

## **Downtown Austin Community Court Response to Resolution 20190620-184**

The purpose of this document is to provide responsive information to Resolution 20190620-184 (Resolution), which directs the City Manager to assess opportunities and make recommendations for immediate and short-term actions to engage and assist individuals experiencing homelessness.

DACC's mission is to administer justice equitably and compassionately to foster trust and accountability, and to utilize a client-centered and housing-focused intensive case management model to help individuals experiencing homelessness achieve long-term stability.

DACC has provided preliminary responses for each portion of the Resolution that is applicable to our work. This response is organized by topic including:

- 1) Options for DACC Expansion and Non-Criminal Remedies or Tools**
  - 1a. Expansion Option 1: Proactive Outreach within DACC's Jurisdiction
  - 1b. Expansion Option 2: 24/7 Community Court Judicial Operations
  - 1c. Expansion Option 3: Magistration of DACC Citations at Central Booking
  - 1d. Expansion Option 4: Expand DACC's Jurisdiction
  - 1e. Notice Implementation for Warrants
  - 1f. Proactive Workshops for Case Resolution
- 2) Wrap Around Services and Support**
- 3) Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST)**
- 4) Storage**
  - 4a. Austin Homelessness Advisory Council (AHAC) Recommendation
  - 4b. DACC Intensive Case Management Perspective on Storage
  - 4c. Contract Solicitation Background and Options through DACC
- 5) Day Services and Navigation**
  - 5a. DACC Partnership for Staffing Potential Navigation Center
  - 5b. AHAC Input Regarding Day Services and Resources
  - 5c. Life Skills Lab
  - 5d. Co-locating Day Services at DACC
  - 5e. Navigation Center Programming Development Project
- 6) Cleaning and Maintaining Public Spaces**
- 7) Sobering Center Collaboration**
- 8) Community Planning and Ongoing Communications**

DACC works on an ongoing basis to improve services and programming for individuals experiencing homelessness. DACC welcomes any requests for additional information regarding our services or any of the items below.

## **1. Options for DACC Expansion and Non-Criminal Remedies or Tools**

The Resolution calls for information regarding:

- The provision of “possible options for non-criminal remedies or tools related to time and place limitations on camping, sitting, and lying”
- Analysis of opportunities and recommendations for “additional initiatives for promoting the general public welfare and engaging and assisting individuals experiencing homelessness, even when and where they might not be engaging in conduct that presents a public health risk or a public safety threat”
- Expansion of “existing models, such as the Sobering Center and Downtown Austin Community Court, of non-criminalized connection to services by first responders”
- Exploration of “citywide 24/7 or on-call operation of the Downtown Austin Community Court system that provides alternative to jail for Failure to Appear warrant violations”

DACC has identified four different options for expansion specific to proactive outreach, Court judicial hours, magistration at Central Booking, and jurisdiction. A description of current improvements that are underway to improve notification and outreach regarding warrants is included below as well.

### **1a. Expansion Option 1: Proactive Outreach within DACC’s Jurisdiction**

DACC serves as a critical safety net for very vulnerable, highly acute individuals experiencing homelessness, many of whom have tri-occurring issues including mental health, physical disabilities, and substance use issues. Developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, and extensive criminal histories are also common among DACC Intensive Case Management clients. DACC often serves as a resource of last resort when clients aren’t successful in other programs or haven’t ever engaged in other services.

DACC was initially created to address public order and quality of life issues within its original jurisdiction and has evolved to work with Frequent Utilizers, defined as individuals who had 25 or more legal cases with DACC and at least one active case in the last two years. When DACC was established, the Court was engaging with individuals solely through the judicial process. DACC has changed over time to be responsive to community and population needs by creating and expanding Intensive Case Management services, and expanding the pathways that enable individuals seeking help to enter into services.

Today, these pathways include the ability to receive walk-in clients and HOST referrals, which has become the primary entry point into services due to the trust we have built within the homeless community. Additionally, service providers regularly seek assistance and refer highly acute and vulnerable clients to DACC when they think an individual may meet the criteria established for prioritizing individuals seeking case management assistance. There is prioritization for ICM for HOST referrals and frequent utilizers, followed by referrals from other organizations and walk-in clients requesting case management services. For the latter, clients are prioritized based on acuity and the presence of mental and physical health issues, substance use, and involvement in the criminal justice system.

Due to the high acuity and vulnerability of the individuals served, DACC created an Intensive Case Management (ICM) Program, which seeks to provide Critical Time Interventions and uses

a client-centered and housing-focused approach. Research shows Critical Time Intervention is best practice for effective case management with the homeless population. Critical Time Intervention has promise for housing, psychopathology, and substance use and is cost effective for addressing issues with mental health. The ICM Program focuses on rehabilitating and stabilizing individuals using an evidenced-based model of wraparound interventions to help them achieve long-term stability. ICM staff have clinical expertise to deescalate situations and motivate individuals to engage in services by developing rapport and creating trusting relationships.

