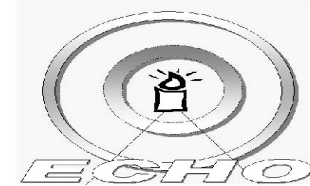


End Chronic Homelessness Organizing (ECHO) Committee



*Ending Chronic Homelessness
In Austin/Travis County*

Presented by Mitch Weynand and Jo Kathryn Quinn

September 6, 2006



Austin/Travis County Health & Human Services Department
Community Action Network's Homeless Task Force





Introduction I: Homeless Initiative

- Homeless Initiative

- July 1995: Ad Hoc Committee, the Homeless Resolution Task Force, convened
- January 1996: City Council established official task force on homelessness
- December 1996: “Comprehensive Plan for Addressing Homelessness”, released by the Homeless Task Force
- The City of Austin Homeless Self-Sufficiency and Responsibility Initiative in 1998

- Homeless Initiative Major Projects until 2004

- Downtown Austin Community Court - October 1999
- Substance Abuse Managed Service Organization (MSO) – January 1999
- Women and Children’s Shelter - October 2001
- New Downtown Shelter (ARCH) - April 2004



Introduction II: ECHO Process

- Chronology of Major ECHO Events (First Year Progress Report, p.24)
 - **Sept. to Dec. 2003:** Worked to develop the Plan
 - **Dec. 2003:** Approved by the CAN Homeless Task Force
 - **Sept. 2004:** Adopted by the Austin City Council
 - **Dec. 2004:** Held a kick-off event to announce the Plan to the public (News Conference)
 - **Jan. 2005:** Held the first ECHO quarterly meeting
 - **Nov. 2005:** Held the Educational Forum on homelessness (Public Forum)
 - **Jan. 2006:** Adopted ECHO Guiding Principles
 - **June. 2006:** Presented the First Year Progress to the CAN
 - **Aug. 2006:** Presented the First Year Progress to the Austin City Council Subcommittee
 - **Aug. 2006:** Presented the Plan and the First Year Progress to the Travis County Commissioners Court. The Court endorsed the Plan and ECHO Plan



What is Chronic Homelessness?

Defined by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as...

An unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, OR has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

Estimate **587**
chronic homeless
persons in
Austin/Travis
County

- Does not include families with children
- Must be living on the streets or in emergency shelter
- Must have a disability:
 - substance abuse,
 - serious mental illness,
 - developmental disability and/or
 - chronic physical illness or disability



Plan Entities

**Community Action
Network**



**Homeless Task Force
(2005-2006 Committees)**

- **Executive and Policy Advocacy Committee**
- **Resources and Programs Committee**
- **Community Education Committee**
- **Stand Down**
- **End Chronic Homelessness Organizing (ECHO) Committee**

Chair

**Steering Committee - Chair, Vice Chair,
Subcommittee Chairs, and At-Large member**

Subcommittees

Planning & Evaluation – Plan for Outcomes

Prevention – Prevent future homelessness

Exiting – Help people exit homelessness

Systemic Issues/Advocacy – Build the Infrastructure

Staff Support



Plan Recommendations

1. Plan for Outcomes: Develop plans to end, rather than manage, chronic homelessness



ECHO Subcommittee
Planning & Evaluation

2. Close the Front Door: Prevent future homelessness



Prevention

3. Open the Back Door: Help people exit homelessness



Exiting

4. Build the Infrastructure: Address the systemic problems that lead to poverty and homelessness



Systemic
Issues/Advocacy



Plan Recommendation 1

1. Plan for Outcomes: Develop plans to end, rather than manage, chronic homelessness

Develop better data on chronic homelessness

- Conduct homeless/chronic homeless survey
- Improve local Homeless Management Information System(HMIS)

Conduct pilot study of chronic homeless persons

- Provide services to help 30 chronic homeless persons exit homelessness
- Use data from pilot to refine and improve plan

Conduct outcome evaluation

- Issue progress reports on plan to end chronic homelessness
- Improve tracking of client outcomes with emphasis on providing people with housing



Plan Recommendation 2

2. Close the Front Door: Prevent future homelessness

Improve discharge planning for persons exiting public institutions

- Provide adequate services so that no one is discharged from a publicly funded institution into homelessness

Invest in long term prevention by supporting families

- Provide adequate housing and support to help families stay intact
- Help keep children from being placed into foster care

Provide adequate substance abuse and mental health treatment

- Help people maintain their housing and employment by providing them with critical services



