

OKLAHOMA'S FIVE YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

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PRESENTED BY: GOVERNOR'S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS
(GICH)

OKLAHOMA'S 5-YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This plan is a broad-ranging, five-year action plan that reaffirms our commitment on preventing and ending homelessness in the state of Oklahoma by embracing collaboration and evidence-based practices along with the most cutting-edge thinking and identifying new strategies to improve the lives of those most in need.

INTRODUCTION TO GOVERNOR'S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS

BACKGROUND

Since being established in 2004, the Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness (GICH) has worked closely with State and Federal agencies and local units of Government and Continuum of Care groups to meet common goals such as: increasing our knowledge about the needs and trends of homeless subpopulations, including veterans, transitional age youth, families and chronically homeless individuals; developing and implementing strategies to improve access to housing, services and mainstream resources; and, promoting the development of affordable, permanent housing with/without supports. The GICH promotes collaborative leadership at all levels of government and across all sectors and is committed to preventing and ending homelessness.

The vision of the Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness is that every person in Oklahoma will have access to safe, decent, truly affordable housing with the needed resources and support to achieve self-sufficiency. Our role in achieving this vision is to provide recommendations to the Governor of Oklahoma related to policies, programs and services for Oklahomans experiencing or at-risk of experiencing homelessness; and, to provide expertise, coordination and support to organizations, systems and policymakers across the state as they work toward this vision.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2008, the GICH was tasked with the responsibility for developing and implementing Oklahoma's first ever ten-year plan to end homelessness. Its purpose was to ensure the development of comprehensive cross systems strategies and approaches that incorporate the unique needs of rural and urban areas addressing barriers in five key areas: transportation, resources, housing, healthcare, and employment. Through brainstorming sessions, strategies initiated, stakeholders recruited, and programs launched, GICH and its partners took on this challenge with determination and a collaborative effort. As a result,

large-scale goals were met and support and advocacy flourished. Here are a few of the key accomplishments:

- Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) expansion: This information technology system covers the majority of the State and has allowed for programs and projects to be data-driven.
- Evidence-based practices such as Housing First, Individual Placement and Support, Motivational Interviewing, Intensive Case Management, Assertive Community Treatment and Seeking Safety have flourished and trainings have increased statewide.
- The GICH website was launched as a source of news, current information and initiatives related to ending homelessness in Oklahoma and to encourage public sector involvement. (<http://gich.ok.gov/>).
- With support from GICH, grants were written for and awarded to our provider network and more funding poured in to the State to address homelessness. The GICH served as the advisory board for a SAMHSA grant, Homes, Honor and Health for Oklahomans (H3OK) which was a Housing First project that integrated an array of needed services and supports for veteran and non-veteran individuals with mental health, substance use, or co-occurring disorders who experienced homeless or chronic homelessness to achieve self-sufficiency, permanent housing and improved quality of life. This project set the standard for other projects across the Nation. The final report on this work can be found at Appendix A.
- Norman, Oklahoma was recognized as the first community in Oklahoma to be certified as ending veteran homelessness by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. More information about communities recognized as having ended veteran homelessness can be found at www.usich.gov.
- Overall, all homelessness in Oklahoma is down nearly 20% since its peak in 2010. Chronic homelessness is down 55% since its peak in 2007 and veteran homelessness declined 10% in Oklahoma in 2018 alone. See Appendix B for trend analysis. <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-report/oklahoma/>
- Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Norman are participants of the national Built for Zero program to end veteran and chronic homelessness. <https://www.community.solutions/what-we-do/built-for-zero>
- An initiative to implement a Social Impact Bond outcome-based end payer system “Pay For Success” (braiding of private and public dollars) addressing youth homelessness has been receiving federal technical assistance since 2016 and is gearing up to launch a project in 2019.

MEMBERSHIP

The Oklahoma Governor’s Interagency Council on Homelessness is a 26-member advisory body comprised of public, private, nonprofit, faith-based and tribal representatives working together to end homelessness in Oklahoma.

