

# Creating Strategies for Change



# Creating Strategies for Change

**Texas Homeless Network** (THN) provides support to agencies and communities that are building systems to end homelessness in Texas through education, resources, and advocacy.

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## Letter from the President

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Since its inception in 1991, Texas Homeless Network has worked with communities to develop systems to end homelessness. Over the years, our agency has provided communities the support necessary to fill gaps in services and housing so they can be successful. The past few years have not been an exception to this. THN continues to follow a strategy of focusing efforts where the need is highest in Texas. Following this model, THN's staff have provided invaluable assistance to Texas' rural and metropolitan regions. The support we enjoy with our members and partner communities allow us to succeed in our goal of helping Texas end homelessness. With this report, we are happy to share the story of these successes.

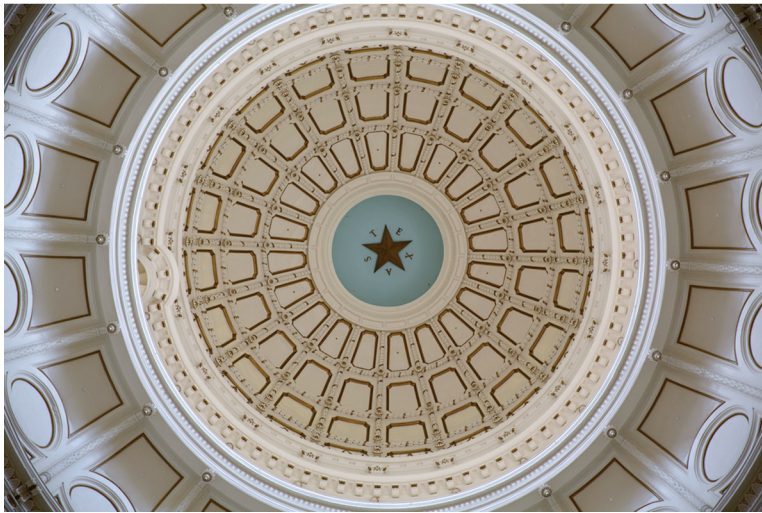
THN's role is to help make the jobs easier and more productive for those providing direct service, housing, and advocating ending homelessness. Over the past year, our staff has provided hundreds of hours of technical assistance to programs in over 150 counties and trained over 1,600 Texans working to end homelessness. Our staff provides this assistance to Texas communities through two major focus areas, the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care (TX BoS CoC) project and our Statewide Initiatives efforts.

The TX BoS CoC has enjoyed great success over the past year. In 2016, HUD awarded funding to 20 programs for Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Re-housing for a total of over \$5.2 million. As the TX BoS CoC lead agency, THN received over \$1 million in funding for CoC planning support activities and HMIS. Over the past three years, homelessness in the TX BoS CoC has decreased by nearly 20% through the hard work of CoC members throughout the state and THN staff.

Under the Statewide initiatives focus, THN has provided high-quality training, opportunities for direct advocacy, served as a VISTA state lead and represented members and partners at state government planning councils. One thing I'm very proud of is the impact of the conferences we organize each year. The Annual Conference on Ending homelessness and the Supportive Housing = Healthcare conference had over 600 attendees last year, and attendees were given access to high quality training and information they may not have otherwise had access to.

We are very proud of the fact that homelessness in Texas has decreased by 32% in the past five years and of our role in that success. However, we realize that there is much work ahead of us because there are still 23,000 Texans experiencing homelessness on any given day, many with critical health needs. We will continue this work with Texas communities and are excited to see what success lies ahead for our agency, Texas and our communities as we work to end Homelessness together.

Eric Samuels  
President & Chief Executive Officer



# Letter from the Board Chair

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A lot has been happening at Texas Homeless Network (THN). The THN Board named Eric Samuels President/CEO in September 2015 and his energy, experience, and enthusiasm have infected us all. I assumed the role of Board Chair in September 2016. Together, we worked with the board to develop a two-year plan to make sure we are supporting the organization in the three major areas of strategic direction, resource provision, and oversight. We are achieving this by strengthening our board capacity, diversifying our funding streams, and providing governance to the organization.

