESG funding.

Through another partnership with TDHCA, THN provided in-depth technical assistance to non-profit organizations, local governments, and local mental health authorities (LMHAs) across the state in 2015. The aim of the project was to develop housing projects that can be funded by either CoC or ESG funds. THN worked with eighteen non-profit organizations in several different CoCs. The project development assistance focused on Permanent Housing and Rapid Re-housing projects. The assistance was provided to entities located in Brownsville, Tyler, Killeen, Kerrville, Bay City, Denton, San Antonio, Austin, Galveston, Texarkana, Denton, Corpus Christi, Temple, Lubbock, Dallas and Bryan/College Station.

(2) Initiate an Evaluation of Future and Current Needs

In developing *Pathways Home*, TICH initiated efforts to evaluate the current and future needs of the state, focusing on four subpopulations: families with children; unaccompanied youth; individual adults experiencing chronic homelessness; and veterans. The assessment of current needs draws primarily on Point-in-Time (PIT) Count data. However, there are several efforts to expand the data sources used, as outlined below and under section 4.

Data on Homeless Populations

TICH finds extensive limitations in existing sources of data on homeless populations. The council, in conjunction with TDHCA, plans to establish an information base to support more sophisticated evaluation of current and future needs. A key component in this effort may be the development of a data warehouse. The proposed system would integrate data from the state's eleven independent Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) implementations. HMIS gathers client-level data from persons served in homeless assistance programs funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), some Veteran's Administration (VA) programs,

and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RHY) under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The data warehouse would have the ability to match records in HMIS across all eleven CoCs . Later in the implementation, the data warehouse may have the ability to connect to existing data in agencies' administrative datasets for cross-systems analysis.

TDHCA had previously identified funding for this effort in 2013; however, issues arose on which entity would own the data so the project never entered the implementation phase. Representatives from the Texas CoCs remain interested in the concept of a data warehouse and this item remains a priority for the council. Implementation of a data warehouse may occur if:

1. An entity with strong ties to Texas CoCs and its communities leads the effort;
2. Resources are made available through public and/or private sources that would allow expenses of constructing a system capable of integrating large, diverse data sets such as those in question; and
3. Official agreements are structured between each participating entity that are structured to establish equity among all and that preserves client and Contributing HMIS Organization (CHOs) anonymity.

Youth Count Texas!

The 84th (R) Texas Legislative Session's House Bill (HB) 679, authored by Representative Sylvester Turner, was signed into law on June 17, 2015. HB 679 adds §§2306.1101 and 2306.1102 to the Texas Government Code. The former defines homeless youth, and the latter requires TDHCA, in conjunction with the TICH, to conduct a study of homeless youth. The study is due to the Texas Legislature no later than December 1, 2016.

The definition of homeless youth per §2306.1102 will be used for the study and has many distinct elements. Information on some of the populations defined as homeless youth in HB 679 is already available, such as youth abandoned in a hospital or youth living in emergency shelters. For these populations, TDHCA is coordinating with other state agencies to gather this information to be used in the final report.

There is little information statewide about certain populations defined as homeless youth in HB 679, such as youth that lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. *Youth Count Texas!* is an initiative headed by TDHCA for a statewide count and needs assessment of both Texas homeless and unstably-housed youth starting October, 2015 and running through February, 2016.

Youth Count Texas! will be conducted in three phases:

- Phase I - Survey Tool Development. From July to August, TDHCA contracted with the Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) to gather input from stakeholders including the TICH, hold three roundtables on the survey tools, and obtain commitment letters from a majority of CoCs to take the survey tool to their governing bodies for approval. The result will be the creation of two surveys: one for use during the annual point-in-time (PIT) count of homeless persons in January 2016 and one for a needs assessment which can be used up until February, 2016. An annual PIT count is required by HUD.
- Phase II - Survey Implementation. From September to April, TDHCA contracted with TNOYS to create training for survey implementation, provide technical assistance for CoCs, create a data collection methodology and system, and deliver a report of the results of the implementation.
- Phase III – Data Analysis. The data from Phase II, along with data collected from other state agencies, will be analyzed to examine the number and needs of homeless youth and the degree to which current

programs are meeting those needs; identify any sources of funding that might be available to provide services to homeless youth; and develop a strategic plan establishing steps to be taken and timelines for reducing youth homelessness in this state.

