

FY 2018 YHDP TX-604 Rural Application Narrative

Proposed Target Area The Heart of Texas Homeless Coalition (HOTHHC), the collaborative applicant for TX-604 Waco/McLennan Continuum of Care (CoC), is applying as a rural community with a catchment area that includes the entirety of the CoC, which serves Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, Limestone, and McLennan Counties in the Heart of Texas region, with the city of Waco being the hub for social services in this region. In the Heart of Texas region, of the 85,839 youth under the age of 18, twenty-seven percent live in poverty.



Leadership Capacity 1. Addressing similar systemic change: The CoC began addressing chronic homelessness in 2005, working with stakeholders to develop Waco’s Mayor’s *10-year Plan: Opening Doors, Unlocking Potential*, following guidance from USICH. The plan was recognized as a national and regional model for cities of our size and since implementation, the number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in the CoC has decreased by 64% while the total number of homeless individuals declined by 67.5%. The Plan included strategies designed to prevent and end Veteran homelessness. A master list of Veterans experiencing homelessness was created and Veteran providers meet regularly to case conference these individuals. As a result, Veteran providers are better connected to resources and avenues to assist their clients, new strategies for ending Veteran homelessness have been explored, and data has been collected that demonstrates our progress. Since 2011, the CoC has reduced Veteran homelessness by 60% and average days to permanent housing is 48. The CoC is close to

submitting paperwork demonstrating our community is at Functional Zero, which is possible due to the ability of the CoC partners to work together to problem solve. While building a crisis response system, ongoing data analysis and needs assessment has been used to reveal service gaps. In 2015, the need to rapidly house homeless families was identified. The CoC implemented a cross-sector initiative through a collaboration between Baylor University, Waco Housing Authority (WHA), Waco ISD Homeless Outreach Services, the City of Waco, The Salvation Army (TSA), and HOTHHC. Sanctuary House was formed in the spring of 2016, with the goal of providing emergency shelter for families while a case manager works to move them into CoC Rapid Rehousing. WHA provides units for families who are referred by the Waco ISD Homeless Liaison and are provided case management services by TSA. In 2016, a second need was identified; a safe place for youth experiencing homelessness to go after school. In response, members of the CoC participated in the creation of The Cove, an after school teen nurturing center that serves youth experiencing homelessness that attend Waco ISD. Another challenge in the Heart of Texas that has impacted homelessness in our region is human trafficking. Texas experiences the 2nd highest rates of human trafficking in the US, with Waco being directly on the path of the “human trafficking triangle”, which is a network of highways that connect Houston, San Antonio, and the Dallas/Fort Worth area. After identification of this issue, collaborations were made between law enforcement, the human trafficking coalition, and members of the CoC to tackle this issue and the impact on survivors by connecting them to treatment and housing resources from CoC partners. Additionally, in 2015, the CoC began the work of developing a Coordinated Entry System (CES). After evaluation, the CE Committee revised the CE policies and procedures manual in 2017, to improve the flow of the homeless crisis response system in the Heart of Texas region. The program was branded as Heart to Home

and two physical access points were created in Waco; one at Mission Waco's Meyer Center and the other at TSA's Community Kitchen. A 24-hour phone line was established in order to better serve the rural counties of the CoC surrounding Waco and those fleeing domestic violence who wish to seek non-victim services. The CoC recognized the need for a CE Lead staff position, and through collaboration between TSA and Heart of Texas Region MHMR (HOTRMHMR), a new position was created with funds obtained through the CoC competition, with their responsibility being the day-to-day management of Heart to Home. Additionally, through CoC funds, HOTRMHMR was able to add two housing navigators to our CES who have served about 200 people in the past year. Prior to the creation of these positions, we had about a fifty percent success rate of placing people into housing programs, and now we are closer to a ninety percent success rate. Collaborating together as a community to problem solve, better utilize existing resources, and develop new funding collaborations has led to a more successful system and innovative approaches to reducing homelessness in our community. **2. YHDP Lead Agency 2a.**

Name: The Heart of Texas Region MHMR (HOTRMHMR) will serve as our YHDP lead agency. HOTRMHMR is the local mental health authority for the region and has satellite offices in all 6 counties. HOTRMHMR operates multiple CoC housing and coordinated entry projects, and the Chairperson of HOTHM is the Program Manager of Housing at HOTRMHMR. **2b. Staff leading YHDP:** Upon receipt of YHDP planning funds, HOTRMHMR will utilize funds to dedicate a position to lead the YHDP. Prior to receipt of YHDP planning funds, the YHDP is being led by Nicole Wiscombe, CoC Administrator for the CoC. The CoC Administrator position is funded by the CoC Planning Grant, and handles all planning activities related to the CoC. The YHDP will be led with assistance from Zeke Morgan, the HMIS Administrator for the CoC; Ron Kimbell, Director of Klaras Center for Families at HOTRMHMR; Amy Jimenez,

Homeless Student Population Specialist at Waco ISD Homeless Outreach Services; and Kelly Atkinson, Executive Director of The Cove. **2c. YHDP Team:** A description of the proposed YHDP team can be found in the attachment entitled “YHDP Team.” **3. CoC support for YHDP lead agency:** The CoC committees that will support the lead agency are the Heart of Texas Homeless Coalition (HOTHC) Board of Directors, the Youth Homelessness Committee, the Youth Action Board (YAB), the CoC Committee, the CoC Advisory Committee, the HMIS Advisory Committee, and the Coordinated Entry (CE) Committee. The HOTHC Board of Directors is made up of the CoC, HMIS, and CE Lead Administrators and 15 Board Members, whose focus is to direct the work of the CoC/HOTHC in ending homelessness in the Heart of Texas Region. The Youth Homelessness Committee is comprised of 20 members who work with the goal of ending youth homelessness. The YAB, consisting of five members, advises the CoC on any policy, programs, and needs of youth experiencing homelessness. The CoC Committee consists of 30 stakeholders representing various sectors of the community whose objective is to concentrate on efforts to sustain and improve the CoC Program in our community. The CoC Advisory Committee has 25 members and provides guidance to the HOTHC Board, CoC Lead, and CoC Membership on aspects of planning, implementing, and evaluating the CoC. The HMIS Advisory Committee, consisting of 25 members, provides guidance to the HOTHC Board, HMIS Lead, and CoC Membership on data management as a tool for planning, program compliance and evaluation of community needs and gaps in services for all homeless populations. The CE Committee is comprised of 45 members and is responsible for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of a community homeless crisis response system for all homeless populations, and those at risk of homelessness. **4. Youth Participation:** The CoC has implemented youth participation by the creation of a Youth Action Board (YAB). The YAB is a subcommittee of the

