

# CAN Community Council

Meeting Minutes of Monday, March 20, 2017

**Community Council Members in Attendance:** Sandra Castillo, Hunter Ellinger, Aimee Finney, Nancy Gilliam, Monica Guzmán, Kirsha Haverlah, Aletha Huston, Ara Merjanian, Blythe Plunkett, Leslie Puckett, Beverly Reeves, Caroline Reynolds, Michael Willard,

**Unable to attend:** Steven Fletcher, Laura Griebel, Anne Harutunian, Kent Herring, Elizabeth Moore, Laura Poskochil, Eileen Schrandt, Gloria Souhami, Paulina Urbanowicz, Courtney Horm, Carmen Luevanos, Terry Wilt

**Guests in Attendance:** Maureen Britton, Carmen Llanes Pulido, Kit Abney Spelce, Debbie Russell

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

**Call to order and Introductions:** Ara Merjanian called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Community Council members introduced themselves & shared announcements. Kirsha Haverlah said April is Sexual Violence Awareness Month. Aimee Finney noted that there are two bills in the State Legislature which deal with lunch shaming. Monica Guzman said District 4 is holding a Town Hall Forum on Homelessness. Hunter Ellinger said he shared some of the information he gained at the last Community Council with former Austin City Council member Chris Riley, and Riley told him he appreciated the work of CAN.

**Approval of minutes from 03/20/17:** Nancy Gilliam made a motion to approve the minutes as written, Michael Willard seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

**Chair's report:** Ara Merjanian said the CAN Board of Directors met on April 7<sup>th</sup>. He gave the Board an update on the Council's work to better understand child poverty, and Travis County Judge Sarah Eckhart expressed an interest in helping with conversations about the impact of disproportionality in the criminal justice system on children in poverty. The Board approved the proposed Dashboard changes that were reviewed at the previous CAN Community Council meeting. A presentation was made by the Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities, a part of the Texas Health and Human Services Department, about the free trainings they have available to help organizations become more diverse and inclusive. Community Council members are welcome to attend CAN Board meetings, generally on the second Friday of the month from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Boards and Commissions Room at Austin City Hall. The May meeting will focus on the Mayor's Task Force Report on the Elimination of Institutional Racism.

**CAN Executive Director Report:** Raul Alvarez discussed upcoming CAN meetings. The CAN Language Access Work Group will meet on April 20<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m. at Lifeworks, 835 N Pleasant Valley Rd. to discuss developing a Language ID card or an "I Speak" card system so families and individuals seeking service can quickly share what language they need services provided in. Alvarez said CAN is meeting with community partners who may be interested in participating in deliberative dialogues centered on the topics of Safety and Justice during the months of September and October. CAN will host moderator training for facilitators of the dialogues. Community Council members are welcome to participate in the dialogues, either as participants or as facilitators. The press conference to unveil the eighth annual CAN Dashboard report will be held on Thursday, May 18<sup>th</sup> at Austin City Hall at 9 a.m. Community Council members are welcome and invited to attend. Alvarez will also be launching a new "Equity Blog" later in April, which will highlight findings of this year's Dashboard report. CAN is also in the process of updating its website and the CAN Dashboard website so they are mobile friendly.

**Building a Person-Centered Community:** Merjanian said the Council has focused for several years on the needs of vulnerable populations and the importance of providing services in a person-centered way. He said there is a desire to keep the topic alive and to share information in the community. Alvarez said there

are several options, from using CAN's Together We Can website, having another summit to share the information, or hosting lunch and learn opportunities. Hunter Ellinger suggested it would be helpful if the Community Council could do more to examine obstacles and trade-offs to implementing a person-centered approach, so we understand why action is not being taken. He said there is some value to better understanding legitimate alternate positions. Merjanian suggested creating an Ad Hoc Committee of the Community Council to flesh out some options and possibilities for the Council's work moving forward. He asked people to let him know if they have an interest in working on this Committee.

***Topic: What programs and services help families with children in poverty grow up in a healthy physical environment and access the health services they need?***

**The intersection of health and housing:** Maureen Britton, Executive Director of Children's Optimal Health, said her organization works with many community partners, through legal agreements, to develop roof-top level data on children's well-being. This allows policy makers to see patterns and to identify where community services are needed. She recommended Rishi Manchanda's TED Talk on the importance of up-stream thinking. [https://www.ted.com/talks/rishi\\_manchanda\\_what\\_makes\\_us\\_get\\_sick\\_look\\_upstream](https://www.ted.com/talks/rishi_manchanda_what_makes_us_get_sick_look_upstream). Britton said where you live has a big impact on health. Dr. Megan Sandel, who presented at a Housing+Health Summit last year presented the idea of good housing being like a vaccine. She shared a video called "Sonja's Story" <http://www.cohtx.org/sonya/> about a family whose son developed asthma. She said houses with mold, dust and roaches cause asthma. She shared maps of childhood obesity, absenteeism, and other indicators, noting the correlations between them. Britton said COH has been asked to work on a project that has to do with stroke. She said there are issues in intergenerational health that impact young children. And one good way to focus on prevention is to work with parents and grandparents.

