



**JOINT INCLUSION COMMITTEE (JIC)
BUDGET ENDORSEMENTS ON HEALTH
RECOMMENDATION #: 20220323-005f**

Date: March 23, 2022

Subject: JIC Endorsements - Recommendations for Health

Motioned By: Amanda Afifi

Seconded By: Raul Alvarez

JOINT INCLUSION COMMITTEE BUDGET ENDORSEMENTS – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCESS

VOTE

For: Amanda Afifi, Vincent Cobalis, Raul Alvarez, Karen Crawford, Rebecca Austen, Charles Curry, Amy Temperley, Robin Orlowski.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

Absent: Jamarr Brown & Gregory Smith

Attest: Jeremy Garza, Staff Liaison, Equity Office:

x Jeremy Garza

DESCRIPTION:

The Joint Inclusion Committee unanimously endorsed the following recommendation submitted by member Commissions. These recommendations address critical issues in health that uniquely affects the quality of life for diverse communities represented from each commission member of the Joint Inclusion Committee.

- Commission on Seniors, **Recommendation Number 20220309-04Cviii**: Permanent Community Health Workers Strategy Plan for Serving Older Adults Experiencing Homelessness
- Commission for Women, **Recommendation Number 20220302-002d**: Women Experiencing Homelessness
- African American Resource Advisory Commission, **Recommendation Number 20220330-004**: Persons Experiencing Homelessness (African American & Youth)
- Commission for Women, **Recommendation Number 20220302-02d**: Recommendations for Mental Health
- Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission, **Recommendation Number 2022032-3aiv**: Expand Funding for Mental Health Supports for Hispanic/Latino Community
- Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission, **Recommendation Number 20220328-004c5**: Mental Health Services
- LGBTQ+ Quality of Life Commission, **Recommendation Number 20220328-3A-3**: Continued Funding for Youth LGBTQIA+ Mental Health Services
- Commission on Immigrant Affairs, **Recommendation Number 20220307-2d3**: Fund Refugee Health Screening Clinic

Recommendation:

The Commission on Seniors recommends the Austin Public Health Homeless Services Division:

1. Transition the current temporary community health worker positions to 9 FTE permanent positions devoted to supporting the needs of persons experiencing homelessness.
 - a. Of the allocated 9FTEs, 2 FTEs should be dedicated to serving the needs of persons 50 and older given the challenges and growth of this population as detailed below.
2. Develop and implement a strategy for serving the needs of older adults experiencing homelessness. Implementation should begin no later than January 1, 2023. The plan should:
 - a. Identify the housing, health care, social, and other needs of older adults experiencing homelessness, including disability, long term care, dementia care, and caregiver support and develop programs to meet those needs;
 - b. Ensure coordinated entry appropriately matches older adults with their needs;
 - c. Include strategies to prevent older adults becoming homeless, such as deeply affordable housing and caregiver support;
 - d. Develop the strategy in consultation with providers serving older adults and providers serving people experiencing homelessness (such as the collaborative described below).

Rationale:

Data provided by ECHO about the population experiencing homelessness in the Austin area shows that for all clients who entered a program between Oct 2019 and Oct 2020, 26% were age 50 or older. Nationally, data shows the number of older adults in the homeless population is growing rapidly and will continue to grow for the next decade.