Youth Homelessness Committee. Members of the YAB are under the age of 25, and a majority of the members are currently homeless or have formerly experienced homelessness. The YAB has representation on the Youth Homelessness Committee and the HOTH Board. The YAB advises and submits recommendations to the CoC through multiple avenues in the CoC structure and participate in CoC policy discussions and decision making related to youth homelessness, which gives youth a voice in the CoC. The YAB will play a vital role in the YHDP and the coordinated community plan process by informing and approving projects and youth homelessness system planning. **5. Engaging other organizations:** After release of the YHDP NOFA, the CoC reached out to community partners to establish a YHDP partnership meeting, which had 20 agencies from the community represented. The organizations expressed an interest in helping the CoC by providing support letters for the YHDP application, and a desire to participate in the development and implementation of a coordinated community response to preventing and ending youth homelessness. They discussed ways to engage those not typically involved and encouraged community partners to share about YHDP with other partners they have throughout the Heart of Texas region to raise awareness of the project. The CoC is also working to engage local entities such as schools of higher education, school districts, law enforcement, human trafficking organizations, churches, local governments, hospitals, and probation officers, as the CoC sees each of these entities as key partners in ending youth homelessness. The CoC will continue its work of building partnerships as a way to increase community collaboration, and to ensure that different sectors are incorporated within the coordinated community approach to prevent and end youth homelessness.

Current Resource Capacity: 1. Crisis Response System: Attachment “Current Resource Capacity” offers a description of the resources and interventions currently available in our CoC.

Community Need: 1. Youth specific homeless needs assessment: Over the last eight years, youth homelessness has become a more prominent issue in our community. Stemming from the work of the Homeless Outreach Services department at Waco Independent School District (WISD), the stories of youth in our community shared a reality the community never knew. To formalize the stories, three youth-specific homelessness needs assessments were conducted within the CoC; one in 2016 by WISD Homeless Outreach, one in 2017 by The Cove, and more recently in January 2019 in collaboration with HOTH, Region 12 Education Service Center, The Cove, and local school districts. **2. Description of needs assessment:** The goal of the three assessments were to gain a better understanding from youth on what their perceived needs were and to gain insight into programs that could address those needs in the community. The first assessment was completed in February 2016, to inform the development of Waco's first nurturing drop-in center for youth experiencing homelessness, named The Cove. An evaluative research study was completed to better understand the current resources and to identify gaps in services of youth experiencing homelessness. The study surveyed McKinney-Vento Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (UHY) and school personnel who work closely with UHY. The survey participants included 23 high school students, six formerly homeless high school students, and 13 WISD staff members. The second assessment was completed in April 2017, by The Cove. A mixed-method, phenomenological study was conducted to investigate the experiences of homelessness, preferences and interests of McKinney-Vento homeless youth particularly around seeking nighttime residence, and their desired qualities of a future host home program. The most recent needs assessment was completed in conjunction with our Youth Point in Time Count, which included an additional survey tool to include questions to inform local programming. The assessment identified current educational, housing, and emotional needs,

reasons and experiences of youth during their homelessness, and vision for the types of housing programs they would like to see in their community. Nine school districts and 61 total students participated. **2a. Youth system:** The needs assessments originated from CoC and members of the Youth Homelessness Committee: WISD, The Cove, and the City of Waco. **2b. Youth involvement:** In the 2016 youth needs assessments, the survey tools were tested and approved by two youth experiencing homelessness before it was executed. The 2017 needs assessment involved youth in qualitative interviews to capture their experiences and desires for their future. The Youth Homelessness Committee received feedback from youth at The Cove regarding survey completions, which informed the decision for an electronic survey for the 2019 Youth PIT Count needs assessment. The survey was piloted with one student experiencing homelessness at WISD before it was executed with others to receive feedback. Most of the youth were compensated for participation in the survey with a gift card. Some students texted the survey link to their friends as a way to recruit more participants, though most of the data gathering was completed by the Youth Homelessness Committee and MSW Interns meeting with students at school or The Cove. **2c. Scope of assessment:** These assessments were limited to two types of providers only, and did not investigate the number of housing units and services within the CoC geographic area. They did, however, identify services that youth experiencing homelessness currently access and trust. The CoC has not completed a youth-specific, large-scale assessment with all agencies in the region, but aims to complete one in the near future alongside Prosper Waco, which would be made possible with receipt of the YHDP grant. **2d. Description of disparities:** Of youth participants in the 2019 needs assessment, 57.4% of youth identified as female, while 40.9% identified as male, and 1.6% identified as transgender. Looking at racial disparities, HOTHF found that 47.5% of youth identified as Black, 8% as American Indian,