THN has two main functions. The first is to serve as the lead agency to the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC) that includes working with 215 counties on their efforts to solve homelessness. The second is the Statewide Initiatives that provides support to the 10 other CoCs through, among other things, their conferences, advocacy outreach, and data/research. With its offices in Austin, THN is the conduit between the rest of the state and the activities of state government and our elected officials. Especially during a legislative year, THN's role is critical in monitoring and informing all CoCs as to legislative matters and budget developments.

The 2017 THN Homelessness Awareness Day was one of the most successful advocacy events we've held to date. THN scheduled 50 visits for the 44 advocates who came from across the state. Our message to the legislators was simple; solving homelessness is possible and there are critical ways that legislation and the biennium budget can help. In non-legislative years, THN follows the activities of the Texas Interagency Council on Homelessness (TICH) helping them to fulfill the eight legislative mandates they have been given.

Compiling statistics, sharing best practices, hosting conferences and seminars, providing evidence-based best practices, and applying for system grant funding make THN the hub of the work to solve homelessness in Texas. To borrow a slogan, when it comes to homelessness, Don't Mess with Texas!

Marilyn L. Brown  
Chair, Board of Directors



# Who We Are and What We Do



**Texas Homeless Network** (THN) is a non-profit membership-based organization that has been helping communities strategically plan to prevent and end homelessness since 1991. THN serves as the host agency for the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care where we assist 215 counties through technical assistance, training, and development of a coordinated response to end homelessness. Through our Statewide Initiatives, we coordinate local and national advocacy efforts, data collection and research, and host an annual statewide conference.



# Strategies for Change

THN serves as the lead agency for the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care (TX BoS CoC). We strategically work within the counties assigned to the BoS CoC to create systems to end homelessness.

The TX BoS CoC is made up of all service providers, advocates, local government officials, and citizens who work to eliminate homelessness in 215 of Texas' 254 counties. The general members of the CoC elect a 15-member board of directors to govern. Working together, we find strategies that fit the specific needs of each community while meeting the overall goal of the TX BoS CoC.

## OUR GOALS:

- Reduce the length of time individuals and families experience homelessness to 30 days or less average length of time
- End Veteran and Chronic Homelessness by 2018
- Create a systemic response to homelessness that measures system performance, promotes participant choice, and have a coordinated entry system in place by January 2018
- End Family and Youth Homelessness by 2020

***We strategically work  
within the counties  
assigned to the BoS  
CoC to create systems  
to end homelessness.***

## DATA

The TX BoS CoC is committed to collecting and using data to drive program priorities and policy direction. We rely on the communities throughout our geographic area to help collect high quality data on homelessness by using the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), completing Housing Inventory Counts, and conducting Point-in-Time counts. The data collected through these methods help to produce reports that inform planning on a local, CoC, and national level.

The TX BoS CoC is the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) lead for the Balance of State Continuum of Care. The HMIS team ensures data integrity by providing technical assistance and training to staff using the system. Currently there are 102 agencies using HMIS.

HMIS is the information system designated by the Continuum of Care to comply with HUD's data collection, management, and reporting standards and used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness.

## THE TX BOS COC BOARD MEMBERS:

Hanna Adams, Central Texas  
Opportunities, *Brown County*

Holly Bates, Shelter Agencies for  
Families in East Texas (SAFE-T),  
*Camp, Delta, Franklin, Hopkins,  
Lamar, Morris, Red River, Titus  
Counties*

Elaine Brandon, Connections  
Individual and Family Services,  
*Comal County*

Nikki Brennan, Georgetown Housing  
Authority, *Williamson*

Rebecca Brune, San Antonio Area  
Foundation, *Atascosa, Bandera,  
Bexar, Blanco, Comal, Frio, Gillespie,  
Gonzales, Guadalupe, Karnes, Kendall,  
Kerr, Medina, and Wilson Counties*