During Phase I, TDHCA's procured vendor, TNOYS, worked from July to August, 2015, to create the survey, in addition to managing the TICH Homeless Youth Workgroup which was created to give input to *Youth Count Texas!* Many members of the TICH Homeless Youth Workgroup members attended one of the three roundtables held during Phase I by TNOYS on the survey tool and edited a draft version of the survey for TNOYS.

During Phases II and III, the TICH Homeless Youth Workgroup will also give input during Phase II and III of the study on homeless youth. In addition, summaries of the progress on the study will be presented at the quarterly TICH meetings for the membership as a whole.

(3) Assist in Coordinating and Providing Statewide Services

The primary goal of *Pathways Home* is to enumerate a set of strategies to help state agencies coordinate resources to address the needs of homeless individuals in the state. The document organizes this framework under four thematic sections: 1) Affordable Housing and Supportive Services; 2) Homelessness Prevention; 3) Data, Research, and Analysis; and 4) State Infrastructure. This discussion begins on p. 34 of *Pathways Home* under the section titled *Framework for Strengthening Texas's Infrastructure*. For an outline of the document's proposed objectives and strategies for assisting in the coordination and delivery of services, please refer to pp. 71-79 of *Pathways Home*.

TICH committees continue to plan for increased communication between state agencies and non-profit agencies through webinars, in-person workshops and teleconferences. Texas Homeless Network hosts a semi-monthly Continuum of Care (CoC) Leader conference calls designed to facilitate conversation among the eleven CoCs in Texas to work on common issues and provide information that may be helpful in preventing and ending homelessness across Texas.

TDHCA partnered with THN to conduct an in-depth assessment of the TICH. The assessment is complete, and THN is working on the recommendations with TICH members in order to implement the recommendations chosen by TICH for follow-up.

Supported Housing Program

During the 83rd (R) Legislative Session, DSHS requested and received funds to provide additional supported housing resources among certain LMHAs across the state. The purpose of this funding is to enhance the ability of LMHAs to provide rental and utility assistance to individuals with mental illness, who were homeless and imminently homeless, along with supportive housing and mental health services. LMHAs are required to become HOME Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) Administrators through TDHCA which allows them to access rental assistance funds, depending on availability, to maintain someone in subsidized housing when they are on wait lists for permanent housing subsidies.

Approximately \$10.9 million (\$4.7 million in fiscal year 2014, \$6.2 million in fiscal year 2015) was allocated to 18 LMHAs, which began utilizing funding and created supportive housing programs in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2014.

Participants are either considered short-term (up to 6-months of assistance) or long-term (up to 12 months of assistance). During 2014–15 biennium, 3,096 individuals have received DSHS rental assistance.

In SFY 2016, 18 LMHAs will be participating. Funding for this supported housing program is currently rolled up into the base budget of DSHS. As of the third quarter of fiscal year 2015, approximately 670 individuals were able to transition to either independent living or permanent supportive housing while continuing to receive behavioral health services.

Healthy Community Collaboratives

The 2014-15 General Appropriations Act, S.B. 1, 83rd Legislature, 2013 (Article II, Department of State Health Services, Rider 90) authorized DSHS to allocate up to \$25 million in General Revenue over the biennium to fund grants to serve persons experiencing homelessness and mental illness.

Awards were made to collaborative projects in the five most populous urban municipalities: Austin, Houston, San Antonio, Fort Worth, and Dallas for the purposes of promoting collaboration based on locally identified priorities. These priorities included leveraging local matching funds in an amount equal to the grant awarded and addressing homelessness, criminal recidivism, emergency room utilization, substance abuse, employment rates, and local economic benefit. Funds appropriated for Healthy Community Collaborative (HCC) projects support significant coordination and collaboration between LMHAs, municipalities, and other community stakeholders.

In the first three quarters of SFY 2015, these five Texas cities have successfully implemented a coordinated assessment process, trained staff on required evidence-based practices, and housed some individuals in the community.