21.3% as White, 6.6% as two or more races, and 13.1% chose not to identify. HOTHHC also identified that 32.8% of youth identified as Hispanic. Compared to McLennan County 2018 population data from the American Community Survey, this reveals a higher number of youth who identify as Black (15% of the population), American Indian (1% of the population), and Hispanic (26.4% of the population) experience homelessness as compared to their White counterparts, who make up 80% of the local population. Eighteen percent of students who answered the justice system question shared they were involved in the adult justice system, and sixty-three percent of students shared they were involved in the juvenile justice system. Their average age of entry was 14 years old. On this needs assessment, we did not ask students to identify their LGBTQ status. However, The Cove, McLennan County's nurturing center for youth experiencing homelessness estimates that up to 10% of students they serve each night identify as LGBTQ. **2e. Key findings:** *"Really, we didn't know where to turn. It was just- we were in complete darkness. It was like, where would we go next? Like what do we do? If I take this step, is there still gonna be ground here or am I gonna fall off a cliff you know what I'm sayin? So we didn't know what to do, we didn't know where to go. [We] didn't know of any shelters... I didn't know, we didn't know."* --Youth experiencing homelessness, *Unaccompanied and Seeking Home research participant, 2017*. Key findings in the needs assessments included youth identifying that finding a safe place to sleep at night was one of their top needs. Results from the 2017 study indicated participants had a unanimous need for a safe place to stay the night. All students reported that it would be useful for other teens going through similar situations to have access to The Cove after school in addition to having overnight accommodation with beds. Through the needs assessment conducted in conjunction with the 2019 Youth PIT Count, we found that roughly a quarter of the 61 youth assessed had

experienced family violence. We found that thirty percent had been kicked out of the house by family and twenty percent had been abandoned by their parent/guardian. Housing assistance, dental care, and transportation were the highest requested services in the needs assessment. **3.**

Ability to collect and report data: The annual Point in Time Count is conducted as a “known location” count in Waco, which is hub of all social services in the Heart of Texas region. **3a.**

Number of unaccompanied youth sheltered: Eight unaccompanied youth (24 or younger) were identified. **3b. Number of sheltered parenting youth:** Five parenting and pregnant youth (24 or younger) were counted. **3c. Number of unsheltered unaccompanied youth:** Three

unaccompanied youth (24 or younger) were identified. **3d. Number of unsheltered parenting youth:** No parenting youth (24 or younger) were counted. **3e1. Youth specific PIT count**

time: The CoC was able to identify, through collaboration with Waco ISD, that youth are being undercounted in our CoC PIT counts. WISD numbers suggest much larger numbers of unaccompanied youth exist in our community. WISD identified 201 unaccompanied homeless youth in the 2017-2018 school year when only 11 were counted during the 2018 PIT Count.

Over the past three years, the CoC has gradually increased the amount of youth-specific PIT count activities to provide a more accurate count, and has collaborated with the Region 12 Education Service Center, The Cove, WISD Homeless Outreach Services, and Central Texas Youth Services (CTYS) to begin the work of broadening the count to include those from other school districts in the region and youth not likely to be counted via current methods. **3e2.**

Targeted counting strategies: Each year the CoC partners with WISD, The Cove, HOTRMHMR PATH Program, Region 12 Education Service Center, and CTYS to help identify the unaccompanied youth they serve, helping to target, identify, and engage youth in the CoC PIT count. **3e3. Youth specific PIT count timeline:** The CoC utilizes a survey tool that was

used at the state level to conduct “Youth Count Texas!”. We conduct planning meetings with partners that serve youth to focus on youth-specific issues related to conducting the PIT for youth. The youth count is conducted concurrently with the regular CoC PIT count in order to obtain PIT data from youth that are served at our Project Homeless Connect service count event.

3e4. Methodology of youth specific PIT count: These partnerships and training have led to a more accurate count of youth for our CoC’s 2018 PIT. Using the “Youth Count Texas!” survey tool, we ask survey questions related to their first experience being homeless (with their family or on their own), sexual orientation, highest level of education completed, and involvement in Special Education services, foster care, and justice systems. We have acknowledged as a CoC the difficulties we have had collecting an accurate PIT count for youth over our 6 county region and have begun implementing new methodologies and improving upon existing strategies during the 2019 PIT Count. We collaborated with the Region 12 Education Service Center to distribute a new electronically formatted youth PIT survey that could be shared electronically with youth, to all school districts in our region. In 2019, we had 9 school districts willing to participate and were able to collect 61 surveys from this youth count. **3e5. Data collected not required by HUD:** Our CoC utilizes all qualitative and quantitative data obtained from the PIT surveys to assist in annual strategic planning. The CoC will be using the data obtained from the PIT, HIC, and McKinney-Vento data to produce a report about the state of homelessness in our community. Data obtained from the PIT is also shared with our community’s system of care for the purpose of support service development. **3f. LEA number of unaccompanied homeless youth:** The Department of Education EdFacts system in the 2016-2017 school year reported 2,181 youth were identified as homeless in the 45 school districts within our CoC geographical area. Of those 2,181 students, 336 were identified as unaccompanied homeless youth. 110 students lived in

motels or hotels, 45 lived unsheltered places not intended for living, and 126 were staying in local shelters. Of all the school districts, only one district received TEXSHEP funds, leading the CoC to observe these numbers may under represent the actual number of youth experiencing homelessness in our community due to lack of training and resource allocation for identification and support services in the other school districts. In WISD alone, the district identified 1074 McKinney-Vento homeless students in the 2017-2018 school year. 201 of those students were unaccompanied and homeless. **3g. Factors contributing to youth homelessness:** Although McKinney-Vento unaccompanied homeless youth are not counted in the CoC PIT count, our community still conducts Youth PIT count surveys with several of our youth to gain a greater picture of youth homelessness in our community with our high school aged youth. Through these assessments, the CoC has learned the main reason our youth become homeless is because they were kicked out of the dwelling by family. Other reasons indicated were domestic violence, abandonment by parent/guardian, aged out or ran from foster care, sexual orientation or gender identity, and physical disability. In addition to these assessments, The Cove systematically assesses the reasons for homelessness during their intake process. They identified the following reasons as youth-identified factors contributing to their homelessness: parental issues, domestic violence, family conflict, financial problems, illness, lack of affordable housing, mental health issues, and rejection of sexual orientation. Though these issues are consistent in our community, we will not let experiencing homelessness be the end of the story for young people in our community.