Plan Recommendation 3

3. Open the Back Door: Help people exit homelessness

Provide adequate affordable housing with services

- Collaborate w/nonprofit, faith-based, & public housing groups
- “Rapid housing” program to move people out of shelter & into housing more quickly

Help homeless persons access income and employment

- Help people access SSI/SSDI and other benefits
- Provide opportunities for supported employment

Provide services using a System of Care approach

- Provide services based on individuals’ needs,
- Provide both formal and informal services, as well as volunteer mentoring and peer support

Increase outreach to persons w/chronic substance abuse problems



Plan Recommendation 4

4. Build the Infrastructure: Address the systemic problems that lead to poverty and homelessness

Implement changes to public policy

- Remove barriers that prevent chronic homeless persons from obtaining housing, services and public benefits
- Implement policies to target available resources to the problem

Engage the community

- Ending chronic homelessness is not easy and requires support from all the community:
 - **Government** – to change policies and make resources available
 - **Business** – to provide employment opportunities and resources
 - **Community** – to provide volunteer, support, assistance and resources

10 Year Action Plan

Years 1-2

- Establish the **Committee**
- Conduct **pilot study**
- Collect **data** on chronic homelessness
- Expand **housing** with supportive services
- Increase **income** for homeless persons
- **Prevent** future homelessness
- Issue **progress reports**

Years 3-5

- Further develop the activities of the Committee
- Evaluate** pilot study
- Continue to **improve data**
- Develop additional housing
- Increase the number of people accessing public benefits or earning a living wage
- Issue **progress reports**

Years 6-10

- Re-evaluate** plan and revise as necessary
- Monitor legislation** and **educate** state and federal elected officials
- Continue public relations campaign
- Continue to improve data
- Issue progress reports

Action Plan: Years 1-2

Planning & Evaluation

Exiting

❖ Improve data

- Data on the number of chronically homeless persons and their needs
- Outcomes of chronically homeless persons receiving services

❖ Report Progress/Outcomes

❖ Pilot Study – improve plan

❖ Discharge Planning

- Hospitals/ERs
- Correctional Institutions
- Mental Health Institutions
- Foster Care agencies

❖ Substance Abuse Treatment and/or Mental Health Services

❖ Expand housing with Supportive Services

❖ Increase homeless person's access to Income

- Homeless person's benefits such as SSI/SSDI
- Employment

❖ Other supportive services such as Outreach

❖ Conduct Pilot Study

❖ Policy Advocacy to End Chronic Homelessness

- Discharge Planning
- Housing with Supportive Services
- Increase Homeless person's Income
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment
- Other policy issues

❖ Funding/Resources

Prevention

Systemic Issues/Advocacy



ECHO Guiding Principles

- ECHO Mission
- ECHO Committee Structure
- ECHO Responsibilities
- ECHO Meeting



Mission

The mission of the ECHO Committee is to end chronic homelessness in Austin and Travis County. The overall role of ECHO is to identify specific strategies and to oversee ongoing planning, prioritization and implementation of plans to end chronic homelessness.

ECHO Structure

Steering Committee

ECHO Chair, Vice Chair, Subcommittee Chairs, and At-Large members

Staff

Subcommittees

Planning & Evaluation: Plans for Outcomes

Prevention: Prevent future homelessness

Exiting: Help people exit homelessness

Systemic Issues/Advocacy: Build the Infrastructure



Responsibilities

- *Provide leadership for strategic planning to end chronic homelessness in Austin/Travis County*
- *Help secure resources to end chronic homelessness*
- *Overcome policy barriers and develop new policies to end chronic homelessness*
- *Work with the US Interagency Council on Homelessness to address Federal level policy issues*
- *Work with the State Interagency Council for the Homeless to address State level policy issues*
- *Build community support for the Plan*



Meeting

- *Regular (Quarterly) Meetings:*
 - *ECHO meetings for all members will be held quarterly*
 - *Notice of meeting will be announced at least one month before the quarterly meeting*
- *Subcommittee (Monthly) Meetings:*
 - *Subcommittee meetings will be held monthly or as often as needed to complete objectives.*
 - *Committee members are expected to attend monthly meetings of the Subcommittee to which they belong. If a member cannot attend, they must notify the Chair/Co-Chair(s) of his/her Subcommittee and/or Staff person before the meeting to let them know that they will be absent.*
 - *Written notice, including an agenda, of each meeting shall be prepared by the Chair/Co-Chair(s) collaboratively with Staff and electronically sent at least one day before the meeting date.*



