

Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

Seat 3 – Chronically Homeless Persons

Andrea Omojola

Current Position: Chief Operating Officer at Lubbock Open Door

TX BoS CoC county served: Lubbock

Do you have lived experience of homelessness? In other words, have you ever lived in a homeless situation? No

Are you affiliated with a HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) Program-funded project and/or Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program-funded project operating in the TX BoS CoC?

Yes, as an employee

Are you the Chair of a Local Homeless Coalition (LHC)? No

Please describe your personal and/or work experience with the population you would be representing in the designated seat, if elected.

For the last 3 years(ish), I have had the privilege of serving within the Open Door community in Lubbock. In my role, I have worked closely with administration, advocacy, program and staff oversight and implementation for our Permanent Supportive Housing project, our newer Transitional Housing project focused on assisting those who are survivors of sex trafficking, the day drop-in shelter and the church. My role as one of the senior leaders in the organization is to ensure that each of our programs works to fulfill the overall mission to provide a space for restoration, community and opportunities for those in our community that are experiencing poverty and homelessness. Specifically, much of our population are those who have been designated as chronically homeless and who are some of the most vulnerable within our local community. I have the opportunity in my role to both serve at a distance administratively as well as to be hands on in the day-to-day functions of the organization.

Please describe how you have participated in the TX BoS CoC in the past.

I have lived in the BoS since October 2018 and spent that first year involved as a general member of the CoC--working and learning and trying to better understand what it would look like to help eradicate homelessness in the State of Texas. As a member of the CoC Board since 2019, I've made an effort to become increasingly engaged in the process of providing support and leadership to those who need it most. I have tried to maximize the time I've had by participating in the ongoing trainings and conversations facilitated by THN. I had the privilege of participating in the annual Homelessness Awareness Day and being an advocate on behalf of those experiencing homelessness in Texas and more. In addition, I make every effort to serve as an active community liaison locally--working with local consortiums and individual organizations to contribute positively to the work being done in Lubbock.

Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

Please describe your experience, if any, working with the HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) Program or similar programs focused on ending homelessness (ESG, SSVF, PATH, and RHY).

Most of my direct experience with the HUD CoC has been in the context of the work that I do with Open Door. As previously noted, I have the opportunity to both serve administratively and hands on in the day-to-day operations of our organization and have been an active part of our journey to end homelessness in our region. Prior to my time working with Open Door, my experience has not been directly working with homelessness. Instead, as a public health practitioner and ministry leader, my overall goal in both faith-based and secular organizations has been to focus on supporting, encouraging, providing programming for those who are potentially poor in mind, body and spirit. I began my career working for a company doing evaluation and assessment of grant-funded public health programs across the United States—working closely with governmental partners like the CDC as well as smaller local organizations in several states so I am no stranger to working with agencies like HUD and more.

Please describe your experience, if any, serving on a board of directors, including any leadership roles.

I have served on the BoS CoC Board since 2019. Beyond that, for several years, I ran my own grassroots community service organization in the Atlanta area and thus led with the help of my Board of Directors as the chief executive of that organization. I have also served several times in supportive capacities on committees for several boards and assisted in the formation of boards, facilitating the work of boards, and assisting with infrastructure building for smaller organizations in the Atlanta metropolitan area.

Please describe your experience, if any, with managing grants.

Working on staff at Berean Christian Church as a Director of their family life center and Minister of Outreach, I had the occasion to manage a few smaller grants. In addition, as an analyst with ORC Macro International, my main function was to assist both governmental and non-governmental agencies in the process of evaluation, assessment and program auditing for purposes of fulfilling their grant requirements and/or getting in line for new grant opportunities. However, the majority of my direct experience in managing government grants has been through Open Door. In that respect, I provide oversight to our PSH and transitional housing grant programs—working on budget development and implementation, staff development and support, programming development, reporting, evaluation and assessment. In addition, I have served as a grant reviewer with the Dept of Education for a grant cycle and assisted in the writing and development of grants for numerous individuals/organizations.

Please describe your specific skills that can benefit the CoC.

Over the years, I have demonstrated the below skills that would benefit the CoC.

- Charismatic and confident speaker in public, to groups, or via electronic media
- Strong written and verbal communication skills
- Effective leadership and project management skills
- Adaptability to changing environments and multicultural settings
- Skilled multi-tasker and strategic planner

Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

- Excellent organizational and community development skills

Why do you want to serve on the CoC Board?

The last two years has been both informative and challenging. I have been grateful for the opportunity to get to serve with so many dynamic individuals across the Balance of State on this CoC Board. And, while we have made every effort to do all we could (even during a pandemic year) I do know that there is so much more to be done and would be honored to be a part. I want to be able to give back to this community that has given so much to me and my family and community at large. But mostly, I have a strong passion and desire to represent and advocate for the interests of our friends who happen to be on the streets or who are just transitioning out of homelessness. What an honor to be able to lend a hand and "get in where I can fit in".

If you are elected to the board, what do you plan to work on and accomplish?

When I decided that I wanted to be a public health practitioner, it was with the heart of affecting change and having an opportunity to speak into policies and practices that guide community development and community health (physically, socioeconomically, and globally). To that end, my career has been a series of building blocks that have led me to this season where I have the ability and opportunity to do that in a practical way for those experiencing chronic homelessness in our city and in our state. I realize that the work that we have before us can only be accomplished when organizations such as ours work diligently with other organizations to build and reinforce effective systems of care. To be able to continue to serve on the CoC Board would be directly in line with my personal values but, more importantly, would help me to be effective in carrying out the mission and vision of Open Door, supporting those experiencing chronic homelessness in the State of Texas.

What else would you like the CoC members to know about you?

As a CoC Board member, it has been my distinct privilege to work with so many committed, passionate, and skilled individuals who are all driven by the single purpose of ending homelessness. As a part of this team, I believe that I bring a passion coupled with skill that contributes positively to the work the CoC Board is accomplishing and look forward to answering any questions about my experience or qualifications.