Capacity for Innovation: 1. CoC enacting change: Over the past two years, our community has been re-developing our coordinated entry system (CES) to create a more effective system to assess, prioritize, and refer the most vulnerable in our community to housing resources. We were

motivated as a community to create a more equitable system that decreases the length of time people experience homelessness. Our CoC had previously attempted to implement a CES but had struggled to find an effective way to utilize our HMIS system and wanted to improve the referral process. After 9 months of community collaboration, the CE Committee developed Heart to Home, our new local CES. After implementation, we have identified the need to capture additional data for evaluation purposes and have looked at how we can improve on our use of HMIS for CES. We have made changes to the system as needed to improve the CES and are about to implement a new workflow in HMIS for CES assessors to improve HMIS user data quality, CES workflows, and to capture additional data needed for CE grant annual performance reviews and for the annual evaluation of the CES. The CoC also identified the need for a lead staff to manage the CES and for housing navigators to improve our ability to place people into housing. Through the CoC annual competition, additional funds were secured and a collaboration between The Salvation Army and Heart of Texas Region MHMR (HOTRMHMR) has allowed for the creation of a CE Lead Administrator position for Heart to Home. HOTRMHMR was able to secure CoC funding to operate two housing navigators who have assisted about 200 people find housing in our community in the past year. They have significantly improved the success rate at which people are placed into housing in our community. Heart to Home is excited to see our first year's evaluation data to celebrate the successes and identify the gaps in our system so we may problem solve as a community possible solutions. In addition to implementing a CES, the CoC has successfully adopted and implemented a 10-year Plan as a community to end chronic homelessness, we are near meeting benchmarks to begin our claim for Functional Zero status on ending Veteran homelessness, and we have partnered together to work on ending homelessness for youth and families through the creation of Sanctuary House and The Cove. An

innovative solution that came out of the youth homelessness needs assessment was the founding of The Cove, a nurturing drop-in center for youth experiencing homelessness. Prior to founding The Cove, there were no agencies in the surrounding area completely dedicated to serving young people experiencing homelessness. Many members from the community came together from public and private sectors, including Waco ISD, Baylor University, The Salvation Army, UnBound, Grassroots Community Development, Rydell Holdings and many others to research, plan, and create this much-needed space. There were many years of working with young people through WISD Homeless Outreach Department in the schools when there was no youth-focused place to send students for the support and care that was unique to their needs. Through this collaboration work, the CoC began a partnership with WISD to implement HMIS in the school district, the first school district in the nation to do so. The use of HMIS in the schools streamlines data sharing with youth providers and other users in HMIS to stabilize housing and ensure families access adequate resources. Through the course of this partnership, we have improved on the ways the data is shared, how to use the data that is collected, and consulted with other CoCs regarding the challenges and benefits of such a partnership. The City of Waco and the Homeless Liaison saw The Cove as a crucial hub to begin identifying unaccompanied students, submitting them into HMIS, and coordinating services in the community. This collaboration has been very successful, as WISD refers students on campus, transports them via school bus, and provides laptops for academics, while The Cove provides a safe place, caring adults, washers and dryers, and serves as the central access point for wraparound services in the community. This partnership continues to strengthen HMIS and WISD as both partners utilize the system for coordinating services for unaccompanied homeless youth. A third example of implementing an innovative system in our community was the development of Prosper Waco, a collective impact

approach to community building that consolidates and builds upon existing efforts to measurably improve the lives of people in the Waco community in the areas of health, education, and financial security. Many CoC members were involved in the development of Prosper Waco and its programs in our community. Since its inception in 2015, Prosper Waco has successfully facilitated the implementation of strategies to coordinate positive change within the community, share data to accomplish collective goals, and engage a broad spectrum of community partners in Waco. Finally, a most recent innovative solution has been the partnership between The Cove and HOTRMHMR's Klaras Center Crisis Respite House. The Respite House was developed in partnership as a result of the Closing the Gaps grant and partnerships from Our Community Our Future, our region's system of care coalition. Respite House first and foremost serves as a respite for youth 13-17 who are in a mental health crisis as an alternative to hospitalization or juvenile justice placement. Though they primarily serve youth in crisis, they have partnered with The Cove to offer unutilized beds for youth experiencing homelessness. To date, Respite has been open 58 days. Already, 28.6% of their clients served have been youth experiencing homelessness who needed short-term emergency housing. This is the first time the region has had access to an emergency shelter beds for unaccompanied youth. This collaboration continues to be strengthened, and is moving toward reserving 2 of 6 beds to always be available for unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness with shared financial collaboration. **2.**

Housing First and other models for youth: The CoC currently operates three rapid rehousing programs (RRH) and 3 permanent supportive housing programs. All of these programs operate using a Housing First model. They are not youth focused, but do have the capacity to serve youth aged 18-24, and have served youth in the past. From the experience of one partner within the CoC, the rapid rehousing process is hard for youth who do enter the program because they are

young, may not be employed, and landlords are skeptical of whether they can pay rent on their own. Another partner stated that youth under 25 are in need of intensive case management during RRH, which must be tailored to address their goals related to education and employment from the onset. One positive aspect of RRH is that it allows a younger person a chance to build up credit and establish a record of consistently paying rent since the lease is in their name. As barriers are eliminated in the process of case management, in the implementation of a youth-specific housing programs, youth will have a greater chance at being successful. **3. Potential future interventions:** There are three interventions that the CoC wishes to pursue: host homes, transitional housing, and rapid rehousing for youth. In the spring of 2018, Masters of Social Work graduate students within the CoC engaged in IRB approved research studies on the feasibility and community expectations of a host home program in Waco with community member participants. Research participants included individuals who have hosted students experiencing homelessness informally in the past and communities of faith who would potentially be interested in partnering. The preliminary findings of the studies determined that the wider community is open to the implementation of a host home program, as well as youth experiencing homelessness responding that a host home program would be their ideal method of intervention. A host home program would involve recruiting and training families in who have a spare bedroom to house a youth experiencing homelessness. The reason youth experiencing homelessness have identified this as their ideal program is because of the value of being housed with a family for a period of time. Many of the youth experiencing homelessness within our CoC do not have a supportive and loving family, so having the opportunity to live within a family, have meals together, and be together regularly is appealing. Transitional housing and Rapid Rehousing would allow the CoC to provide more supportive options to young people who have

no credit history and are living on their own for the first time. Additionally, they would allow for greater options in emergency and crisis situations that our young people face daily: domestic violence, eviction, and mental health crises. Currently the options for homeless youth in the CoC are limited, but with the implementation of youth-focused programs that would change. The current barrier that prevents the CoC from implementing these interventions is a lack of financial resources to create a systemic approach targeted for young people. Agencies who hope to implement these programs currently do not have the funding to fully operate and staff them. **4.**