Greg Shinn, Chair

Mental Health Association Oklahoma

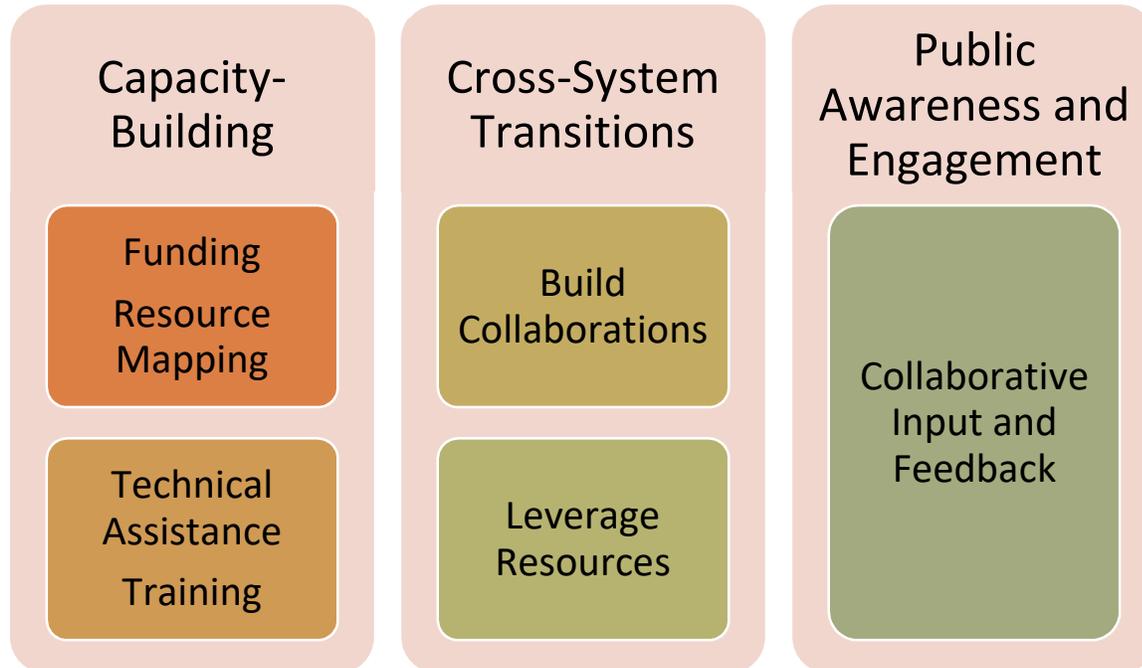
Suzanne Williams, Vice-Chair	Ok Dept. of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Janelle Bretten, Secretary	Office of Juvenile Affairs
Jerod Shadid, Parliamentarian	City of Oklahoma City, Planning Department, CoC
Ed Long, Past Chair	Cross Sector Innovations
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(Shirley) Marisa New	Oklahoma Department of Health
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Cale Powers	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Daniel Straughan	The Homeless Alliance
Gregory Beben	Legal Aid of Oklahoma
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	Oklahoma Health Care Authority
	Oklahoma Department of Education
	Governor's Office
Rebekah Zahn	Lead Staff Liaison, OK Department of Commerce

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS

METHODOLOGY

Over 650 stakeholders from across the state contributed in the planning process by participating in a systems analysis survey. This non-scientific survey was distributed to individuals and organizations serving Oklahomans experiencing homelessness in November-December 2018 and was designed to hear from the public sector and those with boots on the ground, policy-makers, local units of government, funders, and tribes on homeless prevention, wrap around services, system barriers and gaps and what is working well. This feedback along with comments from GICH members were compiled in to this plan to build a framework that is data-driven that builds on the core tenets of the GICH's vision. (The survey results can be found on our website at <http://gich.ok.gov/>.)

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Capacity Building: Ensure a strong homeless advocacy system is statewide with uniform policies which are data-driven focused on homeless prevention, Housing First, a continuum of care and wrap around services. The emphasis will be on increasing and sustaining funding with strong project management support, resource mapping, providing technical assistance, and offering training in evidence-based practices to build capacity in the non-profit, governmental, tribal and private sectors.