As of May 2015, 12,398 individuals completed the coordinated assessment and 1,655 of these individuals were diverted from homelessness and/or enrolled in another housing program. During this same time period, 4,363 individuals were enrolled in a HCC project and 238 individuals were on a waitlist to receive housing and/or related support services. Of the 4,363 individuals participating in one of the five HCC projects, 217 received permanent supportive housing, 329 received rapid re-housing, 46 received affordable housing and 35 received transitional housing. The remaining individuals who were not enrolled in an HCC project received services as usual.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funding opportunity: Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals for States (CABHI-States)

In SFY 2015, DSHS, in partnership with TDHCA and the TICH, submitted an application to SAMHSA for the Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals for States (CABHI-States). The purpose of this funding was to enhance or develop the infrastructure of states and their treatment service systems to increase capacity and provide accessible, effective, comprehensive, coordinate/integrated, and evidence-based treatment services; permanent supportive housing; peer supports; and other recovery support services to chronically homeless individuals or homeless/chronically homeless veterans with substance use disorder, serious mental illnesses or co-occurring mental and substance use disorders. Unfortunately, Texas did not receive this federal funding award. The state infrastructure committee plans to identify possible action items from the proposal that could be addressed in SFY 2016 and beyond.

(4) Increase the Flow of Information among Separate Providers and Appropriate Authorities

Through the development of *Pathways Home*, TICH has facilitated an unprecedented level of dialogue among independent service providers, both at the state and local level. Through the state agency survey, interagency discussions relating to the development of *Pathways Home*, and public hearings that engaged leaders and staff from local agencies and nonprofits, TICH opened new channels for communication. State Infrastructure, on pp. 66-70 and pp. 78-79, describes strategies for continuing to increase the flow of information among service providers and appropriate authorities.

As the subtitle to *Pathways Home* suggests, the framework focuses on the possibility of achieving stronger coordination between state agency programs and local CoC systems. A CoC acts as the core entity for organizing resources at the local level for homelessness assistance. The size of CoCs varies, from a single county like Travis County, to a multi-county network like the Texas Balance of State, which covers a swath of 216 rural and non-metropolitan counties in Texas. HUD is increasingly recognizing the CoC as the hub for coordinating service delivery. Through new regulations, HUD requires heightened integration between agencies receiving HUD funds and local CoCs. TDHCA and TICH recognize the importance of CoCs in the administration of assistance to persons experiencing and at risk of homelessness. As a result, TDHCA and TICH have increased their level of communication with CoC leadership across the state.

Beginning in September 2013 TICH members met with Texas CoC lead agency staff to discuss how TICH can support the work of Texas CoC in efforts to eliminate homelessness. Additional TICH helped facilitate a meeting between Texas CoCs and staff from the Texas Information and Referral Network on how homeless service providers could more efficiently use 2-1-1 to aid in efforts to implement Coordinated Assessment. The TICH plans to conduct regular meetings and webinars with Texas CoCs in an effort to collaborate more efficiently.

The Texas Homeless Information Exchange Governing Body (THIE) met three times in 2013 in an effort to establish a data warehouse. The group's primary goal was to execute decisions relating to the HMIS data warehouse.

In March 2014, THIE governing body members considered an opportunity to utilize funding provided through TDHCA to establish a data warehouse but ultimately could not come to a consensus on the terms of the grant. THIE governing body members continued to plan for the implementation of a data warehouse later in 2014 but interest in the initiative and CoC lead involvement waned. The THIE governing has not reconvened but in October of 2014 CoC leaders expressed interest to resume planning on a data warehouse project.

The Data, Research, and Analysis committee will facilitate a meeting of CoC leaders in the winter of 2015 with the purpose of resuming substantive planning on a data warehouse project. The first goal of this initiative will be the agreement between all CoCs upon a common set of data points that are proposed for inclusion in a data warehouse proposal. Additionally the committee will identify best practices in terms of program design and funding support from other statewide data sharing projects. The committee will follow up with CoC leaders to garner support for the recommended plan in the spring and summer of 2016, if resources allow.

In 2015 the Data, Research, and Analysis committee presented a report of HUD CoC PIT and Housing Inventory data for all Texas CoCs that THN aggregated. In 2016 this report will be updated and present to TICH membership again. Also in 2015 the committee will collect each CoC's PIT survey instrument and examine the questions to determine what data may be compared across CoCs for Texas. The committee will utilize these research findings to advocate for the use of a common PIT survey instrument in Texas beginning in 2016.

Study on Homeless Veterans

The 84th (R) Texas Legislative Session's SB 1580, authored by Senator Sylvia Garcia, was signed into law on June 18, 2015. SB 1580 adds §2306.1101 to the Texas Government Code, which requires TDHCA, in conjunction with the TICH and the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) to conduct a study of veterans experiencing homelessness. The study is due to the Texas Legislature no later than December 1, 2016.