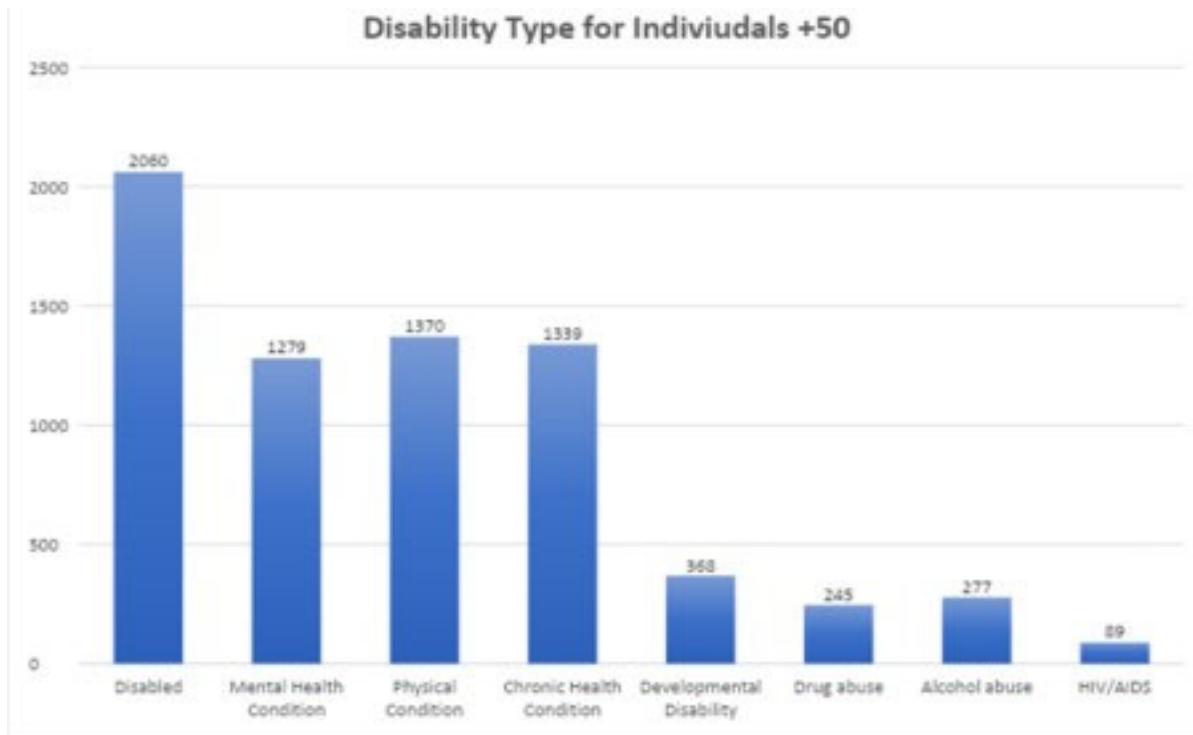
The number of older adults in the population of people experiencing homeless requires us to revisit and adapt assistance programs that were designed to address the needs of a much younger group and fail to account for medical, social, and emotional needs that emerge later in life. Older adults experiencing homelessness have diverse needs related to their housing, health care, social, and other needs. Further, the stresses of homelessness cause premature aging; Austin already classifies aged 55 and older in this population as older adults.

In October 2020, a collaborative was formed in Central Texas to find ways to address the special needs of this aging homeless population. Members include representatives from both the aging and homeless space in non-profit, for-profit, and governmental organizations. Participants include: Family Eldercare, Adult Protective Services, ECHO, Integral Care, UT School of Nursing and Social Work, Front Steps, Salvation Army, City of Austin Public Health, SAFE, Area Agency on Aging, Drive a Senior ATX, Central Health, Texas Health Action, Coming of Age, Care Patrol and Joy of Life Home Health and Hospice.

Individual members agencies in the Austin area are reporting:

- Increased numbers of older adults in their programming
- A lack of specialized services and housing for older adults who are homeless to assist with additional needs such as cooking, shopping, bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting etc. Many are not appropriate for a nursing home but need daily living support.
- Older adults with disabilities and care needs being discharged from hospitals, nursing homes or jails and dropped off at shelters. The shelters are unable to help meet their basic needs such as transferring, dressing/bathing, toileting etc.

Below is a chart based on data from ECHO showing individuals 50+ (2634 total) and their disability type:



Although the Coordinated Entry system identifies persons aged 55 and older, there are virtually no programs to serve the specific needs of older adults experiencing homelessness. The APH Homeless Services Division identified one program, Rapid Rehousing for Older Adults, funded at \$157,750. Further, there is no strategy focused on the needs of older adults. The dedicated funding would allow more effective interventions targeted to the special needs of older adults and their caregivers.

The Commission on Seniors believes the city should put the same focus and dedication to addressing the needs of older adults experiencing homelessness as we did in striving to end homelessness for Veterans. This was discussed at the March 26, 2022, Public Safety and Health Townhall where a community member advocated for increased supportive housing and other resources devoted to persons experiencing homelessness. Allocating 2 FTE community health worker positions would allow for improved care and support for this vulnerable population.