Karen Chung, Council of State  
Governments Justice Center, *all 254  
counties in Texas*

Stephanie Chandler, United Way  
of Grayson County, *Cooke, Fannin,  
Grayson Counties*

Bobby Ehrig, Family Endeavors,  
*Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, Blanco,  
Comal, Frio, Gillespie, Gonzales,  
Guadalupe, Karnes, Kendall, Kerr,  
Medina, and Wilson Counties*

Jesse Elizondo, Homeless Issues  
Partnership, *Nueces County*

Chesley Knowles, Community  
Healthcore in Longview, *Bowie, Cass,  
Gregg, Harrison, Marion, Panola, Red  
River, Rusk, and Upshur Counties*

Julia Lash, City of Brownsville,  
*Cameron*

Kim Ogilvie, The Salvation Army –  
Texas Divisional Headquarters, *all 254  
counties in Texas*

William Reagan, Loaves and Fishes of  
the Rio Grande Valley, *Cameron and  
Willacy Counties*

Molly Voyles, Texas Council on Family  
Violence, *all 254 counties in Texas*

Chad Wheeler, Carpenter's Church,  
*Lubbock County*



# -Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

## POINT-IN-TIME TEXAS BALANCE OF STATE CONTINUUM OF CARE 2016



**2,667**  
Households were staying in emergency shelter.



**2,582**  
Households were staying in places not meant for habitation.



**1,183**  
Households were staying in transitional housing.



**6,432**  
People were homeless in the Texas Balance of State on the night of January 21, 2016.

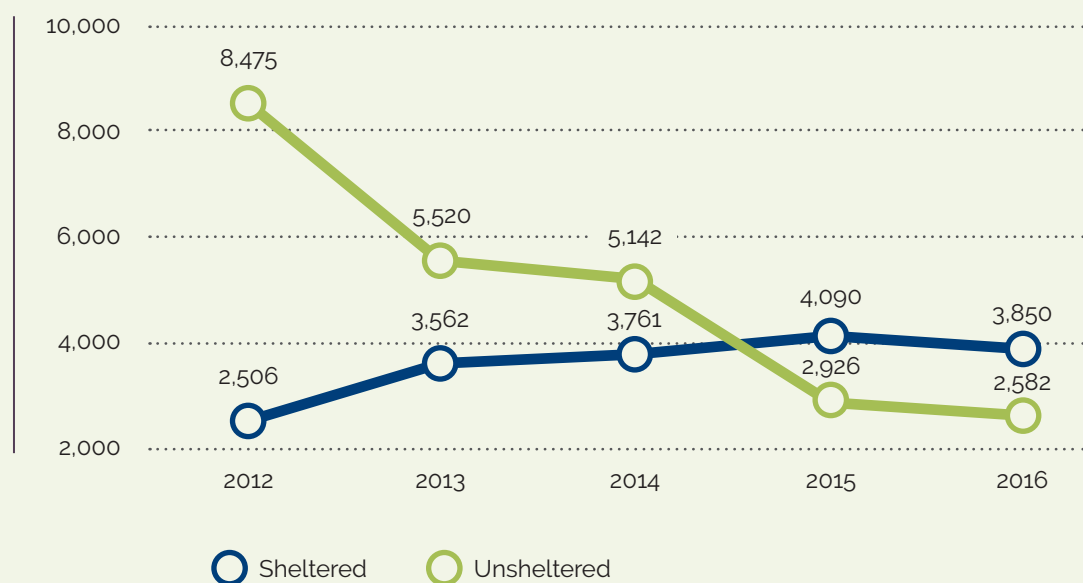


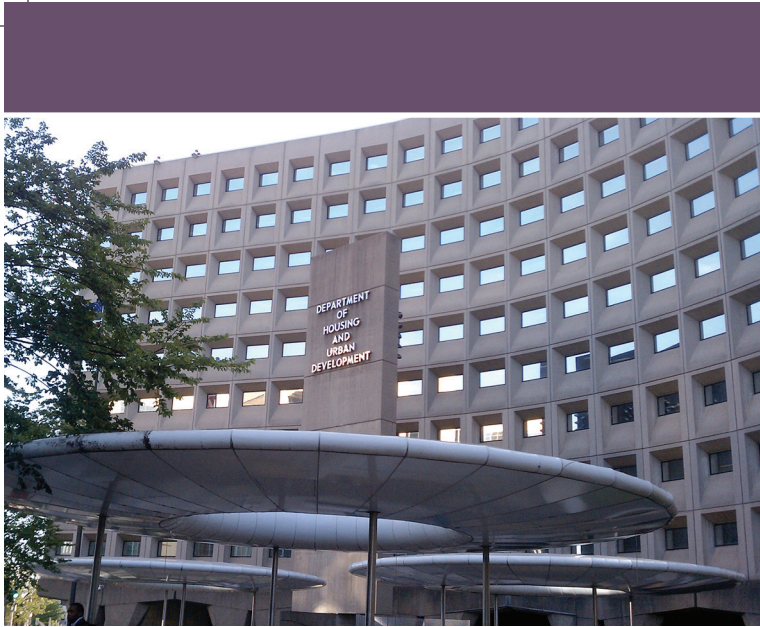
**21%**  
Were children under the age of 18.



**1%**  
Of all households were headed by a veteran of the United States military

PIT 2012 – 2016





# Strategies for Change

## CONFERENCES

THN hosts the only statewide conference on homelessness. Texas is a large state and the conference is a way to bring together everyone working to end homelessness. We learn from the successes communities are achieving as well as from the failures. The Texas Conference on Ending Homelessness brings together over 450 homeless service providers and advocates for three days of networking and learning best practices for communities to prevent and end homelessness.

For the past three years, THN has co-hosted the Supportive Housing = Healthcare Conference with CSH. We work with stakeholders from the housing development and healthcare sides to generate discussion on how to build new partnerships as well as strengthen existing partnerships.

