

COVID19 Updates & Report-outs w/ Homeless Service Providers

Friday May 22, 2020 9:00 AM

Barrera, Patricia <Patricia.Barrera@austintexas.gov>; Kelly White <kwhite@safeaustin.org>; Julia Spann <jspann@safeaustin.org>; natasha.burton@anewentry.org; Monique Coleman <Monique.Coleman@traviscountytx.gov>; Karman, Vella <Vella.Karman@austintexas.gov>; Kathleen.Ridings@uss.salvationarmy.org; Greg McCormack (GMcCormack@frontsteps.org); Matthew Mollica <matthewmollica@austinecho.org>; Darlynn Cardona-Beiler <Darlynn.Cardona-Beiler@integralcare.org>; susan.mcdowell@lifeworksaustin.org; Kent Herring <KHerring@familyeldercare.org>; Jo Kathryn Quinn <jkquinn@caritasofaustin.org>; Peter Daniels <Peter.Daniels@anewentry.org>; Dawn Handley <Dawn.Handley@integralcare.org>; Laura Sovine <Isovine@austinrecovery.org>; Darrin Acker <dacker@cforr.org>; rteich@foundationhomeless.org; jlong@casamarianella.org; tnichols <tnichols@frontsteps.org>; Justine Price <jjustine.price@wilco.org>; Mercer, Tim <Tim.Mercer@communitycaretx.org>; Mercer, Timothy I <tim.mercer@austin.utexas.edu>; Kuang, Audrey <Audrey.Kuang@communitycaretx.org>; Chris Baker <chris@toofound.org>; Shontell Gauthier <SGauthier@familyeldercare.org>; Christine Laguna <Christine.Laguna@integralcare.org>; Robert P. Dominguez <robert.dominguez@integralcare.org>; Foss, Lara <Lara.Foss@austintexas.gov>; Soleece Watson <soleece.watson@anewentry.org>; Cacki Young <Cacki.Young@Foundcom.org>; Amber Fogarty <amber@mlf.org>; Alan Graham <alan@mlf.org>; Valdez, Pete [Community Court] <Pete.Valdez@austintexas.gov>; Kingham, Robert <Robert.Kingham@austintexas.gov>; mark@sunriseaustin.org; Karen Dorrier <Karen.Dorrier@integralcare.org>; Myles, Michelle <Michelle.Myles@austintexas.gov>; Johnson-Smothers, Akeshia <Akeshia.Johnson-Smothers@austintexas.gov>; Kirscht, Estella <Estella.Kirscht@austintexas.gov>; Niki Kozak <nikikozak@austinecho.org>; Kate Moore <katemoore@austinecho.org>; Sowinski, Jennifer <Jennifer.Sowinski@austintexas.gov>; Teri Yates <teriyates@austinecho.org>; Katie Rose <katierose@austinecho.org>; Christopher.Shorter@austintexas.gov; barbara@poppeassociates.com; matthewdoherty.consulting@gmail.com; mwhite@housinginnovations.us; Larisa Corder <larisacorder@austinecho.org>; angelhouse@austinbaptistchapel.com; Axton Nichols <axtonnichols@austinecho.org>; Cate Graziani <cgraziani@harmreductiontx.org>; chrisharris101 <chrisharris101@gmail.com>; Sarah Duzinski <sarahduzinski@austinecho.org>; ELT <ELT@NETORGFT2096939.onmicrosoft.com>; Powell-Evans, Simon <Simon.Powell-Evans@austintexas.gov>; Korey Darling <Korey.Darling@traviscountytx.gov>; Lawrence Lyman <Lawrence.Lyman@traviscountytx.gov>; Elizabeth Baker <Elizabeth.Baker@integralcare.org>; ericka.robinson@anewentry.org; Mark Hilbelink <mhilbelink02@yahoo.com>; Patti McCabe pmccabe@casamarianella.org; kevin@mlf.org; Irit Umani <Irit@TrinityCenterAustin.org>; wthurman@utexas.edu; Craig, Ken <Ken.Craig@austintexas.gov>; mark@marklittlefield.com; Megan Podowski <mpodowski@caritasofaustin.org>; Rohlich, Amanda <Amanda.Rohlich@austintexas.gov>; David Gomez <David.Gomez@integralcare.org>; Shlachter, Zack <Zack.Shlachter@austintexas.gov>; Bronwyn Towart <bronwyn.towart@lifeworksaustin.org>; Whitney Bright <whitneybright@austinecho.org>; Melissa Wheeler <melissawheeler@austinecho.org>; Quiana Fisher QFisher@caritasofaustin.org