Cross-System Transitions: Work across public and private systems of care to ensure there is a shared and strategic vision to address homelessness¹ that is data-driven. The attention of this goal will be targeted at building collaborations for better discharge planning across all systems (including the criminal justice and health care systems) and leveraging resources for increased partnerships on projects and infrastructure to transition individuals in to permanent, safe affordable housing.

Public Awareness and Engagement: Involve all of Oklahoma in a robust conversation to ensure that there is genuine collaboration and meaningful engagement. The efforts will be on increasing the awareness of GICH and its partners, advocacy to strengthen our voice and to provide support to local providers across the State, and to intentionally include in all efforts those experiencing homelessness so that their voice is heard and represented in the decision-making process.

The GICH will identify, track and report key performance measures associated with the strategic priorities goals, objectives, and action steps. This process will be strategic, measurable, attainable, results-oriented and with specific time frames. Progress will be reported at each Council meeting and regularly updated at <http://gich.ok.gov/> and can be found on Appendix C.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

We know that the challenges that we face must be acknowledged so that effective decisions can be made. The prominent barriers that will continue to be addressed through targeted and strategic discussions so that progress can be made are:

- Lack of safe affordable housing
- Lack of funding for wrap around services
- Cross-system coordination, data tracking, discharge planning and referral processes
- Identifying gaps in services through ongoing input from those who have previously experienced homelessness and from diverse populations
- Replication, implementation and scaling of evidence-based practices that are known to be effective
- Ongoing support for the rural communities

¹ Appendix D and E are a high-level overview of the homeless definition by HUD based on four categories under which individuals and families may qualify as homeless. These categories include: 1) literally homeless; 2) imminent risk of homelessness; 3) homeless under other Federal statutes; and 4) fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence. Appendix F is a tip sheet to determining homelessness status of youth. The U.S. Department of Education and McKinney Vento define homeless youth as youth who “lack a fixed, regular, and nighttime residence” or an “individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is a) a supervised or publically operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations; b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill; or c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.” This definition includes both youth who are unaccompanied by families and those who are homeless with their families.

ENVIRONMENT

Understanding the environment that we are in is crucial so that our plans are not static and can be used systemically to coordinate and align resources and actions in a more fluid, comprehensive and strategic manner. 2019 brings opportunity in Oklahoma with new administration in the Governor's office and has a dramatically new state legislature. With that there is both more hope and some uncertainty about the state budget and continuing resources for state agencies and service providers. The cities of Tulsa and Oklahoma City are simultaneously developing multi-year strategic plans to end and prevent homelessness. Criminal justice reform is at the forefront of all discussions. The two largest Housing Authorities are embracing new strategies such as Rental Assistance Demonstration and Choice Neighborhoods to update an aging infrastructure. The Oklahoma Coalition for Affordable Housing is leading the movement to ensure that all Oklahomans flourish in safe affordable homes and promoting economic development and unit production. The GICH along with its cohorts are becoming more data-driven and decisions are being based on evaluations and performance measures.

Two comprehensive assessments that have had significant impact in our strategic planning are the economic impact of the Oklahoma Affordable Housing Act between 2015-2018 (<https://affordablehousingcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/oklahomas-affordable-housing-act-tax-credit-economic-impact-9-2018.pdf>) and the recently updated Statewide Housing Needs Assessment (<http://oklahomahousingneeds.org/>)

STRATEGIC APPROACH

The role of GICH is to address the challenges of those experiencing homelessness and the providers who serve them. Though we are not a direct service provider or a funder, our impact is woven throughout the system by leading the way in policies and practices through strategic planning and guidance. The three strategic priorities—capacity building, cross-system transitions, and public awareness and engagement—will be managed through activities and plans that evolve throughout the process of assessment, strategy formulation, operational planning and action steps and evaluation. (Refer to appendix C.) We will lead these efforts to reach our vision that every individual experiencing homelessness attains self-sufficiency, increases their employment and education, and is contributing to the community. That no one person's potential is wasted. And that the overall economic impact of homelessness is not overlooked, not only on a local but global perspective. These are ambitious yet measurable goals that will push us forward towards our mission to prevent and end homelessness in Oklahoma for the next five years.