Summary of ECHO Activities

Successful First Steps

- Increased ARCH Night Sleeping Capacity by 70 Mats
- Opened the ARCH Resource Center on Weekends
- Received Funding for a Representative Payee Program for the Chronically Homeless
- Obtained Agreement to Use Spring Terrace Permanent Supportive Housing for a Pilot Project
- Initiated Austin Treatment and Housing Collaborative Grant Application to SAMHSA
- Supported the Respite/Recuperative Center for the Homeless



Successful Stories

- *FamilyEldercare*
 - *Suzie and Mary*
- *Community Voice Mail*
 - *Joe*
- *ECHO members*
 - *Donna Carter*
 - *John Nyfeler*



Summary of ECHO Activities

Information/Process Collaboration

- Held Two Community Awareness Events
- Published Homeless Task Force Website (www.AustinHTF.org)
- Created Brochure on Homelessness
- Joined Coalition for Housing Advocacy
- Supported Community Voice Mail
- Enhanced the Use of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
- Expand Collaborative Opportunities



Challenges

- Patience
- Maintaining the Momentum
- Community Education
- Leadership/Ownership
- Renewals vs. New programs
- Lack of Housing Stock
- Availability of Substance Abuse Treatment with follow-up Housing



Challenges (Cont'd)

- Coordination with Workforce providers
- Engaging Broad Base of Support
- Competition for Attention and Funding with other issue areas
- Good, Recent, Local Data and Accurate Counts
- Systemic Issues – Poverty, Mental Health, Health Care, Education, Living Wages



Interacting with other Community Planning Workgroups

- The Community Action Network
- The Homeless Task Force
- Re-entry Roundtable
- Mayor's Mental Health Task Force
- Basic Needs Coalition of Central Texas
- Housing Works



ECHO Recommendations

Support Permanent Supportive Housing – “Housing First”

- Make a long-term investment in **rapid, supportive, and permanent housing services**
- Approve the **\$55 million housing bond package** as currently proposed

Create a network-of-service and housing approach

- Consider allocating **additional local resources toward supportive services** in order to leverage additional federal funds for housing
- Local **public housing authorities** collaboratively participate in and develop **housing opportunities for chronically homeless persons**



ECHO Recommendations (Cont'd)

Prevent future homelessness

- Relax **housing prohibitions** against non-violent ex-offenders
- Provide **transition-planning services** for offenders with mental illness and persons who have been chronically homeless prior to incarceration
- Create targeted **affordable housing** for youth **aging out of foster care**

Promote self-sufficiency and individual responsibility

- Develop stronger relationships with **employment-related partners** to enhance our capacity to serve chronically homeless persons



Summary – What are we doing differently now as a result of having a 10-Year Plan

- Focus on Affordable Housing
- Including Supportive Services with all Housing
- Prevention – the Basic Needs Coalition
- Discharge Planning
- Have a Common Goal and Common Language
- More/Improved Communication/Networking
- More Involvement with Downtown Businesses
- Other Planning Bodies Focused on Chronic Homelessness
- Better Educated Public Officials
- Have Tool for Educating the Public
- Beginning to Think in Terms of Really Ending Homelessness
- Developing Comfort with Housing First/Rapid Housing Models

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7 Ways

to Help End Chronic Homelessness That do not Require Additional Funding

1. Establish funded slots for substance abuse treatment through the Downtown Austin Community Court to address unmet needs of chronically homeless persons.
2. Work with the local legislative delegation to support local applications for federal funding.
3. Designate local public safety and health and human service funding to projects that address recommendations in the Austin 10 Year Plan.
4. Give higher priority for funding under City administered housing programs to permanent supportive housing projects for homeless persons.
5. Provide current data on the extent and cost of homeless persons' use of Emergency Room and inpatient services at Brackenridge Hospital.
6. Participate in the District Attorney's Austin/Travis County Re-Entry Roundtable to improve discharge planning for persons released from State Jail and other correctional institutions.
7. Work with local housing authorities to encourage higher priority for housing to persons exiting homelessness



6 Ways

to Help End Chronic Homelessness That offer a Big Return on Investment

1. Add to the stock of permanent supportive housing
2. Provide discharge planning and case management to persons exiting public institutions (hospitals, jails, etc.)
3. Provide respite care for persons released from the hospital
4. Fund staff to serve as a “representative payee”
5. Provide matching funds for grants
6. Provide assistance with grant applications



Q & A

For more information about **the Austin Homeless Task Force and ECHO**, please visit the website at <http://www.austinhtf.org>

Note: You can download the Austin 10 Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and ECHO 1st Year Progress Report from this website