In addition to connecting individuals with public benefits and housing, DACC funds and manages social service contracts that provide access to transitional and permanent supportive housing, peer support services, substance use treatment and an array of comprehensive social service supports. During contract solicitation processes, DACC seeks services that will enhance our ability to provide Critical Time Interventions, fill proven unmet needs with clients, and works to find innovative solutions to help ensure clients' success. For example, the most recent contract solicitation process yielded two new services including peer support and twenty permanent supportive housing units as resources available for DACC clients. The housing units will serve clients experiencing high levels of acuity, who have been stabilized through case management and social services provided through DACC, and who have no other housing options available to them through vouchers, Coordinated Assessment, or any other housing programs. This ensures that DACC can transition individuals into housing rather than returning vulnerable clients to homelessness after they've gone through months or years of services to achieve stability.

While there are multiple ways to expand Court services, including expanding Court hours, DACC has found the most successful outcomes for individuals experiencing homelessness have resulted from individuals voluntarily participating in ICM, often as a result of responding to proactive outreach to encourage them to engage in services. If large-scale expansion of the Court is something that Council is interested in pursuing, expanding proactive outreach to engage in services is the option most likely to yield effective and positive results.

This approach would address all four of the objectives from the Resolution outlined above. Given that DACC outreach staff would be responding to non-crisis scenarios with individuals experiencing homelessness, this program could be used as a tool for APD, downtown stakeholders, and concerned community members to reach out to individuals experiencing homelessness, but who do not pose any public safety threats. DACC staff would work with these individuals to build trust and develop rapport, and connect them to services and case management that can help them achieve long-term stability. Additionally, of all of the expansion options provided here, this approach would be the most client-centered and is flexible in structure as far as the ability to scale the hours of operation.

Hours of operation options for expanded outreach - All of the options provided here assume a 2-person outreach team per shift:

- 1) 24 hours, 7 days a week
- 2) Weekend scheduling with outreach coverage available continuously from 4:00pm Friday through 9:00am Monday

- a. Given that both HOST and DACC only operate Monday through Friday during business hours, this would provide some coverage where there is an existing gap in services.

If this program is implemented, DACC will collaborate with local shelter partners to identify options for providing shelter for individuals overnight or until they can be connected with ICM staff and support services that are typically operating during normal weekday business hours.

With any of these options, there would be an increase in referrals to ICM programming. DACC currently has a waitlist of 54 individuals, which has been near that level or higher over the last several years. Each ICM case manager can serve 15-16 individuals at any given time. If DACC ICM staff is expanded, there would be a need to also increase the funding for social service agreements to ensure access to wrap around supports for each caseload annually.

For reference, HOST has served 944 unduplicated individuals in the first 3 quarters of FY 2019 including outreach from 9 staff members operating during regular business hours. Of these individuals, 60 were diverted from the criminal justice system and 121 were linked to mental health services. Given the slightly different structure and different hours for expanded DACC outreach, it's not possible to predict the number of referrals that would occur. However, the HOST numbers are helpful to reference since this is also a baseline proactive outreach program.

### **1b. Expansion Option 2: 24/7 Community Court Operations**

During the budget process for Fiscal Year 2018-2019, Downtown Austin Community Court provided a response to Council budget question 177 regarding the estimated cost associated with converting DACC to a 24-hour facility. The cost would be marginally higher today due to normal cost drivers associated with conducting business, but would be the same structure and a similar cost as was outlined in that response.

The estimated structure needed for operating the Downtown Austin Community Court, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week is based on the Austin Municipal Court's 24 hour operation at Central Booking, and is projected to include:

- 4 clerical employees per shift (Monday thru Friday add 2 additional shifts/ Saturday and Sunday add 3 shifts)
- 1 judge per shift (Monday thru Friday add 2 additional shifts/ Saturday and Sunday add 3 shifts)
- Security guards, 2 per shift (Monday thru Friday add 2 additional shifts/ Saturday and Sunday add 3 shifts)
- 1 Triage Case Manager per shift (Monday thru Friday add 2 additional shifts/ Saturday and Sunday add 3 shifts)

Expanding DACC operating hours is not expected to effectively address an individual's homeless status or access to basic needs any more than traditional hours between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. It is true that night and weekend court operations would provide resolutions of a criminal cases and clear cases and warrants by virtue of the extended hours. However, most legal decisions are based on a deliberative process over the course of several settings and thorough analysis of the merits of a case, which may involve additional daytime settings. Additionally, case managers are able to be the most effective during regular business hours given that many

social service providers only have access for intake and some services during business hours. DACC anticipates that an expansion of proactive outreach would be a less expensive and more impactful financial investment, and lead to better outcomes for clients compared to 24/7 court operations.