**The intersection of health and community:** Carmen Llanes Pulido, Director of Go Austin, VAMOS Austin! (GAVA), which focuses on addressing childhood obesity in zip codes 78744 and 78745 to address childhood obesity by engaging community members in taking action to make their communities healthier. GAVA seeks to increase access to physical activity and nutritious foods. Barriers in people's built environments and neighborhoods create barriers to healthy eating and physical activity. The Michael and Susan Dell Foundation funded the initiative initially with a focus on listening to people in the neighborhoods to find out what barriers they face and what changes they would like to see. GAVA helps residents form issue-based and geographic teams and projects to address concerns around physical activity and health food access. Sectors of their work include: out of school time, physical activity, early childhood, food and leadership development. They started their work by listening to parents and teachers about their ideas and concerns. They also helped the neighbors connect with community partners, such as the Parks Foundation and St. David's Foundation. Resident teams have had many success stories with 32 resident-led teams, and they have engaged more than 1200 residents involved in efforts to improve 80% of neighborhood community assets. Some needs are additional lighting for parks and schools.

**Access to healthcare services for children in poverty:** Kit Abney Spelce, Senior Director of Eligibility Services for Central Health. Central Health is the Travis County Healthcare District, funded with property taxes. They serve Travis County residents who live at 200% of the federal poverty level and below, which for a family of 4 is about \$40,000. There is an estimated 130,000 – 140,000 uninsured Travis County residents. The vast majority of low-income children are insured by Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Children not eligible for Medicaid or CHIP are often served through the Medical Assistance Program, which is funded by Central Health. CHIP and Medicaid cover eye care, dental care, mental health care and primary care. Services are provided through Federally Qualified Health Centers, such as CommUnity Care, People's Clinic, and the LoneStar Circle of Care. Implementation of the Affordable Care Act eliminated the former asset tests and raised the income limits for eligibility. It also aligned eligibility criteria with the Health Insurance Marketplace and simplified the application. In addition to children, pregnant women also receive benefits. She said it is important to understand that the vast majority of

Medicaid enrollees are children – 67%, yet the cost of serving these children uses only 31% of the total Medicaid budget. 60% of State Medicaid expenditures go to pay for services for the aged and disabled. The Georgetown University Center for Children and Families did a study of all states and found that in Texas, the percent of children without insurance went from 16.2% in 2009 to 9.5% in 2015. Latino children have the highest rates of being uninsured. Families and children can apply for benefits online at [www.yourtexasbenefits.org](http://www.yourtexasbenefits.org).

#### **Q&A Discussion:**

***What is the barrier to insuring more children?*** Kit Abney Spelce said she is not sure, though some think it is because the enrollment process is so cumbersome. Another possible reason is because many parents are not ensured because Medicaid is not available to most adults. When parents are ensured they are more likely to apply to get their children insured.

***How did the community organizations for GAVA get started?*** Carmen Llanes Pulido said the effort was helped by existing community partners, such as The Austin Project's Family Resource Center at Martin Middle School, Marathon Kids, the Sustainable Food Center, and other partners who were already active in the neighborhoods. As the partnerships have strengthened, other partners have joined. She said it is important to fund community organizing so organizers can galvanize common interests.

***Would there ever be an opportunity for HEB delivery to accept food stamps to get fresh food shipped to people's homes and neighborhoods?*** Pulido said she wasn't sure, but she knows that the City of Austin's Food Sustainability Officer Edwin Marty is a big supporter of neighborhood food buying co-ops, and she would be interested to learn more. She said there are many low-income families who do not qualify for food stamps.

***The Texas Public Health Committee is considering HB3634 tomorrow, which would eliminate some of the good efforts she outlined. What will the impact be?*** Spelce agreed that it is a very negative bill that will roll-back many of the advancements we have made and will harm children. It requires co-pays for Medicaid and changes enrollment periods to six months rather than one-year.

***What works for community engagement?*** Pulidos said they use texting-trees, like the old phone-trees. The residents run their own meetings and set their own meeting schedules. It is a peer-to-peer effort with about 2,000 people on their email contact lists. Most residents have internet, Facebook, smart phones and email.

***Has Children's Optimal Health noticed a health impact of living in proximity to a highway?*** Britton said there is uncertainty whether poor health outcomes near highways are due to the highways or to the health of the neighborhoods in proximity to the highways. COH has mapped ozone and would like to do more work in the analysis of environmental issues.

**Adjournment:** Kirsha Haverlah moved to adjourn the meeting, Michael Willard seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.