

CAN Community Council

Meeting Minutes of Monday, February 6, 2017

Community Council Members in Attendance: Sandra Castillo, Hunter Ellinger, Aimee Finney, Steven Fletcher, Nancy Gilliam, Laura Griebel, Monica Guzmán, Anne Harutunian, Kirsha Haverlah, Kent Herring, Aletha Huston, Carmen Luevanos, Ara Merjanian, Blythe Plunkett, Laura Poskochil, Leslie Puckett, Beverly Reeves, Caroline Reynolds, Gloria Souhami, Terry Wilt

Unable to attend: Courtney Horm, Elizabeth Moore, Eileen Schrandt, Paulina Urbanowicz, Michael Willard

Guests in Attendance: Amit Motwani, Steve Jacobs, Cathy McHorse, Elizabeth Nelson

Staff in Attendance: Raul Alvarez, Mary Dodd, Carlos Soto

Call to order and Introductions: Ara Merjanian called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Community Council members introduced themselves & shared announcements. Following the introduction, Merjanian discussed the agenda.

Approval of minutes from 01/09/17: Aletha Huston moved to approve the minutes as written, Blythe Plunkett seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

Chair's report: Ara Merjanian reported that he would be representing the Community Council at two CAN meetings that week with the Executive Committee meeting on February 7 and the Board of Directors meeting on February 9. Mary Dodd provided an overview of upcoming Community Council meeting topics, but mentioned that speakers have not been finalized. She encouraged attendants to provide recommendations regarding speakers for those meetings, giving priority to coalitions and collaborative efforts rather than individual service providers.

CAN Executive Director Report: Raul Alvarez began with a brief overview of the Butler Award ceremony and recipients at the CAN 25th anniversary celebration. The upcoming Board of Directors meeting on February 9 will feature the City of Austin's new Equity Officer, Brion Oaks and a presentation by Workforce Solutions on the new workforce plan that is being developed. CAN will host a meeting of the Language Access Work Group on February 16th. He said CAN is assisting with facilitation of the Community Schools Initiative and the first meeting will take place on February 22 at 2:00 p.m. at United Way. He asked members to let him know if they would like to participate.

A Closer Look at Child Poverty in Travis County: Mary Dodd shared data about child poverty in Travis County. She noted that the rate of child poverty has declined for Travis County, the City of Austin and the 5-county metro area. While the overall poverty rate for Travis County is 13%, the poverty rate for children and youth under the age of 18 is 18% and the poverty rate for children under the age of 6 is 19%. The full presentation can be found at http://www.canatx.org/CAN-Councils/Community_Council/Presentations/. Of Travis County children living in poverty, 72% are Hispanic, 64% live with a single parent, and 55% live with at least one parent who is foreign born. Among those who live with 2-parents, 91% have at least one parent who is foreign born. Next, Dodd shared a map prepared by CAN showing numerical change in poverty population in Travis County.

Discussion: There was a question regarding what determines "poverty" level. CAN uses federal Poverty thresholds. The poverty threshold for a family of one adult and two children is \$19,337. The poverty threshold varies by family size and age. [Click here for more information](#). It was noted that "low-income" is those who earn up to twice the poverty level, and most agree that it requires at least twice the poverty level to make ends meet in Austin. However, data for low-income populations is not as robust and does not

allow comparison by race and ethnicity, which is why the Dashboard Steering Committee recommended using poverty, instead of low-income as the key indicator for the CAN Dashboard.

Child Poverty: Our Basic Needs Are Met: What programs and services help single moms and their children cycle out of poverty?

Steve Jackobs, Executive Director of Capital IDEA, said single moms are highly motivated and should be seen as an asset to our community, rather than a liability. He shared the story of one of his clients who persevered to earn a nursing degree and now owns her own home. He said Capital IDEA provides case management support, tuition and other financial resources to help adults move from poverty or low-income to a high wage career path. The areas of focus are nursing, skilled trades and technology. He said the organization does not focus on a 2-Gen approach, but does notice 2-Gen outcomes. He said the longitudinal data from his program shows that 70% of the children of their clients attend college. The typical peer outcomes are 45% college attendance. Jackobs said there are 1560 current nursing job openings available in Austin, but local training opportunities are not sufficient to meet the demand. ACC has increased its nursing degree capacity from 120 to 170 students per semester, but more is needed.

Amit Motwani, United Way for Greater Austin, said the 2-Gen approach is comprehensive and implies evidence based, high quality programs for both the parent and the child. He said a 2-Gen Advisory Council has adopted a 2-Gen Vision for the community. Based on that vision, United Way recently awarded \$120,000 in grants to support services that promote the vision. The 2-Gen Advisory Council is producing a needs assessment that juxtaposes data outcomes with a community asset map. They are also working on an evaluation system to allow them to estimate the value of the investments that are being made.

Aletha Huston, Co-Chair of the 2-Gen Advisory Council, said research shows that investments in high-quality early education and care have a high rate of return. She mentioned recent research by Nobel prize-winning economist James Heckman, that finds the programs from birth to age five have a 13% per year return on investment. [Click here to find research](#). Huston said, in addition to quality early education and care, it is important to help parents in poverty learn skills that will help them improve their ability to earn an income sufficient to support their family. She noted that parents are at many different levels. While some may be prepared to pursue a nursing degree, others may need basic English language, literacy or workforce skills. The 2-Gen Vision calls for meeting people where they are and providing the services that are most appropriate for them.

Huston praised AISD for funding full-day pre-k for 4 year olds who are low income or do not speak English, even though the State of Texas only reimburses the District for half-day pre-k. She said when the program is full day, parents are more likely to participate. She said 70% of eligible 4-year olds in AISD attend the District's Pre-K program. The District is also expanding Pre-k to 3-year olds in some cases and has plans to expand this. Beverly Reeves, a Council member who works for AISD, said parents who don't qualify for the program can also send their children to Pre-K for a fee. Huston said there are 298 licensed child care centers in Austin, but only 53 have achieved any kind of quality rating. There is a definite need for affordable, high quality child care centers, as child care is costly and unaffordable for most low-income residents. The largest cost for child care centers is the teachers and their pay is already very low. Without subsidies it is difficult to provide high quality child care at a reasonable price. Child Care generally costs about \$600 a month for toddlers and \$1000 a month for infants. Workforce solutions administers subsidies for low-income working families, but there are not enough resources to meet the need. Head Start runs the local "Headstart" program, which helps fund child care for qualifying students.

Q & A: Panelists were asked if services are being expanded in areas that are seeing increased growth in poverty populations. Are there any other programs to help provide services in the areas of the map that show higher growth in the poverty population? Motwani responded that this precisely is the reason why the

2-Gen Advisory Council is mapping needs and assets, so that we can better understand where services should be focused or expanded.

Council members asked about programming for older children. Panelists said out-of-school enrichment and other programs are available, however higher income communities tend to dedicate more resources for these programs than lower-income communities.

Steve Jackobs was asked if children of those who obtain training through Capital IDEA show better outcomes. He said they do track high school graduation and college enrollment, but not middle school data.

Panelists were asked how long parents need the support of their efforts. Jackobs said low-income adults, especially if they have children, have a difficult time persevering through training if it takes long than 2.5 years. He said more could be done by training institutions to streamline the training and ensure courses are available, perhaps through block-scheduling. He said the main contributor to attrition in their program is time.

Adjournment: Kirscha Haverlah moved to adjourn the meeting, Gloria Souhami seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.