### **1c. Expansion Option 3: Magistration of DACC Citations at Central Booking**

24 hour, 7 days a week (24/7) magistration at the current Central Booking facility for persons arrested for Class C misdemeanors subject to the DACC jurisdiction is an alternative option to 24/7 DACC operation. Such practice could permit jail release in circumstances where otherwise the DACC defendant would be required to wait several hours until 8:30 am the following morning for magistration at Central Booking by the Austin Municipal Court judge. Such cases would not be resolved, but the defendants would be released to appear in most cases. One potential downstream implication of this approach is the issuance of a warrant in cases where an individual is released but fails to appear by their court date, which is a relatively regular occurrence.

There are multiple reasons why it's considered beneficial for individuals with cases within DACC's jurisdiction to see the DACC judge for offenses. First, the magistration and arraignment would occur in close proximity to the offense. If cases are heard by the same judge and same prosecutor, staff would get to know the repeat defendants and have an opportunity to build trust and encourage engagement in services. Second, DACC links individuals to DACC case management services immediately. Linking the defendant to case management services is most effective during weekday business hours as this is when most support services are available, internally and externally. As a result, expansion option 1 above for proactive outreach might be more effective in linking individuals experiencing homelessness to appropriate services than moving magistration during non-business hours to Central Booking, as proactive outreach would serve as a direct link to DACC's ICM program during the day.

If magistration for DACC cases occurs at Central Booking outside of regular business hours, it is critical to have DACC case management available during those hours so that individuals experiencing homelessness would still have access to the intake process and information regarding Intensive Case Management and other resources available. This would require a minimum of one Triage Clinical Case Manager per shift (Monday thru Friday add 2 additional shifts/ Saturday and Sunday add 3 shifts).

### **1d. Expansion Option 4: Expand DACC's Jurisdiction**

Currently, City Council has authorized DACC to hear and adjudicate Class C offenses other than environmental code and traffic cases punishable in most cases by a \$500.00 fine (higher in limited cases) that are alleged to have been committed in the DACC jurisdiction (see City of Austin Code, Section 2-10-32). Class C misdemeanors may not be punished by imprisonment but instances when a defendant fails to appear or fails to comply with court orders could be punished with a remand to jail for a limited period of time. Currently, the DACC judge refrains from commitment procedures at every possible junction by resolutions that typically involve community service, participating in case management, and completing other activities that help

individuals achieve long term stability such as obtaining identification documentation or entering into substance use treatment.

In Fiscal Year 2018, there were 5,555 Class C cases processed by Municipal Court which encompasses the 101 quality of life Class C offenses that can be processed at DACC when they occur within DACC's jurisdiction. These cases represented 4,333 distinct individuals and of those individuals, 909 were homeless.

Citywide expansion of DACC's Jurisdiction to address quality of life Class C offenses for persons experiencing homelessness could be accomplished by one or more of the following initiatives:

- 1) DACC could hear any Class C violations occurring within the Austin city limits, but currently, cases outside of DACC's jurisdiction area ([http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Community\\_Court/downtown-austin-community-court-3-1-11.pdf](http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Community_Court/downtown-austin-community-court-3-1-11.pdf)) are sent to the Austin Municipal Court for resolution. All Class C misdemeanors (excluding environmental code or possibly traffic cases) where a person experiencing homelessness stands accused could be assigned to DACC.
- 2) Rather than all homeless defendant cases as well as currently adjudicated cases, all the Camping in Public Place (Code of City of Austin 9-4-11) and Aggressive Confrontation (Code of City of Austin 9-4-13) cases throughout the City of Austin could be additionally assigned to DACC.

If expansion of DACC's jurisdiction is pursued, analysis would be needed about the staffing and resource implications for both Municipal Court and DACC. Given that DACC's mission is largely based around serving highly acute individuals experiencing homelessness, it would be beneficial to view any changes through the lens of how it could help or hamper services for individuals experiencing homelessness. DACC currently has a waitlist of 54 individuals, and greatly expanding the cases adjudicated at DACC without expanding resources to serve those individuals could result in a bottleneck and lost opportunities for engagement.

### **1e. Notice Implementation for Warrants**

Warrants are issued for failure to appear in court for a fine only offense pursuant to Texas Penal Code 38.10(b) and, as specified to citations, Texas Code of Criminal Procedure 14.06(b). Texas Code of Criminal Procedure 45.014(e) requires that written or telephonic notice be provided to the defendant of the missed court date and that the defendant must appear on a rescheduled date not to exceed 30 days from the missed court date. Consequences for failure to appear must be included in the notice. Therefore, Defendants must be given two opportunities to appear in court before a warrant for failure to appear may be issued. Notices for persons who do not have a permanent residence may be sent to an address designated by the defendant, which oft times may be a temporary shelter or the DACC case management mail center.

