



HB 394 Analysis

The Salt Lake Valley Coalition to End Homelessness (SLVCEH) has reviewed HB 394 Homeless and Transitional Housing Program Amendments and offers the following issues for consideration.

HB 394:

Creates the position of homeless services director within DWS, Division of Housing and Community Development and changes the membership of the State Homeless Coordinating Committee.

Analysis: The position is appointed by the governor in consultation with the DWS Executive director and Division director, and consent of the Senate. No appropriation for salary is included in the bill.

The homeless services director would have sole and final decision making power over the PAHTF and the H2H funding as well as the Homeless Shelter Cities Mitigation Restricted Account and oversee staffing of the State Homeless Coordinating Committee (SHCC). Contrary to current practice, under the bill, **the SHCC would be able to make funding recommendations only and would not have final say.**

The SHCC membership is changed and would solely consist of elected officials and State department directors/employees and chair of Utah Housing Corp board of trustees. Other stakeholders such as private funders, housing authorities, federal agencies, service providers and representatives of subpopulations are eliminated. This action **would limit the knowledge scope of the SHCC and provide limited perspective on the services, needs and statewide system.**

Changes the allowed use and priority of the PAHTF and H2H Funding.

Analysis: **Directs the homeless services director to prioritize funding of programs and providers that require participation in appropriate services as a condition of receiving any permanent housing.** It is well documented that required participation results in people losing or being evicted from housing, while services provided in a trauma informed setting with motivational interviewing result in willing participation in services.

A 2004 research study that demonstrated that when homeless people with mental illness were randomly assigned to Housing First permanent supportive housing or housing contingent on treatment and sobriety and followed for two years. People assigned to the traditional treatment and sobriety program spent only 30 percent of their time stably housed compared to people assigned to Housing First permanent supportive housing who spend 80 percent of their time stably housed^[1].

People who experience homelessness and receive an intervention that uses Housing First approaches have significantly lower healthcare and emergency costs than those who do not^[1].

Analysis: May not approve funding to a program or provider that does not enter into a written agreement with the division to collect and share electronic data regarding the provision of services to homeless individuals so that the provision of services can be coordinated among state agencies, local governments, and private organizations.

There is general wide support and current active work being done to develop ways to share data and information (1) on an de-identified basis for system and program analysis and performance outcomes and (2) on a client-level to improve coordination and reduce time to connect people experiencing homelessness to services and housing. These discussions are taking into account the restrictions from various funding sources and oversight agencies, as well as the privacy rights of people experiencing homelessness, while striving to take a leap forward in data sharing focused on improved outcomes. The Salt Lake Valley Coalition to End Homelessness and its Legal Rights and Safety Core Function group are working diligently in this area.

The State of Utah Strategic Plan on Homelessness calls for the creation of a Utah Homeless Network to coordinate among communities and across the state and includes a SHCC Data Leadership Committee, integration of data across systems and a pilot program for case management data sharing. It requires the State to measure progress annually.

This provision in HB394 adds unnecessary complication and will delay our work on data improvement.

SUMMARY

Based on this analysis, HB 394 is not needed at this time, and would cause additional delays and complications in ensuring improved governance, inclusion of all stakeholders, support of best and proven practices and sharing of data to improve outcomes. The Legislature should uphold the goals in the State Plan and support the initiatives already outlined to achieve system improvement.

^[1] See US Interagency Council on Homelessness (2017); "The Evidence Behind Approaches that Drive an End to Homelessness"; available at: https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/evidence-behind-approaches-that-end-homelessness.pdf); the US Department of Housing & Urban Development (2016; "CoC Competition: Housing First"; available at: <https://www.hudexchange.info/news/coc-competition-focus-housing-first/>); and the US Department of Health & Human Services's Substance Abuse & Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA; 2007; "Pathways Housing First Program"; available at: <http://legacy.nreppadmin.net/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=365>).

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^[2] Tsemberis S, Gulcur L, Nakae M. Housing First, consumer choice, and harm reduction for homeless individuals with a dual diagnosis. *Am J Public Health*. 2004;94(4):651–656. doi:10.2105/ajph.94.4.651