Attest: 
Janee Briesemeister, Chair of the Commission on Seniors

Recommendation to Council:

WHEREAS, the Commission for Women of the City of Austin serves as an advisory body that advocates for and inspires the City Council and City Manager to prioritize women’s quality of life, so that Austin becomes the most equitable city in the nation for women and girls; and

WHEREAS, women and female-identifying persons (hereafter referenced as “women”) may be more vulnerable and less safe while experiencing homelessness; these risks are amplified for those with children; these women are often considered “hidden” - rather than living on the streets, they may be sleeping in cars, hotels, or shelters, or moving from one between places with friends or family; and

WHEREAS, being unhoused causes interrelated issues with poverty, access to stable housing, employment, child care, schooling, and family life; according to a presentation from Saint Louise House to the Commission working group on August 4, 2021, 84% of homeless families are led by women, 53% of these mothers lack a high school diploma, and 92% have experienced abuse; and

WHEREAS, women with or without children who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking and any other form of sexual violence or trauma are at a greater risk; and

WHEREAS, the capacity of short or long-term shelters and temporary/transitional housing for women and families is limited, and exacerbated by COVID-19 restrictions; shelters and temporary facilities may also lack services tailored to the specific needs of women and families; and

WHEREAS, the Saint Louise House is a viable solution to help those in need; their mission as a nonprofit organization is dedicated to the success of women and their children moving from homelessness to healthy independent lives, striving to empower women and their children to overcome homelessness for generations to come; their proven program provides stable housing and wraparound services with highly-individualized support that fosters education, financial literacy, strong family relationships and healthy living, leading to a lifetime of self-sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, since the Saint Louise House was founded in Austin in 2000, there have been 205 families served, 448 children served with 100% moving to the next grade level, and 90% of the women increasing self-sufficiency; in 2020 there were 54 families with 125 children served, 12 successful graduations, 15 families moved out of homelessness into Saint Louise House, and even with COVID-19, 80% of families continued to make progress toward self-sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, the need for housing and services such as those provided by Saint Louise House exceeds current capacity, with waiting lists for families needing guidance and assistance; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for Women passed [Recommendation 20210203-04b](#): Continued Funding for the Hotel Safety Net for Survivors on February 3, 2021, to continue funding the hotel safety net and resources for victims experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, and directing the City Manager to diversify the funding to organizations that support victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, to address their unique needs;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Commission for Women recommends for the FY2022-2023 budget, the City of Austin:

- 1) Support the Saint Louise House to increase capacity and services, such as through partnerships with the City to acquire access to additional land and/or facilities at reduced cost, to serve more women and families experiencing homelessness and help them transition to independence;
- 2) Continue to fund the Hotel Safety Net and/or comparable programs to provide safe and timely housing and services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking;
- 3) Continue to fund programs such as SAFE’s shelter and wrap-around services such as Bridge to Safety for victims of sexual violence;
- 4) Fund affordable, flexible, quality child care programs that specifically address the needs of unhoused families.

Attest: _____
Jonathan Babiak
Jonathan Babiak, Staff Liaison

RECOMMENDATION 20220330-004: PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS (AFRICAN AMERICAN & YOUTH)

Recommendation to Council:

This recommendation looks to further address the mental, physical and emotional concerns of African American persons and youth who are currently and chronically experiencing homelessness in the Austin area. This need also addresses domestic and sexual assault survivors. (\$1.2M)

City Department:

Austin Public Health (APH)

Justification:

According to 2019 data from ECHO, African Americans comprise 8% of the general population, but make up 34% of persons experiencing homelessness. There are over 1900 students experiencing homelessness.

According to Survive 2 Thrive Foundation, in March 2020 survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault being displaced and becoming homeless, shelters are turning away nearly 90% of survivors. 1 in 3 women (40%) and 1 in 7 men have experienced violence. 13% of persons experiencing homelessness self-identify as a victim of domestic abuse. Homelessness and Housing Insecurities – according to the City of Austin Homelessness Dashboard (<https://homelessness.dashboards.austintexas.gov/>), 40% of persons experiencing homelessness, persons being sheltered and over 50% of persons who return to homelessness, due to structural, institutional or relational contributing factors, are African Americans.

We request the City of Austin continue to make caring for persons experiencing homelessness a priority. The priority should consist of programs and resources that help provide stable and permanent housing, as well as looking at programs in other cities like Houston, TX. (Interactive Kiosk Experience) and Los Angeles, CA. (Refresh Spot) that provide resources to persons while experiencing homelessness.

Alignment with Council Strategic Priorities:

Health & Environment. Accessibility to quality health care services, both physical and mental.