Although Texas law permits a separate Class C misdemeanor prosecution for failure to appear on a Class C misdemeanor charge, the City Law Department does not pursue failure to appear prosecutions in either DACC or Austin Municipal Court. Furthermore, the City Law Department's prosecutor assigned to Community Court works with defendants or when represented, a defendant's attorney, to recall warrants for the swift resolution of the class C

misdeemeanor and linkage to case management by virtue of the cleared warrant. Such practices adheres to the mandate of Texas Code of Criminal Procedure 45.014(g) which requires a justice or judge to recall a warrant for failure to appear when a defendant voluntarily appears and makes a good faith effort to resolve the arrest warrant before the warrant is executed.

DACC is working on developing a third notice to go out once a warrant has been issued, which is not current practice. This notice will be written to serve several functions:

- 1) Inform individuals that a warrant has been issued and provide options for next steps
- 2) Provide reassurance that individuals that come into DACC to resolve warrants will not be arrested
- 3) Provide contact information for the Court to field questions including phone, email, and walk-in hours for assistance
- 4) Provide information regarding options for resolving warrants, which can include Community Services Restitution hours or participating in activities that help individuals achieve long term stability such as obtaining identification documentation, participating in substance use treatment, or engaging in Intensive Case Management services
- 5) Serve as an informational template that can be provided to HOST and other service providers that work with individuals experiencing homelessness. This would help inform others about services provided at DACC, and serve as a resource if they encounter individuals that currently have warrants with DACC and need help with next steps

Additionally, DACC is currently exploring implementation of call and email reminders to notify individuals of upcoming court dates. The New York City Criminal Justice Agency published a research brief titled “Desk Appearance Tickets and Appearance Rates – The Benefits of Court Date Reminders” (Study). The Study found overall failure to appear (FTA) “at the first court appearance was reduced by as much as 47 percent for those individuals who received both a three day and same day phone call (10.1 percent FTA) compared to those who did not receive any phone call reminder (18.9 percent FTA).”

If determined as a best practice, DACC would be implementing this as an improvement to ongoing operations and as a proactive approach to help defendants avoid warrants. This program would not negate the need for proactive outreach, as many individuals experiencing homelessness do not have phones, or may have numbers that change frequently when their phones are lost or stolen. These individuals may also lack reliable access to email. However, some individuals experiencing homelessness that are defendants of DACC do have phones and email access, and could benefit from this practice as well.

## **1f. Proactive Workshops for Case Resolution**

In the nearly twenty years that DACC has been in operation, there have been efforts to continuously improve services and programs in ways that are responsive to the needs of the community and the individuals served by Court. These improvements include regular review of best practices of other community courts around the country. One of these best practices that DACC is exploring is conducting proactive workshops, which would enable individuals to resolve cases and have access to community resources. These events would be advertised and provide times for individuals to:

- Clear DACC and Austin Municipal Court warrants and resolve outstanding cases utilizing non-monetary resolutions
- Discuss options with the DACC prosecutor which may include pretrial diversions
- Collaborate with DACC staff to clear cases or other impediments to obtaining identification
- Provide support for enrollment in Medicaid, VA benefits, and other health insurance and public benefits the individual may qualify for
- Complete a Coordinated Assessment to determine housing prioritization based on vulnerability
- Support victims of human trafficking through referrals to available support services
- Identify and obtain services for medical, dental, vision, and/or mental healthcare
- Provide access to job training or work opportunities as appropriate

These workshops would be available to DACC defendants and any individuals experiencing homelessness in the community that are interested in engaging and getting help accessing resources. If this initiative moves forward, DACC would work with organizations and community partners to coordinate necessary resources to address the needs of individuals attending these workshops. DACC currently provides all of these services to defendants and other individuals including referrals from HOST and walk-in clients seeking help. DACC is open to feedback about this potential service including which partners should be included, optimal structure and frequency, and effective outreach strategies.

## **2. Wrap Around Services and Support**

The Resolution calls for wrap around services as a component of potential new sheltering options for people experiencing homelessness including “parking areas across the City that would allow for people to sleep in cars and receive wrap around services,” and in at least ten locations in each Council District “that would allow for a temporary or permanent shelter, and/or camping, that are to be planned in conjunction with the delivery of and receipt of wrap-around services.”

