

Ending the Foster Care to Homelessness Pipeline in Austin and Across Texas

September 2025

Today's Agenda

Overview of the Austin Taskforce Addressing Foster Care to Homeless Pipeline (20 minutes)

Small Group Deep-Dive Discussions (60 minutes)

- Four topics; two 30-minute-long rotations

Small Group Feedback and Open Discussion (30 minutes)

Taskforce Goal

Develop a **coordinated set of policy and financing actions to end the foster care to homelessness pipeline in Austin.**

At the end of this process, we emerged with:

- **A targeted set of state-level policy and practice interventions** that are both politically feasible and can meaningfully improve the housing and outcome trajectories of people in and exiting foster care
- **A set of policy and practice changes that are fully within local government's control** and could unlock more housing opportunity for young people
- **A set of public and private financing strategies** that accelerate the production and preservation of homes for young people in and existing foster care

Taskforce Structure

Taskforce Co-Chairs

David Gray

*Homeless Strategy Officer,
City of Austin*

Liz Schoenfeld, Ph.D.

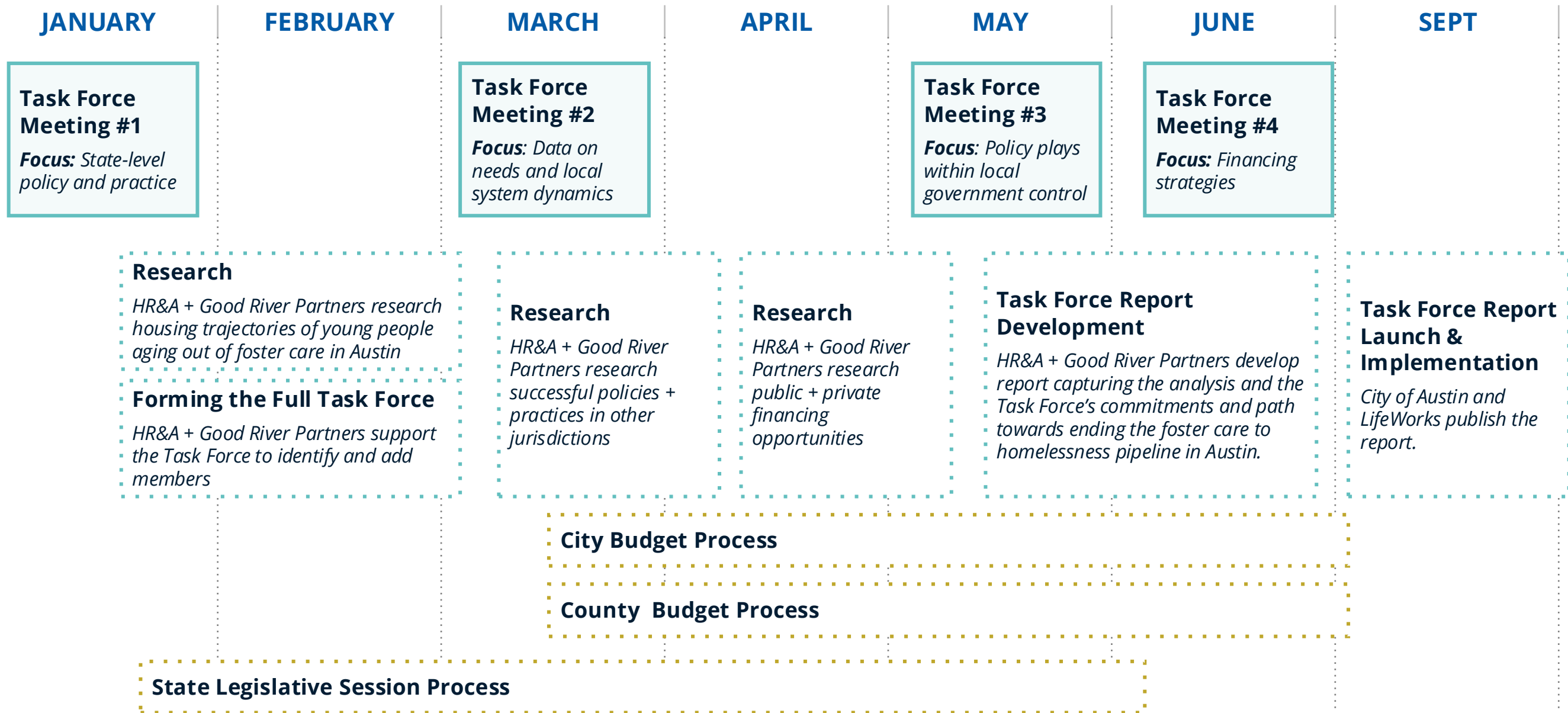
*Chief Executive Officer,
LifeWorks*

*Project Management, Research,
and Analytic Support: **Good
River Partners** and
HR&A Advisors*