Meeting Recording:

Topic: COVID19 Updates & Report-outs w/ Homeless Service Providers (April 8-June 30 invite)

Date: May 22, 2020 09:00 AM Central Time (US and Canada)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/->

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Meeting Agenda

Austin/Travis County

COVID19 Updates & Report-outs w/ Homeless Service Providers
May 22th Agenda



City of Austin / Austin Public Health



Implementation Team Updates



Agency Updates



Wrap Up – Next Call: Monday, May 25th @ 9:00am

Meeting Notes:

COA – Laura Foss

<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/austins-homeless-strategy-covid-19-support>

- 2712 confirmed COVID-29 cases in Travis County; 937 recovered; and 83 deaths
- Demographic information on cases available at <http://www.austintexas.gov/covid19>
 - Using the same data from Wednesday-at least 46 individuals experiencing homelessness have tested positive, including 24 that have recovered.
 - The count of cases among people experiencing homelessness is likely an undercount due to private labs and providers not necessarily recording each person's housing status when they test.
 - Austin Public Health launched an online enrollment form for free COVID-19 testing
 - Form will allow people to take self-assessment to determine eligibility and schedule a free test without a medical provider referral
 - <http://www.austintexas.gov/covid19>
 - Click “self-assessment” button to create an account and complete the questionnaire listing your symptoms
- Austin Public Health published a Color-Coded Chart
 - To help residents understand the stages of risk during pandemic, and

- To provide recommendations on what people should do to stay safe
- New Risk based guidelines
 - 5 distinct stages of risk
 - 1=Lowest threat stage to
 - 5=Most serious threat stage
- With recommended behaviors for each stage of risk
- Access it here <https://austintexas.gov/news/new-risk-based-guidelines-help-community-stay-safe-during-covid-19-pandemic>
- Order from Austin/Travis County Health Authority stating **masks when outside the home or in public are recommended**
 - Physical distancing of at least 6 feet between individuals is still recommended
- Quarantine and Alternate Facilities
 - Pro-Lodges 1-4 are operational
 - All ProLodges are secure and not open to the public
 - If any agency is interested in learning more about the Pro-lodge operations and services please contact Robert at Robert.Kingham@austintexas.gov
 - If other programs have capacity to work with people staying at Pro-Lodge sites, please contact Vella Karmen, vella.karmen@austintexas.gov
- Eating Apart Together (EAT); Food access for people experiencing homelessness
 - Since the beginning of this initiative we have delivered to people experiencing homelessness;
 - 21,406 prepared meals,
 - 6,000 bags of shelf stable foods,
 - 5,790 shelf stable meals,
 - 11 pallets of bottled water,
 - 3,000 1gallon jugs of water,
 - 150+ bags of dog food,
 - 2,000 face masks,
 - 3,000 rolls of toilet paper,
 - Hygiene and feminine hygiene products, and
 - Thousands of COVID19 educational flyers
 - Central Texas Food Bank utilizing City of Austin RAISE funds to provide 3 additional weeks of shelf stable meal bags
 - Austin received it's first shipment May 21st
 - The remaining shipments are May 28th, June 4th, and June 11th
 - The agreement will allow the EAT initiative to increase the amount of shelf stable food bags going out to people experiencing homelessness
 - And some of those meals will go to those who are recently housed
 - The Convention Center and Parks and Recreation staff
 - Producing 1,000 shelf stable bags of food designated for individuals living in encampments outside of the downtown core