DACC currently has a triage case manager during business hours, who assists clients with basic needs, navigation, identification documents, and linkage to resources. The triage case manager will assign an ICM to any frequent utilizer requesting case management services, and adds other clients to the waitlist for case management. This person does not carry an ongoing caseload, but rather ensures that any walk-in clients have immediate access to some level of help and provides access to information about available resources. If appropriate resources and staffing were available, DACC staff could serve in the same triage and intake capacity at other shelter locations in the City. This would be particularly effective in cases where clientele is similar to the individuals served at DACC, who typically are experiencing homelessness, and may have tri-occurring issues including physical disabilities, health and mental health issues, and substance use.

Consideration should be given to the capacity for individuals who need ongoing Intensive Case Management Services through DACC. As noted in the section above, the current waitlist is 54 individuals, and each ICM case manager can serve 15-16 individuals at any given time. For each

new case manager, expansion of funding for social service agreements is needed to ensure access to wrap around supports for individuals participating in ICM services.

### **3. Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST)**

The Resolution calls for the potential expansion of “the Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST) program and related retraining of APD, EMS and Integral Care employees.”

DACC plays two roles on the HOST Team. First, DACC has a dedicated case manager on the HOST team that assists with outreach and proactively engaging and addressing the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. The consistent presence of the same DACC case manager also assists with developing rapport and creating trust among individuals who are typically resistant to services or accepting assistance. Second, this case manager facilitates HOST referrals to DACC for individuals requiring intensive case management assistance and linkages to support services. DACC case management services are primarily available to at-risk, highly vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness who HOST engages anywhere HOST conducts outreach.

DACC intensive case managers provide comprehensive, wrap-around services to include connection to temporary and permanent housing, transportation, bio-psycho-social assessment, outreach, case monitoring, crisis intervention, employment assistance, linkages to support services (i.e. substance use treatment, peer support, life skills training, basic needs, etc.) and continued support after individuals are housed.

If HOST is expanded, DACC recommends that DACC case management staff and investments in social services are increased proportionally to ensure continuity of services for individuals ready to engage. If DACC does not increase staff capacity and social services to accommodate the increase in HOST referrals, a significant bottleneck could continue to develop and opportunities for deeper level engagement could be lost. Best practice would be to have a case management slot available when a client is ready to engage providing Critical Time Intervention.

Each DACC Clinical Case Manager carries a caseload of approximately 15-16 clients at any given time. DACC will continue to prioritize HOST referrals, but there may still be a short waiting period if there are no open slots at the time of engagement. DACC’s waitlist currently includes 54 individuals from all intake sources including the judicial process, walk-in clients seeking services, and HOST referrals. When slots open up, HOST referrals are a prioritization criteria along with other items measuring an individual’s acuity.

### **4. Storage**

The Resolution called for “possible options for safe storage lockers, including climate-controlled storage lockers, across the city for people experiencing homelessness.” The following information is provided in three categories including a recommendation from the Austin Homelessness Advisory Council, DACC Intensive Case Management staff perspectives based on client interactions, and information regarding past and potential future contract solicitations for storage.

#### **4a. Austin Homelessness Advisory Council (AHAC) Recommendation**

The Austin Homelessness Advisory Council (AHAC) is an advisory body comprised of individuals with lived experience with homelessness in Austin whose work is facilitated and administratively supported by DACC. AHAC developed a resolution recommending City Council action regarding storage, including guidance for factors that should be considered in the development of any storage program to serve individuals experiencing homelessness. AHAC's Resolution was presented to and recommended by the Downtown Austin Community Court Advisory Board as Recommendation 20190607-3a, available here:

<http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=321920>. As part of AHAC's process, surveys were completed to describe the personal impacts of availability of storage options, which were provided as backup to the DACC Advisory Board and available here:

<http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=320613>.

#### **4b. DACC Intensive Case Management Perspective on Storage**

In response to City Council's Resolution, DACC's Intensive Case Management staff provided input on why storage is important and what not having storage keeps a client from accomplishing based on their interactions serving individuals experiencing homelessness. Their feedback included the barriers related to lack of access to storage, as well as suggestions for what would be beneficial in a storage structure to accommodate the needs DACC has seen with our clients.

##### **Barriers Associated with Lack of Storage**

Clients can be hesitant to seek employment and attend medical appointments knowing that they will have to bring all of their belongings with them each day or attempt to hide them or leave them with other people risking theft. People are also less likely to access designated shelters at night, if they fear their belongings, which can include sentimental items that are irreplaceable may end up missing. Lack of storage often results in DACC Case Management staff working with clients to re-order identification documents numerous times, which is costly and time intensive. Replacing identification documents can be extremely difficult with the limits on the number of birth certificates and Social Security cards that may be issued. Some DACC clients are at their limit for replacement Social Security cards because their belongings have been stolen so many times. Additionally, clients carry their medications in their backpacks, which can be expensive and/or difficult to replace. Individuals can become medically vulnerable if they don't have access to the medication they must take to address physical health and mental health disorders. When items are stolen, individuals can't always get refills because the prescriptions are new and insurance won't cover them again until a certain time period has passed, limiting their access to a critical health need.