The study requires the following:

- A definition of homeless veteran used for the study;
- The status of homeless veterans in Texas;
- Statewide and local entities serving homeless veterans;
- Funding sources of entities serving homeless veterans;
- Recommendations to improve the State's approach to address veteran homelessness; and
- Recommendations to change State law to assist homeless veterans.

For the definition of homeless veteran used for the study, the study will include the definition used during the PIT count, which is a main federal data source for homeless veterans.

For the status of homeless veterans in Texas, the study will include the number of homeless veterans from the PIT count for last three years and veteran data from the U.S. American Community Survey, as well as needs of homeless veterans. The study will include short case studies on Houston, which recently announced it effectively ended veteran homelessness in June, 2015. A survey of other Texas cities that took the Mayors Challenge to end veteran homelessness will also be conducted and included in the study.

For the statewide and local entities providing services for veterans and funding sources, the study will include a list of housing options for homeless veterans, such as HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers and reduced-rent apartments (Housing Tax Credit Program), and a list of service options from TICH members. Data from OneStar Foundation was purchased and data from TexVet.org was obtained to determine statewide entities other than state agencies that provide services to homeless veterans.

For the recommendations to state programs and state law, the study will include recommendations for Best Practices from other states and cities, recommendations from cities that are working to effectively ending veteran homelessness, recommendations from roundtables being held to gather input to the study, and recommendations from the TICH Veteran Homelessness Workgroup.

(5) Develop Guidelines to Monitor the Provision of Services for the Homeless and the Methods of Delivering those Services

In *Pathways Home*, TICH issues guidance on monitoring the delivery of services to persons experiencing and at risk of homelessness. For a proposed Housing Status Continuum, see p. 68. For a discussion on strategies for establishing a common definition of "at risk of homelessness", see Homeless Prevention, beginning p. 54. Objective 2 of Data, Research, and Analysis, pp. 63-65, provide guidance on developing metrics for monitoring the delivery of services to persons experiencing homelessness. Objective 1 of State Infrastructure, pp. 66-68, discusses the need for coordinating the definition of "homeless" that state agencies use for data collection and assessment.

In 2015 the Data, Research, and Analysis committee will resume the analysis of state agency data collection regarding persons experiencing homelessness. The goal is to establish common program intake questions regarding a person's housing status so that TICH may compile and compare data across all state agencies. State agency program intake data may prove to be a great resource TICH could effectively utilize to further examine homelessness across Texas over the course of time. Additionally this committee will meet with Texas' CoC leaders to facilitate planning so that a data warehouse can be implemented. If resources allow, the committee will poll HMIS projects in Texas to determine commonalities in regard to entry standards and practices.

(6) Provide Technical Assistance to the Housing Finance Division of the Department in Assessing the Need for Housing for Individuals with Special Needs in Different Localities

THN has provided resources and data to the TICH on the homeless population and its various subpopulations, including those with special needs. The TICH will share those resources and data with the Multifamily Program Division of TDHCA. Additional resources and data will be provided, as needed, specifically information related to youth and veterans experiencing homelessness. Notably, THN has over 15 years of experience conducting research and data analysis utilizing sensitive information from people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. THN will provide technical assistance in the area of data collection, analyses, and the dissemination of research to TICH and the Multifamily Program Division as needed.

(7) Coordinate with the Texas Workforce Commission to Provide Homeless Individuals Information to Assist them in Obtaining Employment and Job Training

The 83rd Legislature created a rider to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Appropriations Bill that provides \$4 million in funding in 2014 and \$4 million in 2015 to "implement a program with community based organizations in partnership with employers to move Texans off of public benefits and into the workforce. The program targets individuals without housing and employment, and moves them into permanent employment." THN and TWC collaborated in the development and release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit proposals from community based organizations in Texas.

Initial funding was awarded to three agencies: 1) the American GI Forum National Veterans Outreach Program (NVOP), 2) SEARCH Homeless Services and, 3) Haven for Hope of Bexar County. As of September 2015, 2,376 people have been enrolled for employment services and 1,113 participants have entered regular employment.

In SFY 2015, TWC released a second RFP to solicit proposals from additional qualified organizations and awarded funds to The Coalition for the Homeless of Houston. The remaining funds from the second RFP were distributed proportionately among all four awarded organizations to serve additional participants.