- Producing 1,000 shelf stable bags for those living unsheltered around the downtown core and individuals recently housed and enrolled in housing case management
 - EAT Initiative will continue to investigate food access needs for those experiencing homelessness
 - To determine the scope and length of need as a response to COVID19
 - Austin Resource Recover
 - Increased trash picking to every day at Violet bag location to accommodate trash needs associated with EAT initiative
 - The EAT 123 survey
 - Include information on encampment trash pickup needs
 - EAT has the hopes of providing or increasing trash pickup in the identified locations
 - Or send information to Michelle.miles@austintexas.gov
 - If you want to participate in any aspect of Eating Apart Together Initiative Zach Shlachter at zack.shlachter@austintexas.gov
- Communications
 - Homeless Communications Team's working on a project to text those experiencing homelessness notifications;
 - About COVID19,
 - How to stay safe,
 - How to access services, and
 - How to meet needs
 - There are parameters on messaging and the frequency of messaging but
 - Group text is available to those experiencing homelessness
 - If your agency has provided phones that have texting plans (does not have to be Smart Phones) and are interesting in participating in this program email laura.foss@austintexas.gov
 - Took another 2,000 educational flyers to the convention center to be added to the basic needs bags regarding;
 - How to mitigate the spread of COVID19,
 - How to get medical attention, and
 - How to access services
 - If you want a hard copy or digital copy email laura.foss@austintexas.gov
 - A pdf can be sent to you or
 - As many hard copies as you'd like can be delivered to you
 - Joint Information System at EOC has launched an advertising campaign for Austin Public Health Online Enrollment Form
 - Number of visits to that cite and
 - Number of tests performed are on the rise
 - Emergency Operations Center will be closed tomorrow-Saturday, Sunday, and Monday for they holiday
 - Will resume normal operations on Tuesday

- Downtown Austin Community Court Update (DACC)
 - Continue to offer walk-in triage case management services 8am-5pm Monday through Friday
 - Triage case manager provides flyers to all clients with information on COVID-19 and safety planning
 - May 20th and 21th they served 48 individuals
 - And since March 16th they have served 949 individuals, an average of 19 individuals a day
 - Individuals accessing basic hygiene resources or client's case managers reach remotely are not factored into this number
 - On Friday the 15th DACC obtained 24 food kits from the Austin Convention Center
 - To provide to the housed case managed clients
- City of Austin's Homeless COVID19 Support Strategy-Housing First Request for Qualifications Statements (RFQS) Solicitation
 - Extended for 2 weeks
 - To establish a contract with one or more qualified nonprofit or governmental agencies to provide operation management and support services for converted motels
 - Will close on May 28th at 2 PM to Central Purchasing
 - More information on the solicitation and how to apply can be found here https://www.austintexas.gov/financeonline/account_services/solicitation/solicitation_details.cfm?sid=134322
- COVID19 Response Funding Implementation Team
 - Been charged with developing a plan on how best to align the various funding sources for COVID19 response
 - Looking for feedback from local homelessness service providers
 - 11 question survey
 - Should take less than 20 minutes to complete
 - To access follow this link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8JTWHJM>
 - Please forward the link to help spread the word to other local service providers who may want to be involved
- Travis County Update
 - Seeking applications from Agencies for the use of Travis County's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
 - Approximately \$700,000 to respond to COVID19 in Travis County
 - Due today at 5pm
 - Application can be accessed here <https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/health-human-services/cdbg>

Agency Updates

None

ECHO Updates:

- Current Structure of the Austin's COVID19 Homelessness Plan
 - Headed by the Project Management team
 - With leadership from the City of Austin, ECHO, and the consultants the city has contracted with
 - Underneath the Management team are the
 - Hotel/Motel Implementation Team
 - Emergency Shelter and Unsheltered Implementation Team
 - Funding Strategies Implementation Team
 - Rehousing Strategies Implementation Team
 - All teams are tasked with all or some of the Austin COVID19 Homelessness Response Plan Objectives
- The Emergency Shelter and Shelter Implementation Team
 - Working on Objectives 1, 4, and 5
 - Recent Discussions
 - Implementation of the initial assessment of technical assistance needs for emergency shelters was completed (thank you to the shelters that provided information)
 - The information will go up to the Project Management Team and
 - Krista will continue to be in touch with the shelters to help with any resources and provide technical assistance where needed
 - The need for testing specifically for shelter and congregate settings (and how to scale up)
 - Currently there is a limited amount of test kits and resources to test everyone coming in to our shelters
 - Testing only captures one point in time
 - Clients are coming and going from shelter and there's the potential risk they are being exposed and coming back to the shelter
 - How to test service providers who also need testing
 - Completed the staffing for Pro-lodge 4
 - At capacity
 - Those in the lodge were prioritized based on high risk factors and medical conditions
 - With the help of the medical providers in the community (thank you for those who assisted)
 - Next Steps
 - Creating a document with all the COVID19 CDC Guidelines
 - So CoC Service Providers only need one place to look for updates or information
 - Gathering more information to support the needs of the unsheltered population and outreach workers i.e.

- Ensure they have a working knowledge of CDC guidance and COVID19 educational materials
 - Understand the specific community workflows on getting people into protective housing
 - Coordinating schedules and locations of where outreach partners are going
 - To reduce duplication and
 - To identify locations with unmet needs to coordinate coverage in those workgroups
- Hotel Motel implementation Team
 - Discussions
 - Pro-lodge resident surveys to get feedback on services and how things are going
 - Pro-lodge 4 is at capacity
 - Looking to build that out and
 - Continue to get our venerable populations into some type of protective lodging
 - Participant agreement draft is being worked on
 - So those who come into the Pro-lodges have an agreed upon set of rules and structures
 - Working on discharge criteria and protocols
 - Incentives to refer lower risk individual out of the Pro-lodges to
 - Congregant shelter, or
 - Light touch or
 - Diversion to other housing opportunities
 - Review of how to build out behavior health services at Pro-lodges
 - Staffing capacity is a huge talking point
 - Decisions
 - Participant agreement is being drafted, will be reviewed, and hopefully approved
 - Program agreement needs to be established for those who get programing out of the Pro-lodges
 - Participant surveys went out yesterday
 - Responses by next meeting
 - Proposal to get dedicated behavioral health staff onsite
 - Next Steps
 - Continuing conversations to coordinate services at Pro-lodges
 - Figuring out onsite behavioral health services
 - Working on getting feedback on participant agreement once we have the draft sent out
- Funding Strategies Implementation Team
 - Discussions (on)
 - Feedback from completed AHAC survey

- Feedback from providers
 - Continuing to monitor the feedback that will come in as the survey wraps up as well as the listening section later today
- Decisions
 - Recommendations for the Project Management team are to use the CDBG and ESG Cares funds for projects that assist individuals experiencing homelessness
 - Two major directives for this funding;
 - ESG be used for Rapid Rehousing assistance as it can provided longer assistance than CDBG and
 - CDBG be used for homelessness prevention and diversion assistance as it is more flexible
 - Will be working with the Rapid Rehousing team today looking at their designs
 - Viewing incoming feedback and deciding how to disburse the funds
- Rehousing Strategies Implementation Team

*Their meeting takes place during this meeting; hence no one from said team is able to provide updates

*Has a cross-section of service providers from our community from City Government and ECHO