Attest: Daryl Horton, Chair

Recommendation to Council:

WHEREAS, the Commission for Women of the City of Austin serves as an advisory body that advocates for and inspires the City Council and City Manager to prioritize women’s quality of life, so that Austin becomes the most equitable city in the nation for women and girls; and

WHEREAS, the United States is currently in a mental health crisis and quickly approaching a second pandemic of mental health spillover and burnout from the COVID-19 pandemic¹ for which Austin is not exempt²; and

WHEREAS, according to Mental Health America³, Texas is among the lowest ranked states in regard to access to mental health care; and

WHEREAS, recent suicide data suggests that Austin suicide rates were on an increase over the last several years⁴; and

WHEREAS, disparities are apparent among mental health treatment for individuals from underserved communities in Austin (BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, etc.), who are less likely to engage in services due to the lack of culturally-specific providers in the Austin community, and significant financial barriers; these issues were highlighted in the LGBTQIA+ Quality of Life study⁵; and

WHEREAS, the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force 2021 Mid-Year Recommendations report⁶ highlights the need for mental health resources allocated to the community; and

WHEREAS, on June 22, 2020 the Commission for Women passed Recommendation 20200622- 03A1: Race and Gender Equity⁷, which included a recommendation to address disparate economic, health and safety impacts on women of color resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, on April 17, 2020 the Commission for Women passed Recommendation 20200417- 03C: COVID-19 Responses for Women and Girls⁸, which highlighted the physical and mental health issues affecting women and girls as a result of the pandemic;

¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32340586/>),

² <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/state-mental-health-america>

³ <https://mhanational.org/issues/2021/ranking-states>),

⁴ <https://www.livestories.com/statistics/texas/travis-county-suicide-deaths-mortality>

⁵ <https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=368782>

⁶ <https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Completed%20RPS%20Taskforce%20Mid-Year%20Recommendations%20Report.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=342481>

⁸ <https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=339033>

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Commission for Women recommends the following for the FY2022-2023 budget, to address the mental health needs of women, girls, individuals who identify as female, and the broader community:

- The City of Austin prioritize funding to diverse communities regarding mental healthcare, particularly for BIPOC and transgender individuals, including specific recommendations from the LGBTQIA+ Quality of Life Study.
- The City of Austin allocated \$250,000 to implement the Reimagining Public Safety SSVVP group recommendation related to creating a mental health referral fund.
 - This funding should be contracted to grassroots, community-based organizations rather than administered out of APD, so as to increase access for all community members.
 - If the funding remains in APD, it should fund an administrator position in Victims Services.
 - The funds can be used to expand the current EMDR training program, train Victim Services and community-based therapists in alternative healing modalities, and directly pay for mental health and healing services.
- The City of Austin implement recommendations from the Public Health Reinvestment Working Group of the Reimagining Public Safety Taskforce, including:
 - Open low-cost and sliding scale integrated care clinics in low income, historically underfunded communities of color and ensure accessibility by providing transportation and telehealth options.
 - Invest in stocking community medical supply closets that offer low-cost medical supplies for residents unable to afford full price supplies.
 - Provide programs and services that can effectively and competently provide low- cost sliding scale mental health services to predominantly marginalized populations, such as people with disabilities, queer and trans individuals, Black and brown people, immigrant and undocumented community members, and non- English speakers.

Attest: **Jonathan Babiak**
Jonathan Babiak, Staff Liaison

RECOMMENDATION 2022032-3aiv: EXPAND FUNDING FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS FOR HISPANIC/LATINO COMMUNITY

Recommendation to Council:

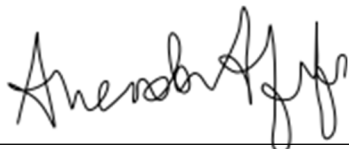
Increase Austin Public Health’s funding for mental health services that serve Hispanic/Latino clients. Ensure services are provided in the client’s preferred language. Ensure services provided are culturally tailored and that the professionals are culturally competent as well.

Background and Rationale:

The Reimagining Public Safety Task Force 2021 Mid Year Recommendations report states, “There are very little programs and services that either offer clinicians that can effectively and competently provide services to predominantly marginalized populations such as people with disabilities, queer and trans individuals, Black and brown people, and our immigrant and undocumented community members, or non-English speakers or that provide low-cost sliding scales services and almost none that offer both. We call on the City to support and reinvest in the collected mental wellbeing of our communities and to invest in the provision of mental telehealth opportunities for particularly vulnerable populations.”