##### **Suggested Considerations for Storage Accommodations**

Storage locker size should accommodate clothes that need to be hung or neatly folded. DACC clients have mentioned that if they have to wear a work uniform or business casual clothing that they can't keep their clothes clean, pressed and neatly folded in their backpacks. The units should also be large enough to store work boots and some tools, if possible. Some individuals would be able to make more money if they had their own tools to use. However, since they can't carry them around when they're not working, they typically don't try to acquire their own. Having a storage unit can also reduce the overall stress that clients experience, because they know they have a safe and secure place to store their belongings, which can improve their overall mental health and daily functioning. Having a place to store

belongings may also allow clients to attend medical and mental health appointments, court hearings, complete Community Service Restitution and potentially avoid warrants, which is a better outcome for those individuals and a cost-savings for the public. Designated storage center(s) that include outlets for charging phones would be helpful, and the center(s) could also serve as a designated lost and found if the model and staffing associated allows for that.

#### **4c. Contract Solicitation Background and Options through DACC**

On November 8, 2018, DACC launched a Housing-Focused Support Services Contract Solicitation that gave applicants twelve different service area options to apply for, including storage. The potential program and service areas were selected following feedback from DACC case managers and AHAC regarding what services would be most beneficial and critical for clients experiencing homelessness. Thirteen bids were received, but none of the applicants proposed a storage program. DACC is exploring the option of conducting a solicitation specific to storage to serve DACC clients, which could be expanded if resources were made available.

DACC could work with the Purchasing Office to release a solicitation specific to creating storage solutions for individuals experiencing homelessness. Having a dedicated contract solicitation for storage, instead of listing storage as an eligible program in a general homelessness services solicitation, would provide specificity of a desired storage solution and would attract potential respondents who have not historically responded to homelessness services solicitations.

#### **5. Day Services and Navigation**

The Resolution called for identification of “funding for pilot projects that can incubate innovative solutions to sustainable programs” and creation of “new, geographically dispersed, temporary, housing-focused homeless navigation centers and shelters across the City.”

DACC has provided several categories of responsive information including possible partnership with DACC for staffing navigation centers, input from AHAC regarding day services and resources, a Life Skills Lab program proposal, co-locating day services at DACC, and a navigation center programming development project that’s currently being developed through a partnership between DACC, the Office of Design and Development, and Austin Public Health.

#### **5a. DACC Partnership for Staffing Potential Navigation Center**

DACC could deploy a triage clinical case manager to provide intake services for Intensive Case Management and resource navigation if adequate staffing was available. The same caveats for availability of services after intake and structure as listed in the wrap around services section above would apply here.

#### **5b. AHAC Input Regarding Day Services & Resources**

Austin Public Health visited AHAC on June 24, 2019 to collect input from the members regarding the transition of day services and other resources as part of the process for transitioning the services provided by the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH). The members filled out surveys that included questions regarding where services are currently offered, what organizations could provide services, resources that are needed but not available, prioritization of locations for services, benefits and challenges of using City and community facilities for services, and effective communication methods for notifying individuals experiencing homelessness of service changes and expansion.

AHAC Members were asked to identify resources that are needed and not currently available based on their personal experience and from input they've heard from others. AHAC Members identified the following unmet needs in the community:

- Counseling
- Showers
- Classes on budgeting
- Personal hygiene supplies
- Life skills classes
- Co-located services
- Day sleep options
- Mobile food pantries
- Mobile pet services
- Transportation assistance
- Storage/lockers for men and women
- Places to get out of the heat for an extended period of time
- Places for individuals with disabilities to rest
- General services for people with physical disabilities
- Access to water and coffee
- Low barrier or free access to laundry options
- Accessible case workers
- Mobile health clinics and basic medical assessments
- Information regarding available services

For effective communication methods, AHAC Members recommended:

- Word of mouth
- Fliers
- Radio
- Phone calls
- Signs up at shelters such as the ARCH and Salvation Army
- Communication through case managers and churches
- Collaboration with the Trinity Center
- Video recorded advertisements to be shown in areas such as the lobby of CommUnity Care Clinics and other service providers

AHAC members have given consent to sharing their written input, and DACC can provide copies of the surveys upon request.