 - Discussion
 - Working on program design for interventions needed to rehouse those in Pro-lodges, shelters, or are unsheltered
 - There is a first draft for Rapid Rehousing design
 - Continued discussion on eviction prevention needs
 - Talk about people needing PSH interventions
 - The Cares funding that came through Congress is not for PSH, so
 - Looking at creative ways to partner with the city and other private funding and way to bring PSH on line
 - One potential way to bring on more PSH is the Hotel/Motel strategy and RFQs and salutations for that work
 - Funding strategies and implementation team will be working to create a request for applications for
 - CDBG (flexible housing rental assistance pool) and
 - Rapid Rehousing through ESG
 - The Rapid Rehousing program design is being discussed by the rehousing strategies team and will be used to inform the requests for applications for the ESG funding and
 - Diversion interventions designed by rehousing strategies team will be used for requests for applications for CDBG funds

- DACA has identified diversion resources (prior to COVID) for Pro-lodge residents
 - Housing plans are being created by Integral Care and Front Steps staff for those who can resolve their homelessness through diversion resources
 - DACA is transitioning some residents out of the Pro-lodge and into PSH program that had capacity prior to COVID
 - Next Steps
 - Finalize the program design so funding can be released through RFA for RRH and diversion
 - Project Management Team
 - Discussions
 - How to shift the focus of implementation teams from crisis phase to implementation phase
 - How to align next steps from a response to strategic and align with the future
 - How to include people with lived expertise in all the decision-making processes across all the implementation teams
 - Making sure in all implementation teams and project management team that a racial equity lenses is being used for decision making and when trying to create an equitable system for those who experience homelessness
 - Talked about reports from those who experience homelessness (AHAC surveys)
 - Decisions
 - Approved funding recommendation from first CARES ACT dollars
 - ESG funds coming through TDAHCA will be coordinated through ECHO and will be for RRH
 - CDBG funds will be used for rental assistance
 - Next Steps
 - Help implementation team focus on the shift from the crisis response to the implementation phase
 - Help to get the voices of lived experience included in the implementation phase of the work
 - Continue to focus on racial equity lese of the response
 - People have been disproportionately impacted as it relates to COVID

*Our next call with be Wednesday the 27th due to Monday being a holiday

Chat Box

From Jordan Schmid to Everyone: 09:00 AM

I'm sorry in advance if my mic has an episode while I'm speaking

From jkquinn to Everyone: 09:03 AM

What stage of risk is Austin in right now?

From Andrew Willard to Everyone: 09:05 AM

Austin is currently in Stage 3: <https://austintexas.gov/page/covid-19-risk-based-guidelines>

From larafoss to Everyone: 09:13 AM

For demographic breakdowns and more information, you can visit the <http://austintexas.gov/covid19> web site

Risk based guidelines:

<http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/Risk%20Based%20Guidelines%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

If any agency is interested in learning more about the Pro-lodge operations and services please contact Robert at Robert.Kingham@austintexas.gov

If any programs have capacity to serve clients at these Pro-lodge sites, please contact Vella Karman at Vella.Karman@austintexas.gov

Please include information regarding trash pickup needs for encampments in the EAT Initiative 1,2,3 survey when food is distributed in the community or send this information to michelle.myles@austintexas.gov

If you are interested in participating in any aspect of Eating Apart Together please contact Zack Shlachter (zack.shlachter@austintexas.gov)

If your agency has provided phones that have texting plans, and you are interested in participating in the program, email me, Lara Foss at lara.foss@austintexas.gov

More information about the RFQS solicitation and how to apply can be found here: https://www.austintexas.gov/financeonline/account_services/solicitation/solicitation_details.cfm?sid=134322

Funding Implementation Team 11 question survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8JTWJHM>

From larafoss to Everyone: 09:13 AM

Travis County's Community Development Block Grant application: traviscountytexas.gov/images/health_human_services/Docs/cdbg/covid-19-response-application.pdf

From Stephanie Eaton-APH CDU to Everyone: 09:30 AM
will there be a call on Memorial Day?

From Katie Rose to Everyone: 09:30 AM
correct! ECHO is off on Monday