Risk areas: The biggest areas of risk in our youth homelessness system are aging out/running from foster care, domestic violence, abandonment by parent/guardian, human trafficking, rejection of sexual orientation/gender identity, lack of affordable housing, financial problems, family conflict, mental health issues, and physical disability. Working to build collaborative relationships between entities such as HOTHM, the local mental health authority (HOTRMHMR), CPS, juvenile justice, youth homeless service providers, human trafficking organizations, and other support service organizations, we can use YHDP to create targeted housing programs, CES, and supportive services for youth. By approaching youth homelessness from a community perspective, we can build on existing work that community coalitions, such as HOTHM, the Human Trafficking Coalition, and Our Community Our Future Coalition, have begun that target and work to reduce risk factors for youth homelessness. **5. Learning from failures:** A community collaboration effort between the Waco Housing Authority (WHA), Waco ISD Homeless Outreach, and The Salvation Army (TSA) led to the creation of Sanctuary House. Sanctuary House was designed to offer emergency shelter in three units provided by the WHA for families with children referred by WISD with case management services provided by TSA. The goal of this collaboration was to provide additional family emergency shelter as there are

only 3 existing units of family emergency shelter in the area, identify more families eligible to move into permanent housing through TSA's CoC RRH program, and reduce homelessness in our community. After the first year of operating this collaboration, we found that families were staying too long in the shelter and not allowing for system flow. Due to the struggles of operating this program, the WHA suspended it, and the partners met to refine the program's policies and procedures. The WHA reduced the available units to two units, the process of determining families to move into the units was reevaluated, and new case management models were explored to use with the families. Length of stay was shortened to allow more flow in our homeless crisis response system and these families were connected with the newly redesigned CES and housing navigators to assist with their movement into permanent housing. **6.**

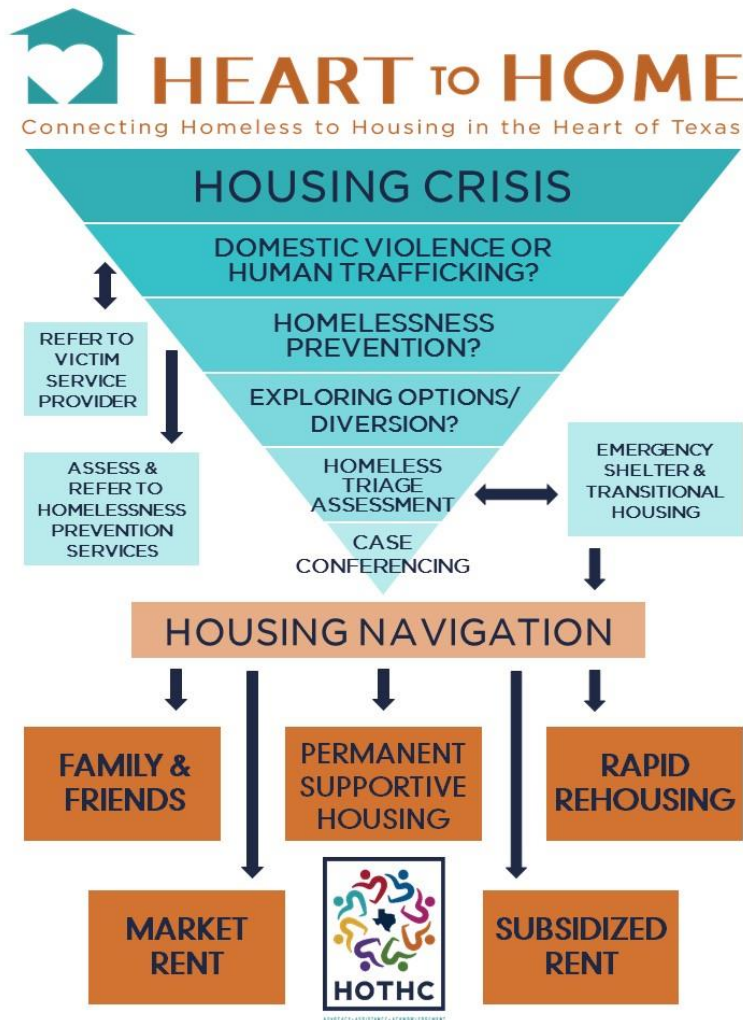
Disparities: Utilizing the CoC Racial Equity Analysis Tool provided by HUD, our CoC identified that 76% of our community identify as White and 15% identify as Black. When our CoC assessed disparities in our homeless response system, we found that 58% of those experiencing homelessness identify as White and 35% identify as Black, which shows that our community has a higher rate of people who identify as Black that are experiencing homelessness as compared to the percentage makeup of that population in our community. This identified disparity is even higher in youth experiencing homelessness, with 60% of youth experiencing homelessness identifying as White and 40% identifying as Black. Our community is working to identify other ways we can assess for disparities in our homeless response system, including using coordinated entry system (CES) data once we complete our next annual evaluation of that system. With implementation of CES, our CoC will improve access to fair housing in our community which will reduce disparities that previously have been identified. We are working to identify other methods to address identified disparities and how to bring them to an end. **7.**

Engaging in new project models and methodologies: Research has been done within the CoC to determine if host home programs would be a good project model for youth experiencing homelessness within the CoC. Research has shown that the community is open to the idea and that it would be an effective project to help end youth homelessness within the CoC. Research through the youth needs assessment also found that students themselves would be interested in a host home program. A second way that stakeholders have been willing to engage in new project models is through the 2016 implementation of The Cove, a nurturing after-school drop-in center. The Cove was implemented after the WISD homeless liaison found that there was a need for a safe place for McKinney-Vento homeless youth to spend time after school. The Cove began serving clients in October 2016, and is already significantly changing the way that homeless youth are served in the CoC. It has been found that attending The Cove on a regular basis improves attendance at school and that students' grades improve with participation. The Cove offers mental health counseling, tutoring, job application assistance, and "productive time," where students can recover seat time using WISD computers. For years, youth providers have been told that students would not prefer to stay in a youth shelter, therefore the community has pursued the research around the host home model based on the promising practice in other communities. However, in the first Youth Action Board meeting, one youth who experienced homelessness in high school shared that she would prefer to stay at a youth shelter and would welcome that in our community over a host home program, unless the host home program participants were highly trained and equipped. The CoC highly values the input and advocacy of youth in our community, and is willing to align with what youth desire for this community. This is why the six-month planning period would be so crucial for our community, as we seek to pinpoint the most effective methods for addressing youth homelessness in the region today.