### **5c. Life Skills Lab**

The City's Office of Design and Development, the Innovation Office, and the Austin Homelessness Advisory Council have identified a need for day services and educational resources for individuals experiencing homelessness, and have worked together on a framework for a Life Skills Lab that would meet this need. DACC was asked to develop curriculum and lead a Life Skills course for the community if this project moves forward. To successfully run this program, one Clinical Case Manager would be needed to research and develop curriculum for day programming for clients at the pre-contemplative and contemplative stages of homelessness.

If approved during the Fiscal Year 2019-20 budget process, the development of the curriculum would take place in 2019/2020 and the program would be presented in 2020/2021 at different locations. The initial structure would require one additional Clinical Case Manager.

### **5d. Co-locating Day Services at DACC**

Since its inception approximately 20 years ago, DACC has been located at 719 E. 6th. DACC now has more than triple the number of staff compared to when the Court first began operating at the current location. DACC is working with the Office of Real Estate Services to identify a facility to accommodate its growth and expansion of services for individuals experiencing homelessness. One requirement identified for a new location is the availability of space for day

programming activities for individuals experiencing homelessness to help them obtain the skills and knowledge needed to successfully transition from homelessness to housing.

### **5e. Navigation Center Programming Development Project**

DACC is providing funding and collaboration for the Office of Design and Delivery's work to prototype and test navigation center programming and to capture data and promising practices regarding how a center could serve the homeless community. The hiring process is currently underway for a temporary case manager that will supervise the navigation center pilot.

The Case Manager will oversee the center, welcome clients, assess their needs, and assist with intake and various applications. Social services provided will include help accessing health insurance cards, doctor's appointments, various identification documents, substance use treatment, coordinated entry, housing assessment, TB testing, and HIV AIDs testing. This center is a pilot, so the Case Manager will write notes about their observations at the end of every workday. The navigation center will move locations every two weeks to three different locations, including downtown Austin, North Austin, and South Austin. The pilot will run for approximately six weeks.

### **6. Cleaning and Maintaining Public Spaces**

The Resolution requested information regarding the creation or expansion of “programs that keep City parks and waterways clean and well maintained.”

DACC's Community Service Restitution (CSR) work crews enable defendants from DACC, Municipal Court, and Travis County Probationers to complete community service requirements. The majority of participants in the CSR program come through the Travis County Probation program. Due to physical and/or mental disabilities, most individuals with cases at DACC that are experiencing homelessness are unable to participate on CSR work crews. In these cases, individuals can meet community service hours through participating in case management or engaging in activities that help achieve long-term stability such as obtaining identification documents or participating in substance use treatment.

CSR defendants complete community service requirements through graffiti abatement, homeless encampment cleanup, right of way maintenance, and other municipal purpose jobs. This includes the collection of many tons of trash throughout Austin, at the request of Austin Resource Recovery, Austin Code, Parks and Recreation, Public Health, Police and other City departments and community stakeholders. CSR work crews also help grow and maintain small food crops at DACC's Edgar Fincher III Program Garden, which are donated to social service and nonprofit agencies that provide meals to Austin's homeless population.

Cleaning of homeless encampments includes prior notice and outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness to connect those interested with services, as well as coordination with multiple departments to arrange everything needed for supplies and staffing required for these projects. When DACC is the lead for encampment cleanups, APD's presence is necessary to ensure security and enable DACC staff to focus on cleaning the area and providing information to individuals regarding case management services and other resources.

In Fiscal Year 2018, there were 27,858 hours worked through the CSR program on these municipal purpose projects. Calculated at the City’s living wage of \$15 per hour, this is a \$417,870 value for the City. In Fiscal Year 2019, including October through June, 16,169 hours have been worked through the CSR program, which is a value of \$242,535. This program is nearing capacity, given that there are limits and fluctuations in individuals needing to fulfill public service hours. If there was a desire to expand these programs, an additional crew leader could be hired. Each crew leader requires a vehicle and some equipment, and accommodates up to 4 CSR defendants that assist in completion of municipal purpose projects. Based on the average hours per work crew in Fiscal Year 2018, an additional crew leader would likely support approximately 5,572 hours for municipal purpose projects annually, which would be the equivalent value of approximately 2.7 FTEs.

### **7. Sobering Center Collaboration**

The Resolution asks for options regarding expansion of “existing models, such as the Sobering Center and Downtown Austin Community Court, of non-criminalized connection to services by first responders.” DACC is currently working with the Sobering Center to develop a formalized process and procedure to enable DACC to accept referrals from the Sobering Center. DACC welcomes other opportunities to strengthen this partnership, and will continue to explore ways to improve client services through collaboration and shared resources.

### **8. Community Planning and Ongoing Communications**

The Resolution directs the City Manager “to develop recommendations for public information strategies that provide the general public with access to data, resources, and educational materials on assisting the homeless and relevant City policies and efforts. These strategies should include opportunities for private individuals or organizations to participate in Austin’s efforts to address homelessness.”