## ADVOCACY

THN advocates on behalf of our state by keeping our elected officials up-to-date on homelessness in Texas. We compile statewide data to create an overview of homelessness in Texas. Presenting this to our elected officials at both the national and state level provides a consistent message. Each July we coordinate a meeting with our members of congress in Washington, D.C. and each biennium we host Homelessness Awareness Day at the Texas State Capitol.



"THN's sponsorship of the Texas Legislature's Homeless Awareness Day was outstanding! We were able to meet and talk with Representatives, Senators and staff from San Antonio/Bexar County. THN coordinated many of those meetings and provided support the day of the event to expand the list to include more elected officials than originally planned.

The pre meeting hosted by THN provided us with all the appropriate protocols and talking points we needed to make the meetings more productive. The talking points also provided us a springboard to expand the discussions to the local level. Many of the elected officials have asked us to follow with additional data and information. It was also an opportunity for us to build a personal relationship with the legislative staff.

We counted the day a total success and could never have done it on our own. Thanks to everyone at THN that made it happen." ~ Bill Hubbard, Executive Director, South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless

THN works to educate legislators on the progress Texas is making on preventing and ending homelessness while emphasizing our work is not done. We will continue to communicate the importance of funding from sources such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Homeless Housing and Services Program, and the Balance of State Continuum of Care Technical Assistance, to forward our progress.





# –Our Statewide Initiatives

## SOAR

THN serves as the SOAR State Lead and works with communities to implement the SOAR process through strategic planning, training, and technical assistance.

SOAR stands for SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR). Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) are income benefits administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) that also provide Medicaid and/or Medicare health insurance to eligible individuals. Case managers complete training on the SOAR process that leads to quality applications for eligible individuals who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Sixty-seven percent of SOAR claims are approved on initial application in an average of 101 days putting them on the path to recovery.



