COVID19 Updates & Report-outs w/ Homeless Service Providers

Meeting Recording:

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

Meeting Recording:

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

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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

- 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


- 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 in 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](mailto: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](mailto: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 continuing 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 interested 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 From
    ▪ 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)
  o 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
  o May 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{th} they served 48 individuals
  o And since March 16\textsuperscript{th} 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
  o On Friday the 15\textsuperscript{th} 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
  o 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 28\textsuperscript{th} 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
  o Been charged with developing a plan on how best to align the various funding sources for COVID19 response
  o 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
  o 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.traviscountytx.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
  o To reduce duplication and
  o To identify locations with unmet needs to coordinate coverage in those workgroups

• Hotel Motel implementation Team
  o 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 Prolodges 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
        o Congregant shelter, or
        o Light touch or
        o Diversion to other housing opportunities
    ▪ Review of how to build out behavior health services at Pro-lodges
      • Staffing capacity is a huge talking point
  o 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
  o 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
  o 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

  o 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

  o 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
  o Next Steps
    • Finalize the program design so funding can be released through RFA for RRH and diversion
• Project Management Team
  o 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)
  o 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
  o 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 lense of the response
      • People have been disproportionately impacted as it relates to COVID

*Our next call will 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%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/8JTWHJM

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