There are at least two new agencies in the area that desire to open youth shelters, and the CoC is willing to engage what that would look like for our area, as the closest youth shelter is an hour away in Killeen, TX. **Youth System Map:** The “Youth System Map” is attached for a summary of our current assets and innovative ideas to transition youth experiencing homelessness into stable and thriving living situations.

Collaboration: 1. CoC’s strategic plan: Currently, we have a 10-year Plan to End Homelessness introduced by the City of Waco. The 2.0 version of this plan has begun revision to introduce strategies to prevent and end youth and family homelessness. The City of Waco, HOTRMHMR, Waco ISD, Methodist Children’s Home, The Cove, Mission Waco, The Salvation Army, Tarleton University, Baylor University, Family Abuse Center, Compassion Ministries, and many other community partners have been involved in the conversations and meetings regarding the revision of the existing 10-year Plan. Receipt of the planning funds from the YHDP grant would help facilitate the completion of this project in our community. The CoC conducts strategic planning annually where the CoC has identified ending youth homelessness as a priority. **2. Stakeholder Chart:** Please see attachment entitled “Stakeholder Chart” for description of engaged partners. **3. CES and youth:** The CoC Coordinated Entry System (CES) policies and procedures manual addresses youth as a special subpopulation served through our system. **3a. CES access:** Due to the rural nature of the majority of the counties in our CoC, all access points are accessible to all who present for assistance. **3b. CES prioritization:** Youth are prioritized within the CES as a special subpopulation and are prioritized in case conferencing for referral to CoC and ESG funded resources. **3c. CoC and ESG funded resources:** Currently, our CoC has the capacity to serve transition aged youth through three CoC and one ESG funded Rapid Rehousing programs, and three CoC funded Permanent Supportive Housing programs. **3d.**

Integration of other providers: Youth homelessness and at-risk youth providers are the first point of contact with youth who experience homelessness. These agencies, including The Cove, DFPS-CPS, Klaras Center for Families, Mission Waco, Methodist Children’s Home, juvenile detention centers, and school districts, will serve to refer youth to the CES. Most youth would not likely access this system alone, so the providers play an imperative role in building the youth’s trust with the CES. Once youth progress through CE, after the initial assessment is complete, youth will be prioritized through case conferencing. Youth will be referred through the appropriate CE access point, which are Mission Waco’s Meyer Center, The Salvation Army Community Kitchen, or Heart to Home phone line.



4. System-level discharge strategy: The CoC is working in collaboration with other community agencies and coalitions to ensure youth are not being discharged into homelessness from child welfare (foster care), juvenile and adult justice, and institutions of mental and physical health. The Our Community Our Future (OCOF) coalition in particular focuses on the system of care for youth in the juvenile justice, CPS, school, and mental health systems. The purpose of OCOF is to organize stakeholders to look at the needs of youth in our community, identify gaps in services, and pool resources between community partners to meet those needs, with the goal of providing a continuum of care for youth. Members of the CoC meet bi-weekly with the OCOF coalition on various committees to develop and strengthen these systems and work together to ensure transitions for youth are positive. This collaboration will ensure youth discharging from these systems will not enter into homelessness. For McLennan County Juvenile Probation, when a youth is placed on probation, probation officers do a risk/needs assessment and develop a case plan that is designed to reduce these issues. The case plan is reviewed with the youth and their parent/guardian on a monthly basis to revise or adapt as needed. When the youth is discharged from supervision, they ensure the youth has information for their particular needs (counseling numbers, GED sites, drug counseling numbers, etc.). If a youth is already referred and connected to a program like CPS or HOTRMHMR Klaras Center for Families, juvenile probation encourages the youth to remain in the program and follow through as required by that program. For Child and Protective Services, DFPS has several discharge policies for substitute care and extended foster care, both planned and emergency discharges. When a youth is discharged from substitute care, the caseworker must ensure the youth is given information such as assessment of the youth's needs, service plan, placement forms, record documents, school and medical records, and details on the Medicaid program. When discharged from extended foster care, the

caseworker is responsible for scheduling a Transition Plan Review along with ensuring that the youth has all personal records and documents including: a birth certificate, a Social Security card, a Texas identification card, savings account information, a Medicaid card, education records, Transition Portfolios and printed medical records. In an emergency discharge, when the youth leaves the placement before the planned end date, the caseworker must attempt to make contact with the youth and foster caregiver within 24 hours, to discuss the emergency discharge and if there are alternatives that can be explored first. If no other alternatives can be found, the caseworker must review the Transition Plan with the youth, to the best of the caseworker's ability under the situation. At Klaras Center for Families, at 18 years old, clinically necessary clients can stay in services up until age 19 due to counselor and/or the psychiatrist's opinion. During that time, a counselor goes through the discharge plan with them, transitioning to either adult mental health services, Transition Aged Youth program, or to a community provider. The discharge process begins at age 17 ½ and Klaras discusses options of AMH, TAY, or community. If youth want to go to adult mental health treatment, they have to have a GAF score of 50 or below if they do not have a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder, Major Depression, Schizophrenia, and/or Schizoaffective Disorder. With those four diagnoses they can have any GAF score for adult mental health treatment. If a youth does not have a stable home or is not in an educational setting or job, the youth is discharged into the TAY program, which serves 18-24 years olds by providing job training, educational services, housing, and counseling. Though each system has individual discharge policies, we need to continue developing a more streamlined systemic approach to discharging, so that youth are connected to adequate resources and support services are tracked and monitored to create a better system of care for this population. **5.**