THN has partnered with TWC on a project to fulfill the requirement of the 7th statute, "Coordinate with the Texas Workforce Commission to Provide Homeless Individuals Information to Assist them in Obtaining Employment and Job Training". The AmeriCorps VISTA Project manager, overseen by THN, is working with TWC and local workforce boards, and homeless service providers to assess the extent at which employment assistance to persons experiencing homelessness is being provided.

(8) Establish a Central Resource and Information Center for the Homeless

2-1-1 Texas currently serves as the state's central resource and information center for persons experiencing and at risk of homelessness. TICH will continue to work with 2-1-1 to ensure that this system maintains comprehensive and accurate information on current resources. THN, in coordination with TICH, continue to provide information to 2-1-1 to ensure that information on homeless services remains current.

HUD now requires CoCs to restructure their methods of case management, resource delivery, and information distribution. This restructured system is called Coordinated Entry and implementation is required by all CoCs. In recent regulations issued for the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program, HUD has already taken steps to encourage CoCs to begin using a coordinated entry process as the basis for all service delivery. CoCs will begin to use a coordinated entry assessment to both determine client eligibility for assistance and to refer clients to local resources that best fit their needs. As this transition occurs, TICH has served as a liaison between CoCs, 2-1-1, and state agencies to ensure the state's information resources are well positioned to support the coordinated entry and referral processes. Leads from each of the 11 Texas' Continua of Care coordinated with 2-1-1 staff to identify each agency serving as a CoC coordinated entry point. Establishing the coordinated entry points in the 2-1-1 system offers a more streamlined information and referral process for persons experiencing homelessness. Training in these communities was completed in the summer 2015, and these communities began receiving referrals directly from 2-1-1.

(9) Council Responsibilities Executed by Other Entities

The TICH works closely with THN, a nonprofit organization that provides assistance to Texas communities to end homelessness through training, technical assistance, and advocacy. THN has the following statutory authority to supplement the TICH's work pursuant to Section 2306.905(b) of the Texas Government Code: "The council and each of its represented agencies may seek program or policy assistance from the Texas Homeless Network in accomplishing the council's duties."

THN assists service providers in receiving and managing HUD grants, administering services, and gathering data. THN has assisted with the assessment of the state's current resources, evaluation of current and future needs, and has helped set goals for a state intervention to end homelessness. THN will continue to provide information and resources to the TICH as needed. THN is in the ideal position to provide additional assistance and work for the TICH if resources became available.

THN also assisted in *Youth Count Texas!* as described under Goal 2 above. Further, THN worked from July to August, 2015, to provide technical assistance to the Balance of State Continuum of Care agencies for an expanded PIT count in January, 2016, that will include more focus on youth, or a youth count separate from the PIT count from October 2015 to February 2016. THN worked to create a draft toolkit adapted from the True Youth Count Toolkit, created by True Colors Fund. The draft toolkit includes information on how to promote the count and a tip sheet with information on:

- Collaborating with youth-serving organizations;
- Community partners;
- Involving youth;
- Safety;

- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page discussing the Point In Time Count and why a youth count is so important; and
- Magnet Event planning checklist.

THN also worked with three communities that are piloting a youth count separate from the PIT count: Denton, Comal County, and Victoria. THN will work closely with these communities to utilize their feedback on what worked and what did not work to inform future youth counts in the Balance of State areas.

THN identified potential partnering resources for *Youth Count Texas!* in the Balance of State Continuum of Care agencies' local communities, including youth service providers and Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender (LGBT) partners. THN will continue to work with the homeless coalitions to identify youth service providers and LGBTQ partners to cross check with THN's current list.

THN worked on a social media strategy for *Youth Count Texas!* to effectively integrate social media, such as hashtags on both Facebook and Twitter, to reach a larger audience. TDHCA and THN will work together to coordinate the social media strategy.

THN collaborated with the Texas Homeless Education Office (THEO) on how to engage schools in the youth count. THEO suggested a few school homelessness liaisons that THN can work with to brainstorm ideas to coordinate *Youth Count Texas!*

Finally, THN researched and gathered information from the Urban Institute and True Colors Fund. These organizations both agree that involving youth who have been homeless and have aged out of foster care will improve any strategy in outreach to other youth. Importantly, the experience of these youth can be effectively utilized for advice on the survey tool, creating magnet events, and especially for locating and identifying known "hot spots" where homeless youth congregate.