As stated previously, DACC can accept walk-in requests for services as well as referrals from other social service providers. The warrant notification currently in development, mentioned section 1e. above, will be written in a way that will include a clear explanation of services available through DACC that can be made available to service providers and the general public. As citywide communications regarding homelessness services are developed, DACC will gladly contribute and collaborate to move those efforts forward.

The Resolution also called for the development of “recommendations for convening City staff, community stakeholders, national experts, and leaders in peer cities to collaborate on best practices for addressing homelessness” and “methods for regularly determining the needs and soliciting the input of individuals directly experiencing homelessness.”

DACC would gladly take a lead or collaborative role in organizing and facilitating convening of stakeholders, experts, stakeholders, and staff. DACC is the only City department that provides direct and intensive case management services solely to individuals experiencing homelessness, and our Clinical Case Management staff are highly trained, licensed, and have backgrounds working with highly acute individuals experiencing homelessness.

As mentioned in the sections on Storage and Day Services, DACC provides facilitation and administrative support for the Austin Homelessness Advisory Council, a group of approximately

15 individuals with lived experience with homelessness in Austin. This group meets biweekly for two hours each meeting, and is available for any City Departments or service providers that would like input on policies, programming, or practices related to homelessness. For more information or to schedule time on one of their agendas, you may reach out to Laura Williamson at [Laura.Williamson2@austintexas.gov](mailto:Laura.Williamson2@austintexas.gov) or by phone at (512) 974-1233.

Additionally, DACC provides staff support for the Council-appointed Downtown Austin Community Court Advisory Board, which regularly considers items related to issues impacting our homeless population. DACC respectfully requests that any convening of local stakeholders and providers includes representation from AHAC and the DACC Advisory Board given their expertise and current advisory roles for the City.

The Resolution calls for alignment with Austin's Action Plan to End Homelessness (Action Plan) and all other previous Council resolutions and actions directed related to homelessness. Through the ICM program, DACC's work directly aligns with objectives in the Housing and Support Services section of the Action Plan including:

- "Persons experiencing homelessness have access to recovery services, mental healthcare, and other healthcare services"
- "Persons experiencing homelessness access all mainstream benefits and are assisted by social service agencies to successfully enroll in benefit programs"

DACC's provision of facilitation and administrative support of AHAC aligns with the following objective in the Addressing Disparities section of the Action Plan:

- "Our homelessness response system leverages the abilities and agency of people that have experienced homelessness"

DACC is also committed to Strategic Direction 2023, and our work directly aligns with the following outcomes:

- **Economic Opportunity and Affordability** - As part of the Economic Opportunity & Affordability Outcome, DACC is contributing to the leveraging of both prevention and service delivery to reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness in Austin by providing these individuals with intensive case management support, while adhering to best practice approaches, so individuals can gain long-term stability and successfully exit homelessness.
- **Safety** - As part of the Safety Outcome, DACC is contributing to the accountability, fairness, equity, impartiality, and transparency of justice processes for residents that engage with the Community Court. Clients of DACC, including individuals experiencing homelessness have access to alternative forms of adjudication which can include participating in Intensive Case Management Services to obtain identification documentation, signing up for public benefits they qualify for, completing a Coordinated Assessment, and/or participating in social services that meet their needs.
- **Health and Environment** - DACC seeks to promote healthy living among the high-risk individuals served at the Court by connecting them to the appropriate service providers and helping them navigate the system to overcome barriers to obtaining the services that they need. This includes providing services that can result in optimal physical, mental,

and behavioral health and ensuring access to health services, basic needs, and other resources necessary for individuals to achieve long-term stability.

- **Government that Works for All** - DACC is contributing to the development of trusting, transparent, collaborative decision-making processes, with all stakeholders of the Court, in order to achieve positive perceptions and more equitable outcomes, and exceed the expectations of the resident we serve, specifically the most vulnerable, high-risk, high-needs individuals seeking court services. Regular process and practice improvements are enacted including updating and standardizing how DACC measures and monitors service and performance standards, maintaining a focus on serving the vulnerable, high-risk, high-needs individuals, and by improving our competitiveness as an employer to recruit and retain a diverse, highly skilled, ethical workforce.

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DACC appreciates the City Council's leadership in addressing homelessness in our community. Our staff will continue to collaborate with stakeholders, City leadership and departments, and individuals experiencing homelessness to advance our combined efforts to help facilitate positive outcomes for our neighbors experiencing homelessness.

For questions or requests for further information about any of the items above, please feel free to contact me at (512) 974-4873 or Robert Kingham, DACC's Court Operations Manager at (512) 974-1394 or [Robert.Kingham@austintexas.gov](mailto:Robert.Kingham@austintexas.gov).