The City of Austin needs to be intentional when selecting service providers to ensure the most vulnerable populations, which includes Hispanic/Latino people, are able to equitably access mental health services. According to SAMHSA’s National Survey on Drug Use and Health, overall mental health issues are on the rise for Latinx/Hispanic people between the ages of 12-49. In 2018, 56.8% of Latinx/Hispanic young adults 18-25 and 39.6% of adults 26-49 with serious mental illness did NOT receive treatment.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, bilingual patients are evaluated differently when evaluated in English versus Spanish, and Latinx/Hispanic people are more frequently undertreated than whites. Hispanic children and adolescents are at significant risk for mental health problems, and in many cases at greater risk than white children. Barriers to accessing mental health care include lack of insurance or inadequate insurance; lack of knowledge/awareness about mental health problems and services available; cultural stigma associated with mental illness; language; lack of culturally tailored services and culturally competent mental health professionals; shortage of bilingual or linguistically trained mental health professionals; difficulties recognizing the first signs of mental illness; and problems identifying psychiatric symptoms when chief complaint is somatic symptom.



Attest:

Amanda Afifi, Chair

Recommendation to Council:

The Commission would like to request continued or increased funding of existing Asian Pacific Islander (API) focused mental health services at \$100,000 annually through APH’s Health Equity contracting portfolio.

For the FY 2020 City Budget, the AAQoL Advisory Commission submitted a budget recommendation for mental health education, outreach, and service provision in the amount of \$200,000. This item was funded in the FY 2020 Approved Budget along with a similar recommendation from the LGBTQIA+ Commission in the total amount of \$200,000 (\$100,000 each). This funding is ongoing.

Data from the City’s Asian American Quality of Life Initiative (Quantitative Study) showed higher levels of mental distress and serious mental illness across all of Austin’s largest Asian American ethnic groups when compared to the general U.S. population. In addition, these groups also exhibited low utilization levels of psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health professionals (counselors, marriage therapists, social workers).

There is no additional cost related to this recommendation unless the City can fund the Commission’s full FY 2020 recommendation amount of \$200,000, which would be an increase of \$100,000 ongoing.

Department:

APH

Alignment with Council Strategic Priorities:

Health & Environment: Healthy conditions among individuals (absence of unhealthy conditions);
Accessibility to quality health care services, both physical and mental.

Attest: Jeremy Garza, Staff Liaison, Equity Office:

x Jeremy Garza

RECOMMENDATION 20220328-3A-3: CONTINUED FUNDING FOR YOUTH LGBTQIA+ MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Recommendation to Council:

WHEREAS, the recently completed LGBTQIA+ Quality of Life study reported that survey responses indicated a high risk of serious mental health issues, including depression (42%) and suicidal ideation (12%); and

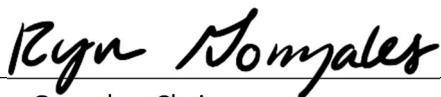
WHEREAS, 52% of survey respondents also rated their overall mental health since the COVID pandemic as fair, poor, or very poor, a sizeable increase in mental health concerns; and

WHEREAS, an additional community survey reported that more than half (53.5%) of respondents rated their mental health as poor or fair with youth and transgender/gender-expansive individuals indicating a higher percentage of very poor and poor mental health since the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, a 2018 report by the Journal of the American Medical Association indicated that LGBTQ youth were 3.5 times as likely to attempt suicide as their heterosexual peers, transgender teens were 5.87 times more likely, gay and lesbian youth were 3.71 times more likely, and bisexual youth were 3.69 times more likely to attempt suicide than teens who identified as heterosexual.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the LGBTQ Quality of Life Commission recommends to City Council that the FY22-23 Budget continue funding of existing youth LGBTQIA+ focused mental health services at the current level of \$100,000 through Austin Public Health's Health Equity contracting portfolio.

Attest:



Ryn Gonzales, Chair

WHEREAS, we heard testimony from staff of the City of Austin Refugee Health Screening Clinic regarding the work that they do and the challenges that they face; and

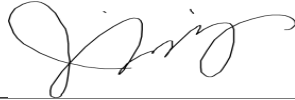
WHEREAS, Austin has seen an increase in arrivals of refugees, including from Afghanistan, and will be seeing new refugees from Ukraine, in addition to continued refugee arrivals from other parts of the world; and

WHEREAS, prior to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, the Refugee Health Screening Clinic was projecting for FY22 over four times the number of refugees in the Austin/Travis County area as compared to FY21; and

WHEREAS, the work of the Refugee Health Screening Clinic supports the city's outreach efforts to new immigrants and refugees, especially in the area of public health.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Immigrant Affairs recommends that we provide funding to the City of Austin Refugee Health Screening Clinic to pay for the salaries of two FTE staff.

Attest: _____


Estephanie Olivares, Staff Liaison