

CTOSH Listserv Survey Summary

By Jenn Davis

In April and May 2006, Dr. Craig Scott and Dr. Laurie Lewis and their research team sent a survey to members of the CTOSH listserv, asking for their feedback. Participants were asked questions about their listserv use and perceptions of its value. Of the 107 listserv members, 44 completed the survey for a response rate of 41%. A summary of their responses follows.

Participants' experience with the network of homeless service providers in Austin/Travis County ranged from less than one year (7.7%), between one and five years (56.4%), between five and 10 years (17.9%), to more than 10 years (17.9%). One third of participants reported never attending Homeless Task Force meetings (33.3%), while 28.2% attend a few meetings a year, 30.8% attend a majority of meetings, and 7.7% attend every meeting. Finally, 2.6% of participants reported never participating in activities involving members from other homeless service organizations, while 17.9% participate in these events rarely, 41.0% participate sometimes, and 38.5% participate regularly.

When asked about the ways in which they use the CTOSH listserv, a majority of participants (84.1%) reported *reading* listserv email frequently; a few reported sometimes reading emails (6.8%) and several reported infrequently reading emails (9.1%). However, only 20.5% of participants reported frequently *sending* email to the listserv, while 22.7% reported sometimes sending email, and more than half reported only infrequently sending email to the listserv (56.8%).

An overwhelming majority of participants value the listserv as an effective means of information dissemination and communication within the network of homeless service providers. Their responses to these questions are detailed in the table below. 75% or more felt the CTOSH listserv is a valuable tool for disseminating information, that it is the most effective means they have for spreading information to other providers, that it is a valuable way to receive information, and that it is the most effective means they have for obtaining information from other providers. 81% agreed that their ability to communication with others in this network is enhanced by CTOSH, and 88% indicated they would notice if the listserv were discontinued.

Participants were also asked if they had ever continued listserv conversations off the list in a face-to-face interaction, via telephone or private email, or with another method. Most participants indicated they had done this at least sometimes or even frequently (although about 25% of participants reported never taking a conversation off list). When doing so, email was the most used follow-up channel, followed by telephone, face-to-face meetings, and other.

Finally, participants were also asked their opinions about the name "CTOSH" for the listserv. Most participants were neutral on the issue (61.9%), but several liked the name (26.2%) and only a few did not like the name (11.9%). Nearly half the participants (47.6%) felt they would benefit from a more descriptive name in the future. Several participants offered suggestions for a new listserv name. Suggestions included:

- Community-List
- Bring Austin Home
- Austin homeless listserv
- Homeless Service Provider Network
- Austin HTF/HTF listserv
- Binthe know

In addition, most participants do not want to switch to a commercial listserv provider (66.7%) that might include advertising through the list.