



## Hogg Foundation for Mental Health

### Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs Public Comments on the Draft 2021 State of Texas Low Income Housing Plan and Annual Report January 2021

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The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony on the Draft 2021 State of Texas Low Income Housing Plan (SLIHP) and Annual Report submitted by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. Given the impact of COVID-19, we would like to emphasize the state's need to properly fund housing supports and services for individuals with mental health/substance use conditions during and after the pandemic.

#### **Hogg Foundation Recommendations:**

- Implement a flexible continuum of housing that works to provide individuals with mental health/substance use conditions with less-restrictive housing options. Utilizing recommendations included in the HHSC Housing Choice Plan, the continuum should encompass:
  - increased staff support in group homes,
  - transitional/recovery/permanent housing options,
  - supports for persons exiting psychiatric institutions,
  - continuous assessments of appropriate housing models, and
  - housing supports for tribal communities.
- Provide funding for local mental health authorities and local behavioral health authorities to hire staff focused on administration of supportive housing rental assistance. This would better serve individuals with mental health conditions who also have affordability barriers.

According to studies cited in your 2021 SLIHP draft report, 39.9 percent of surveyed youth experiencing homelessness reported having a mental health condition and 5.8 percent reported having a developmental disability.<sup>1</sup> Second only to finding housing, the next most immediate challenge that youth experiencing homelessness reported was mental health issues such as depression, anger, anxiety, and trouble sleeping.<sup>2</sup> For veterans experiencing homelessness, the report stated that experiencing mental health disorders other than PTSD was one of the top five barriers to veterans receiving services.

Individuals with mental health conditions can experience significant barriers to permanent and stable housing. The most recent Point in Time count of homelessness in Texas found that over 20 percent of individuals experiencing homelessness (116,179) have a severe mental illness, and almost 16 percent of individuals experiencing homelessness have a chronic substance use condition.<sup>3</sup> Individuals experiencing homelessness with mental illness are at higher risk of chronic homelessness and remaining homeless for longer periods of time than those without a mental illness.<sup>4</sup> Serious mental health/substance use conditions may create difficulties in accessing and maintaining stable, affordable, and appropriate housing. Affordable housing programs that focus on homelessness prevention are critical to helping this population become successfully housed.<sup>5</sup>

While Texas offers some housing assistance to support individuals with mental health/substance use conditions, the need to expand the overall stock of affordable housing and services is critical. Without adequate housing support, individuals are likely to cycle through emergency departments, jails, prisons, and state mental health

facilities at a much higher cost to the state. Texas should continue to offer more affordable, quality, and supportive housing options for individuals with mental health conditions, substance use conditions, and disabilities.

**Submitted by The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. For additional information, please contact:**

**Sean Walker, MPAff, Policy Fellow, [sean.walker@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:sean.walker@austin.utexas.edu)**

**Colleen Horton, MPAff, Director of Policy, [colleen.horton@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:colleen.horton@austin.utexas.edu)**

**Shannon Hoffman, MSW, Policy Specialist, [shannon.hoffman@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:shannon.hoffman@austin.utexas.edu)**

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<sup>1</sup> Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. (2020, December 21). TDHCA Governing Board Approved Draft of 2021 State of Texas Low Income Housing Plan and Annual Report. Retrieved from <https://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/housing-center/docs/21-SLIHP-Draft.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> HUD 2019 Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Homeless Populations and Subpopulations. (2019, September 20). Retrieved from [https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC\\_PopSub\\_NatlTerrDC\\_2019.pdf](https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_NatlTerrDC_2019.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless. (2006). *Mental illness and homelessness (NCH Fact Sheet #5)*. Retrieved from [http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts/Mental\\_Illness.pdf](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts/Mental_Illness.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2016). *Homelessness and Housing*. Retrieved from <http://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-housing>