

## Austin's Action Plan to End Homelessness

In February 2017 Mayor Steve Adler and Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo partnered with the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) to convene a diverse group of organizations to urgently address the crisis of homelessness in Austin. ECHO led meetings with key stakeholders across the community and developed an action plan. The plan contains cost-saving solutions to expand the homeless response system and to ensure homelessness is a rare, brief, and one-time event for adults, youth, and families.

### **The Need**

Nearly 3,000 households are experiencing homelessness in Austin today. Young and old, with or without children, sick or living with a disability—they all need housing and supportive services to end their homelessness.

Many have been homeless or lacked stable housing for a long time, and others are entering homelessness for the first time. Our goal is to end homelessness for those currently experiencing it, reduce the number of people becoming homeless for the first time, and ensure no one experiences homelessness twice.

### **What Works**

Our community knows how to end homelessness—because of Austin's commitment, many veterans, youth, and families are connected to a home every day. Last year, 1,500 people moved from homelessness to housing.

- Partners and stakeholders **collaborate daily** as one system to best serve clients.
- We use a **shared intake system** that assesses a person's needs and connects them to housing and services.
- Thirty-five agencies use a **community-wide database** that tracks client needs, community progress, and outcomes.
- We **partner** with landlords and property management companies to secure housing opportunities for everyone regardless of barriers.

### **The Solution**

We must build a system that is broad enough to meet the needs of everyone experiencing homelessness in Austin. With increased support and resources, we can connect every person and family experiencing homelessness to housing, jobs, healthcare, and other support services.

Ending homelessness does not mean that a person or family will never experience homelessness again, but rather that as a community we have a comprehensive response that ensures homelessness is rare and brief.

## Solutions to End Homelessness in Austin



### **Outreach & Shelter**

- Improve outreach through better coordination, standardization, and shared data
- Increase mobile outreach to more people experiencing homelessness
- Create additional small, low-barrier shelters throughout Austin and Travis County
- Ensure outreach and shelter services act as bridges to housing
- Expand family reunification services



### **Housing & Support Services**

- Scale proven solutions like rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing
- Create more low-barrier, low-cost housing opportunities in the rental market
- Create policies that increase the availability of affordable, low-barrier housing
- Strengthen connections to mainstream benefits, healthcare, substance use treatment, and other support services



### **Addressing Disparities**

- Address inequalities that place certain groups at higher risk of homelessness, including involvement with the criminal justice system
- Research and address barriers to maintaining permanent housing
- Engage people who have experienced homelessness in system leadership
- Provide access to housing in geographically dispersed, high opportunity areas



### **Effective System Response**

- Increase coordination among all agencies working to end homelessness
- Expand use of system-wide performance measures to improve programs
- Increase staff access to training, development, and technology
- Coordinate alignment of prevention programs



### **Community Commitment**

- Create sustainable funding streams to address housing programs and support services

- Build increased support by government, nonprofits, businesses and the community as a whole to provide invaluable resources, volunteer time, and creative solutions
- Partner with faith communities, foundations, and the private sector to leverage their resources, expertise, and passion to end homelessness

## Targeted Initiatives in Austin

Different populations experiencing homelessness face unique challenges.



### **Veterans**

- At least 81 veterans are experiencing homelessness in Austin today.
- We have a nationally recognized system that connects veterans experiencing homelessness to housing within 90 days.
- This system was built with the leadership of Mayor Adler, a surge of federal funds and local philanthropy dollars, and strong partnerships with landlords and service providers.



### **Youth**

- 341 youth are experiencing homelessness in Austin today.
- Austin was chosen as one of 10 communities nationwide to demonstrate how to end and prevent youth homelessness. The community received \$5.2 million to undertake the project.



### **Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness**

- Over 1,200 people are experiencing chronic homelessness in Austin.
- Austin is one of a few communities nationwide implementing a Pay for Success initiative. This program will eventually house 250 people experiencing chronic homelessness who frequently interact with the healthcare and criminal justice systems.
- The project will be implemented over 5 years and will have \$17 million in investments from the City of Austin, Travis County, and others.



### **Families**

- At least 300 families are experiencing homelessness in Austin today.
- Our community is developing an action plan to end family homelessness.

## About ECHO

The Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) is the lead agency that plans and implements community-wide strategies to end homelessness in Austin and Travis County. We are the backbone for homeless services and work closely with nonprofits and government agencies to coordinate assistance for people experiencing homelessness in our community. ECHO manages data on homelessness and advocates for just policies and adequate funding to assist those in need. We believe it is the community's responsibility to provide a compassionate response and ensure homelessness is rare, brief, and only happens once.

Our **Mission** is to provide dynamic, proactive leadership that engages policymakers and the community to end homelessness.

Our work:

- We are designated by the community to act as the lead agency for **coordinating federal funding dedicated to ending homelessness**. ECHO strives for strategic and effective use of that funding to improve outcomes.
- We **coordinate the system** that connects individuals who are homeless to agencies and services, and we conduct assessments and provide referrals.
- We manage the **Homeless Management Information System**, a database used by 34 partners that tracks the needs of those experiencing homelessness and is used to monitor and evaluate system performance.
- We work with property owners and managers to develop and maintain a portfolio of **housing options**.
- We **engage a diverse community of experts** and facilitate workgroups and task forces to create and implement strategies for system change.
- We **educate and train** stakeholders and community members about the best practices for ending homelessness.
- We conduct research, write reports, and work on **public policy** to advance our mission.
- We **advocate** at City Hall and with other community leaders for adequate funding and policies to address homelessness in Austin. We are a resource to the media and strive to increase public awareness on the issue of homelessness.

ECHO is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2011. ECHO has 28 staff members working in all areas of homelessness policy, planning, and services.