PCWAs Role: According to CPS, if an investigator comes across a youth who is experiencing

homelessness, the investigators work diligently to ensure the youth does not remain homeless and will find a placement for the youth while investigating the family. CPS continually works alongside the schools, the Cove, and other organizations to find youth a safe place to reside. CPS does interact with runaway youth who may have enrolled at school and are currently experiencing homelessness, and they assist in stabilizing their living situation. The Conservatorship Department assists in family reunification services as needed. Before youth transition out of foster care, they prepare them with the necessary information to obtain housing, college access, and job training programs through the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Program and Circles of Support. When youth experiencing homelessness identifies as formerly involved in the foster system, CPS can verify if they have aged out which qualifies them for additional services in the community.

Youth Collaboration 1. Mission and vision of YAB: The mission of the Heart of Texas Youth Action Board (YAB) is to expand justice for youth in the Heart of Texas region through housing opportunities. The vision is to create opportunities to house youth experiencing homelessness in Waco and the surrounding communities in innovative ways that suit the desires and needs of youth. **2. Structure and work of YAB** **2a. YAB history:** The history of the YAB dates back to 2015-2016 when the first variation of the group formed to assist in the development of The Cove. Two of the YAB members also served as Board of Directors of The Cove for the first two years of The Cove, which included the development and implementation of the program's first year. This YAB was limited to assessing and advising on Cove programs, structure and policies and did not serve the entire Homeless Coalition. From 2016-2018, the YAB met on and off as needed, to discuss and advise on specific projects and plans related to The Cove programming for youth experiencing homelessness. In April 2018, the YAB was officially created as a

subcommittee of the Heart of Texas Homeless Coalition to begin plans and discussions for which types of housing projects they desired for the Waco community. The YAB met once for a roundtable discussion in 2018 and included current and former youth experiencing homelessness. The Cove continued to meet with their Cove-specific YAB with current Cove Scholars on a monthly basis. The official Heart of Texas YAB met again in May 2019 with new members added as several others no longer had the capacity to serve. The chair of The Cove YAB and one Cove scholar also sit on the Heart of Texas YAB and the chair represents the YAB on the CoC Board. **2b. YAB membership:** YAB is made up of five youth. At the May 2019 meeting, four of the five youth were in attendance, and one youth had an excused absence. At the April 2018 meeting, three of the five youth were in attendance. **2c. YAB meetings:** In 2019, the Heart of Texas YAB established a quarterly meeting. The next meeting will be in July 2019. During the development of the Coordinated Community Plan, the meetings will be twice a month. The Cove YAB meets monthly, with two shared members attending those meetings as well. **2d. YAB recruitment:** Youth and young adults with lived experiences are recruited through The Cove. They have been recruited based off their strong leadership skills, diverse backgrounds of experience, and connections to the Waco community. They represent current high school students, college students, and working youth. **2e. YAB decision-making:** The decision-making structure gives each youth a vote to approve, deny, or abstain. In order to make a decision, 4 of the 5 youth must approve. **2f. YAB and the CoC:** The YAB sends a representative to the HOTHHC general membership monthly meetings and to the Youth Homelessness Committee meetings. A member of the YAB has representation on the HOTHHC Board. **3. YAB incentivization:** Youth are incentivized by leadership and professional development opportunities and opportunities to build social capital with older youth who have overcome

homelessness. The CoC plans to compensate YAB members throughout the Community Planning process for time and transportation via the planning funds. **4. Youth voice:** One challenge will be changing the times of meetings in decision-making structures to allow for youth to attend. Another will be for others to trust youth's input fully. **5. YAB challenges:** The biggest barrier to sustaining a YAB is consistency in meetings and coordinating schedules with members of the HOTH Board and subcommittees.

Data and Evaluation Capacity: **1. Percentage of homeless beds in HMIS:** For 2018, HMIS bed participation was at 91.23%. **2. Percentage of types of beds covered by HMIS:** All of beds utilizing HMIS are able to serve transition age youth (18-24). At this time, the CoC has no dedicated beds for unaccompanied youth under 18 that are entered into our HMIS. Central Texas Youth Services (CTYS), who receives the Runaway and Homeless Youth grant in our area, serves two different CoCs, with a majority of their services outside of our CoC. Currently, they enter all of the beds from their McLennan County Maternity Group Home and Transitional Living Program into the Texas Balance of State HMIS. The CoC has identified this error and is working to establish an HMIS MOU with them to begin entering these five units into HMIS for our CoC. **3. Recruitment to HMIS for youth dedicated projects:** The CoC successfully encourages and recruits HMIS participation by all types of homeless programs. Besides correcting the above mentioned issue with beds from CTYS, there are no other youth-dedicated projects in our CoC that can be added to our HIC or HMIS at this time. Through the CoC competition process, we encourage the community to present proposals for youth-dedicated projects, and projects for youth receive extra points in the CoC competition. All projects requesting YHDP funding will be required to demonstrate willingness to participate in HMIS. **4. Support transition of new projects to HMIS:** To support transition of new projects to HMIS,