***Having statewide support  
and coordination is  
essential to keeping the  
SOAR effort in Texas strong  
and continuing to grow."***

—Suzie Brady, Austin SOAR Lead

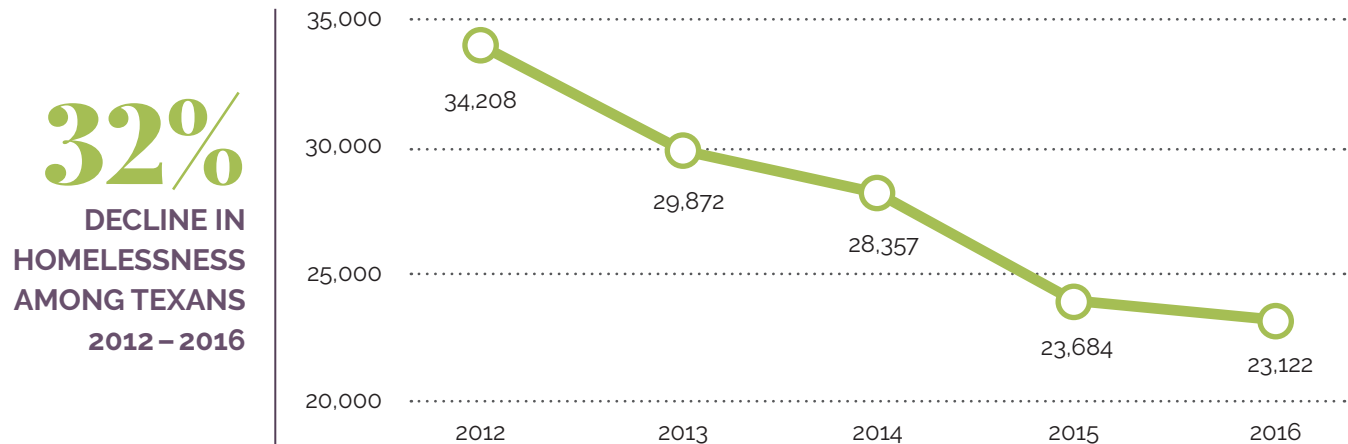
"I have been so appreciative of THN helping coordinate SOAR in Texas. The Basecamp (project coordination software) has been very helpful with connecting Local Leads and giving us the ability to assist people that ask us for assistance from other areas. It is so easy for people using the SOAR process to feel isolated and alone in their efforts—having statewide support and coordination is essential to keeping the SOAR effort in Texas strong and continuing to grow." Suzie Brady, Austin SOAR Lead

## VISTA PROJECT

THN serves as the state lead for VISTA projects related to homelessness throughout Texas. We partner with service providers, local homeless coalitions, and other community organizations that intersect with issues surrounding homelessness. Some of our current and previous projects include Continuum of Care planning, Coordinated Entry, SOAR (SSI/SSDI, Outreach, Access, and Recovery) implementation, coalition building, resource and program development. The AmeriCorps VISTA mission is to strengthen organizations that alleviate poverty through volunteering and the mobilization of resources. Our goal is to grow the VISTA program to 20 members serving across the state by 2018.

# 2016 Texas Statewide Homeless Count

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night in January. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that Continuums of Care conduct an annual count of homeless persons who are sheltered in emergency shelter and transitional housing on a single night. PIT data can provide insight into a community's homeless population and service gaps. It provides a "snap shot" of what homelessness looks like on a single night in a community.



**24 HOURS IN TEXAS  
POINT-IN-TIME COUNT, JANUARY 2016**  
23,122 People Counted

**50%**

**Adults had some barrier to housing.** Barriers include physical disability, serious mental illness, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse disorder, and domestic violence.