Core Taskforce Membership

- **Commissioner Ann Howard and Nirav Shah**, Travis County Precinct 3
- **Mandy DeMayo**, City of Austin Housing Department
- **Dylan Shubitz**, HACA
- **Jordan Scott**, Reissa Foundation
- **Katie Renner Olse**, Sellers Dorsey
- **Regan Gruber Moffitt, J.D.**, St. David's Foundation
- **Katy Bourgeois**, TACFS
- **Jim Currier**, Texas Department of Family Protective Services
- **Fedora Galasso**, TNOYS
- **Kate Moore**, ECHO
- **Cortney Jones**, Change 1

Taskforce Timing and Impact Opportunities



Key Discussion Topics and Research Questions

- Reviewed promising policy approaches in other jurisdictions.
- Assessed the housing trajectories of young people impacted by the child welfare system in Austin and agreed upon specific problems the taskforce needed to solve.
- Developed a shared understanding of the constraints and opportunities in Austin's housing landscape.
- Researched implications of recent federal funding decisions for Austin and Travis County.
- Aligned on the most promising opportunities, pressing constraints, and highest and best use of resources, including private capital.
- Identified key short- and mid-term priority policy and financing interventions to unlock more housing opportunity for this population and the role of each taskforce member in implementation.

The Problems We Sought to Solve

A shortage of at least 2,000 housing options by the end of 2029, more than half of which would be needed to support the housing needs of every young person impacted by the child welfare system for up to three years before the age of 28.

The need for a more streamlined and youth-friendly system, so we do not lose young people along the way.

The need for a pathway to long-term housing success and stability, helping young people to lay a foundation for their adult lives.

A more intensive and intentional focus on prevention, so we are able to address the housing needs of young people before they experience homelessness

A regional commitment to refine, scale, and proactively plan on an ongoing basis

The plan: Taking eleven bold steps together to create a path to housing security for all youth impacted by the child welfare system

Unlock more housing opportunity by drawing as many federal resources into our region as possible

- **Make a bold play to bring as many federal vouchers as possible into our region**, powered by a new local pooled fund for services that will allow us to better leverage existing vouchers and compete for additional vouchers
- **Max out Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers at every housing authority in the region**
- **Dedicate staff capacity to analyze all possible federal funding opportunities** and make sure our region is not leaving any funding on the table

Leverage existing local opportunities to create a youth-friendly system, so we do not lose people along the way

- **Launch a community-based transition hub** to support young people aging out of foster care with housing navigation, benefits enrollment, and intensive support
- **Step up prevention efforts by making housing support available to youth at risk of housing instability**, in addition to those experiencing literal homelessness
- **Create a youth pathway in Austin's Housing Connector program**, a new partnership offering streamlined pathways to find landlords who accept vouchers and offer a low barrier pathway to housing
- **Access available units in the Texas Housing Conservancy's Austin and Travis County Inventory**
- **Allocate beds in Austin shelters specifically for youth**, and make sure that shelter policies and practices make it easy for young people to go to school and work

Support statewide legislative changes that will unlock more housing opportunity for young people in our region

- **Support a strategic state legislative agenda and support compensated opportunities for youth to advocate for it.** This session: Fully funded extended foster care at age 23 (HB 3941). Next session: increase Supervised Independent Living rates, make extended foster care portable, mandate consistent, quality data across the state, and provide additional support for the Texas Child Centered Care (TC3) program, including more incentives for transitional living placement providers.

Sustain regional coordination to build toward a future of housing security for all young people impacted by the child welfare system

- **Support a Housing Bill of Rights for Young People**, developed by young people and in partnership with the Texas Network of Youth Services, that will articulate the housing quality standards and services that should be available to all young people impacted by the child welfare system
- **Offer enrollment in the Family Support Services (FSS) program to all youth** voucher holders to help them build savings for future housing stability

Small Group Discussions

Courtney Jones – Engaging Foster Youth Authentically: Building Trust and Centering Youth Voice

This session will focus on building trust, fostering empowerment, and ensuring that youth voices are central in shaping the systems that serve them.

Dr. Liz Schoenfeld – Using Data to Drive Impact: Leveraging Information to Support Foster Youth

This session will highlight practical approaches to using data for accountability, continuous improvement, and informed decision-making.

Daniel Heimpel – National Priorities and Policy Levers: Advancing Support for Foster Youth

This session will explore emerging federal priorities, funding opportunities, and advocacy efforts to improve systems of care.

Jim Currier, MSW – State Systems in Action: Preventing Homelessness for Foster Youth

This session will highlight the creation of the first housing program in a State Child Welfare agency focused on implementing the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Voucher Program. Ready to start an FYI Program?

Small Group Feedback

What is one insight or idea from your breakout session that challenged your current thinking or assumptions about supporting foster youth?

How might the strategies or policies discussed in your session be adapted or applied in your own work or community?

What barriers or opportunities do you see in advancing the changes discussed — and who needs to be at the table in your community to make progress?

Breaking the Pipeline to Homelessness for Youth Leaving Foster Care

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