our HMIS Lead meets with the agency to sign a participation agreement, determine an agency administrator, and to provide orientation and initial training to the system. The HMIS Lead provides ongoing support which includes new user training, refresher training for users, training on reporting capabilities of HMIS, and video trainings. HMIS users can submit a request for support through the website, email, and phone. The HMIS Lead is available to assist agencies with building the HMIS portion of their project budgets, report building, and assistance with data quality improvement. **5. HUD data reporting requirements:** The CoC has met all data reporting requirements in the past 12 months. **6. AHAR table shells:** The CoC submitted seven program table shells and seven Veteran-specific shells to HUD in 2017, and all were accepted. In the fall of 2018, the CoC submitted its first LSA report to HUD. **7. Other sources of youth data:** The CoC collaborates with Waco ISD to obtain data on the number of students served by WISD Homeless Outreach Services that meet the HUD and McKinney-Vento definitions of homelessness. Due to the number of school districts involved in the Heart of Texas region, the CoC also obtains McKinney-Vento data from the Texas Homeless Education Office. The Cove measures student visits, graduation rates, and numbers of students utilizing basic services on a semester basis. Additionally, Prosper Waco, conducts research and stores data on education, health, and financial security in our community, with a focus on low-income residents of the Greater Waco area. Prosper Waco shares data collaboratively with the CoC to assist in strategic planning and support system development. The Our Community Our Future coalition collects and maintains data for students involved in the juvenile justice system, CPS, and mental health programs and shares this data with the CoC. **8. CoC performance measures and monitoring process:** The CoC Committee, which is made up of members of the Scoring and Ranking Committee, the CoC Lead, the HMIS Lead, grant recipients, and other community partners, is

responsible for the evaluation and monitoring of CoC and ESG funded projects. All projects are monitored annually by the CoC Lead, HMIS Lead, peers, and impartial subject matter experts. The projects are evaluated on data collected from Annual Performance Reports, agency financials, HUD monitoring correspondence, and performance measures. The CoC has adopted the HUD System Performance Measures to assess all CoC and ESG funded projects. Specifically, the CoC measures the average unit/bed utilization rate (universe: all program beds), percent of participants who increased or maintained earned income from entry to exit (universe: all program leavers), percent of participants who increased or maintained other income from entry to exit (universe: all program leavers), percent of participants with earned income (universe: all program leavers and stayers), percent of participants with income other than employment (universe: all program leavers and stayers), percent of participants who exited to permanent housing (universe: all program leavers), leavers who exited to shelter or streets (universe: all program leavers), percent of entries from literal homelessness (universe: all program participants), and percent of participant entries with no income (universe: all program participants). The CoC monitors data on providers in HMIS, and is currently monitoring system-wide performance on a quarterly basis. The HMIS Lead also monitors for compliance with data privacy and security requirements. The CoC provides projects with an evaluation after monitoring. The CoC and HMIS Leads are available to provide technical assistance to resolve performance issues. If the project fails to resolve any issues found during monitoring, they are subject to reallocation of funds during the CoC competition. **Monitoring performance of youth providers:** Currently, there are no CoC or ESG funded projects in the CoC that serve unaccompanied youth under 18. All existing projects are able to serve transition age youth (18-24) and are monitored in the manner described above in question 8. All CoC projects undergo an

annual CoC and HMIS monitoring. During the CoC monitoring, staff evaluates the agency's ability to timely submit their APR, their written standards, performance measures, participation in the CES, whether they follow a "Housing First" approach, their prioritization of chronically homeless, and general operations. Those conducting the monitoring review of client charts look for proper documentation (i.e. income, rent calculations, housing quality standards, homeless status, participant eligibility) and treatment plans. During HMIS monitoring, reviewers ensure whether agencies have user agreements and certifications on file, if they have a standard privacy notice and policy that is posted, if they protect hard copy data from unauthorized viewing or access, if they use appropriate releases of information, if agency computers are properly protected, the agency's data quality and completeness, and if the agency staff attend user trainings. As described in question 8, agencies are provided with an evaluation after their annual monitoring visit, and have technical assistance available to them to assist in correction of any findings. **9. Use of data:** Through the assessment conducted in the community (discussed in the Community Needs section), data has been obtained that has identified the need in the community for services for youth experiencing homelessness, which led to the creation of The Cove. The identified need has also led to research on possible interventions for serving youth experiencing homelessness in the community. The collaboration between Waco ISD and HMIS has led to the CoC being able to identify that PIT counts were not accurately counting youth, which has led to improvements in the planning and implementation of new PIT count methodology to improve the count. By obtaining more accurate PIT data, the CoC will be able to better demonstrate the need within the community. The data from the PIT and from WISD about McKinney-Vento youth has informed CoC strategic planning, and the CoC identified ending youth homelessness as a priority. The CoC is also able to share this data with our community systems of care for the

purpose of support services development for youth experiencing homelessness. **10. Youth and evaluation:** Youth are involved in evaluation and quality improvement conversations through their representation on the Youth Homelessness Committee and the HOTH Board. The Cove invites graduates to participate in the YAB which gives input on all aspects of student services. The YAB meets once a month and discusses topics like housing needs and empowerment. **11. Outcome Measures and Defining Success:** In the YHDP meeting held in early 2018, community stakeholders affirmed their commitment to ending youth homelessness and measuring our progress along the way. Outcome measures will align with what other youth serving agencies and homeless agencies currently have in place. These measured outcomes would include the numbers of youth placed in stable and affordable housing, engaged in employment, equipped with transportation, and actively engaging in a circle of positive relational support. Acquisition of independent living skills, health outcomes, and graduation rates will also be considered depending on the level of participation in services. The circle of support will provide “community anchor points” so that when a youth transitions from one system to another (i.e. school to work; home to independent living), the anchor points would communicate and the youth would successfully transition from one to the other, having at least one trusted adult or agency as a constant support through the transition. Additionally, as youth-specific services are implemented, we would measure numbers of days off the street, implement coordinated entry for youth, use HMIS with each youth-partner, and create longitudinal data points to follow young adults through their 25th birthday. The youth-focused CoC team will aim to administer a youth-developed, semi-annual post-graduation survey that measures how young adults are maintaining stable employment, staying in college or trade school/working/military, obtaining health insurance or access to discounted health care, and demonstrating good citizenship without

becoming involved in the justice system. The surveys would also include satisfaction outcomes to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs with which they were involved. Our youth-focused CoC efforts are committed to aligning and measuring outcomes with Prosper Waco to see the vitality of Waco's most vulnerable young people improve in demonstrable ways. We will partner at the systems level to make change happen for youth currently experiencing homelessness. Their story does not end at the age of 24; it is our job to ensure they receive the support necessary to not only survive, but to thrive as they enter adulthood as those who have overcome homelessness.



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