**1,309**

**Unaccompanied Youth.** Youth with no parent or guardian present were experiencing homelessness.



**2,297**

**Households with Children**  
Decrease of 1.5% from 2016.



**18%**

**Decrease** in people who are Chronically Homeless.



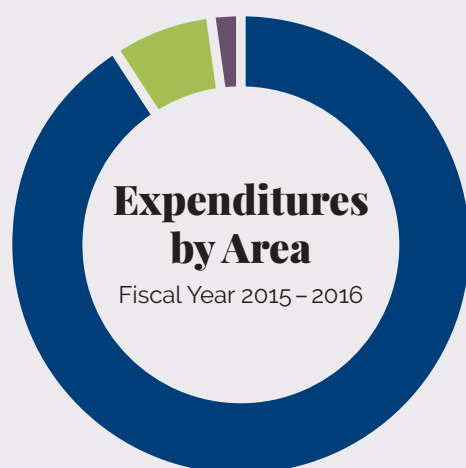
**26%**

**Decrease** in Veterans experiencing homelessness in Texas from 2015 (1,768 total Veterans).



# Financials

Texas Homeless Network would like to thank our members, TX BoS CoC partners, supporters, and government partners for supporting our mission to provide solutions to end homeless in Texas communities through education, resources, and advocacy.



**91%**

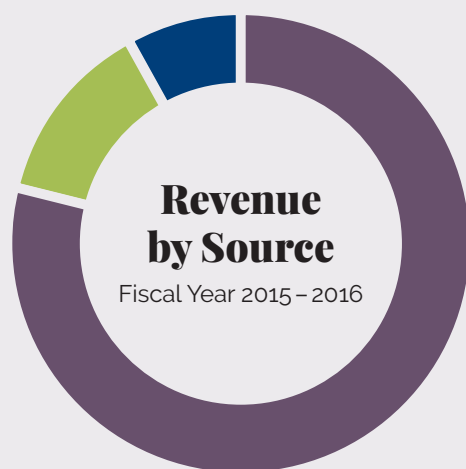
■ Program Services

**7%**

■ Administration

**2%**

■ Fundraising



**79%**

■ Government Grants

**13%**

■ Conferences & Workshops

**8%**

■ Membership & Contributions

## Current Staff

Eric Samuels, President & CEO

Kameron Fowler, CoC Director

Brian Goodner, Director of Finance and Human Resources

Jennifer Paulsen, Director of Development & Communications

Caitlin Bayer, Programs Coordinator

Sophia Checa, Assistant CoC Director

Jesus DeLeon-Serratos, HMIS Project Manager

Kraig Fiero, CoC Assistant

Deanne Lock, Accounting and Human Resources Generalist

Victoria Lopez, HMIS Support Specialist

Ben Mahoney, HMIS Support Specialist

Megan Moore, VISTA Project Manager

Mary Rychlik, Continuum of Care Manager

Kristin Zakoor, Data Coordinator

## Board of Directors

Marilyn Brown, Houston, Chair

Anne Budill, Richmond, Treasurer

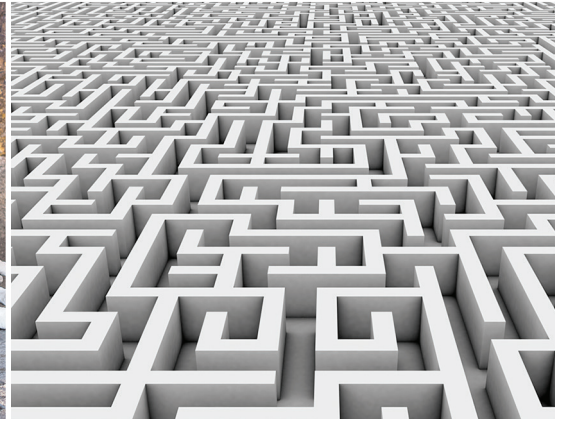
Teri Holtkamp, Waco, Vice-Chair

Karlene Lewis, Corpus Christi, Secretary

Todd Shell, Houston

Lynne Sipiora, Dallas, Past Chair

Michaele Wormly, Houston



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