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COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS ISSUES FINAL REPORT AFTER COMMUNITY CHARRETTE PROCESS

September 6, 2012 (Houston, Texas) [The Coalition for the Homeless](#) of Houston/Harris County issued a final report in August from the Charrette process it hosted in Houston, with support from the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH). More than 450 diverse stakeholders from the community participated in the Charrette including business leaders, homeless service providers, faith-based organization executives and consumers (those who are currently or have experienced homelessness). Among the participants were: City of Houston Houston Mayor Annise Parker; Bob Eury, President and CEO of Central Houston; Hank Rush, President and CEO of Star of Hope Mission; Frances Isbell, Chief Executive Officer, Healthcare for the Homeless – Houston; Tory Gunsolley, President and CEO, Houston Housing Authority; Tom McCasland, Interim CEO of Harris County Housing Authority; and Neil Rackleff, Director of the City of Houston Housing Department.

The two-day Charrette was broadly publicized and open to the public. The recommendation gathering process was facilitated as a “round table” discussion. Officials in the Houston, Harris County, and Fort Bend County region have worked for many years to prevent and end homelessness for its citizens. The Charrette process demonstrated that, while there has been great work accomplished, advocates need a comprehensive community plan to address the needs of the citizens. One woman, Twaunette Sharpe, spoke passionately about her experience as a recipient of services as a homeless person during the

Charrette, reminding the group at large, “We are not just data. We are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, nieces, cousins and friends of somebody.”

The six distinct issue areas discussed included: Integrating Housing and Services; Performance and Accountability; Right Sizing the Continuum of Care (CoC) Housing Models; Prevention and Diversion; Coordinated Access and Political Will and Advocacy. [The final report](#) details action steps to be taken for each issue area. On September 13, the final report recommendations will be presented to the Continuum of Care (CoC) steering committee. The committee will use the report as a tool to formulate a Community Action Plan to be in compliance with the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act. Houston, Harris and Fort Bend County must reduce the overall number of people experiencing homelessness; reduce the recidivism of people returning to homelessness, and reduce the length of time that people remain homeless. The final report can be found on the Coalition website at: http://www.homelesshouston.org/images/hh/HoustonCharrette_FinalReport_FINAL.pdf

“The findings from the Charrette will guide how the city approaches the solution to the complex issue of homelessness,” stated Mayor Annise Parker. “We are committed to ending homelessness in our city.”

Issue Area Recommendations - Highlights

Integrating Housing and Services – discussion at the Charrette focused on the fact that not all people who experience homelessness have the same level of need. There are individuals that may need some limited services such as job training, and others that may need services throughout their life.

Recommendation: combine services so that housing support is connected with the appropriate level of services.

Performance and Accountability

Recommendation: The community will set benchmarks to evaluate all the services that are being provided to the homeless community.

Right Sizing the Continuum of Care (CoC) Housing Models

Recommendation: Evaluate the housing and service options that are in currently in existence for the homeless community. Identify gaps and begin the effort to procure the needed housing services.

Coordinated Access – Recommendation: Once the Right-Sizing of the Continuum of Care Housing Model has been completed, service providers can have a common assessment tool to direct people to the agency that provides the specific services they need for self-sufficiency.

Building Political Will and Advocacy – great political will already exists within the city and participating county leadership teams. **Recommendation:** Homeless advocates must plan for succession of leadership and build an infrastructure of services that remains intact regardless of the political climate.

“We are delighted to have a blueprint of recommendations that come from community voices to share with the Continuum of Care committee,” stated Marilyn L. Brown, CEO and President of the Coalition for the Homeless. “The discussions addressed each of the six issue areas in detail with vetted action steps for each area. I am sure the CoC steering committee will find these recommendations valuable in developing a plan to prevent and end homelessness in Houston.”

ABOUT THE COALITION

The Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County was established in 1982, incorporated as a 501(c)(3) in 1988, and has evolved to be the lead agency coordinating the community response to homelessness in Houston. Under the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, passed in 2009, an entire community rather than individual service providers must demonstrate success in preventing and reducing homelessness. In 2011, HUD named Houston as a priority community. This designation recognizes the great need to transform Houston's existing homeless service system and the tremendous opportunity to make significant advances due to the commitment of homeless service and key community stakeholders, including both private and public contributors. For more information about the Coalition's efforts, visit www.homelesshouston.org.