

HHSCC Meeting

HHSCC Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday, July 24th, 2024

at 10:00am

221 East 11th St. Room 116

Austin, Texas 78701

Roll Call

Approval of Minutes - No quorum present after roll call
therefore minutes could not be voted on.

Bobby Wilkinson (00:00):

Alright, item two, Bill Cranor is going to give us an update on
Section 811.

Bill Cranor (00:14):

Okay. I'm Bill Cranor. I'm the director of Section 811. And the
first and foremost, I think what everybody probably wants to
know is if you get any money from HUD and the answer is not yet.
We were told June 20th that awards were imminent. I'm not sure
they know what that word meant.

Bobby Wilkinson (00:37):

It would be nice to know before we have to put in our
legislative probation request, you might need an FTE.

Bill Cranor (00:43):

Right, right.

Bobby Wilkinson (00:43):

Yeah, I will.

Bill Cranor (00:46):

Fingers are still crossed.

Megan Sylvester (00:48):

Well, what's really annoying is they announced there was a big NOFO that had different programs and they announced all the programs under that except 811.

Bobby Wilkinson (01:00):

Why not?

Bill Cranor (01:03):

Currently we have 473 housed. This is an increase of 33 people over the last six months. That's currently residing in units. Of those 22 are from the new FY 19 money that we started on about six months ago. So that means we've also increased 11 people in non FY 19. We've been kind of pushing that. HUD hasn't been clear on what our actual threshold of number of people is, so I've been kind of being, let's push it a couple more and see what they say. So they haven't said stop. So we're just kind of pushing and pushing and pushing just a little incremental at a time to hopefully get as many people houses as we can. So that's kind of our goal. Also upcoming, we will be closing wait lists in two counties next week, which are Denton and Fort Bend. So

the waits have gotten excessive and so we will be closing those also. That's pretty much it for 811.

Bobby Wilkinson (02:12):

Did I see something about a software change for you contemplated with my IT group? No.

Bill Cranor (02:18):

No.

Bobby Wilkinson (02:18):

Maybe they're planning something without you or maybe I think of a different division.

Bill Cranor (02:22):

Yeah, no, no, we don't have a software change. I know they're doing it. They didn't tell me.

Bobby Wilkinson (02:28):

You're good.

Bill Cranor (02:30):

Come in one day and not have access to anything.

Bobby Wilkinson (02:34):

Okay. So the only thing is do we get the new award and then do we need extra FTE?

Bill Cranor (02:40):

Correct.

Bobby Wilkinson (02:41):

Right. What's the size of the latest application award?

Bill Cranor (02:45):

8 million, I believe.

Bobby Wilkinson (02:46):

Okay. Which is roughly in line with the past ones. There was a 12, right?

Bill Cranor (02:50):

Well, the first two were twelves, both 12 and then the next one was seven. This one's eight.

Bobby Wilkinson (02:57):

This is our fourth.

Bill Cranor (02:59):

Yes.

Bobby Wilkinson (02:59):

Yeah, potentially.

Bill Cranor (03:01):

Right.

Bobby Wilkinson (03:03):

Okay. Thank you.

Bill Cranor (03:04):

Sure.

Bobby Wilkinson (03:05):

Any questions for Bill on 811? What about our population rebalancing away from what's not just from referrals from local?

Bill Cranor (03:17):

That's still ongoing. The numbers are still, traditionally it was about 92% before we started doing that. It's gone down to, I think 91% we follow with so many people that, but it's been doing, I think when we started this, we for the first group we looked at was like 17 out of a hundred had been in those other populations, which is obviously 17%. And then I think the one after that, it was 18%. And right now it's the most recent group

that I looked at was 16%. So we're hovering right around double what we used to get before one or two people moving in or not moving in. Really changes the numbers but not.

Bobby Wilkinson (04:03):

Okay. Thank you.

Bill Cranor (04:04):

Sure.

Bobby Wilkinson (04:08):

All right. Item three. Gavin's going to talk to us about CEAP.

Gavin Reid (04:11):

Yes. So Gavin Reid, I work here in the community affairs division at TDHCA. Just I was here a couple months ago giving you an overview of our community services block grant program. And I've been invited back to give an overview of another program that we offer. It's the Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program or CEAP would say that this is our most popular program, our most well-known program. The calls we get on at most, the most assistance we provide, et cetera. But the bottom line on this, remember if you come out of this remembering anything, basically this program offers, helps low income persons pay their utility bills. That's the bottom line on this. It helps

low income people pay their heating and cooling bills throughout the year. So to kind of get into a little more detail on this with the CEAP Sub-recipients, well first of all, TDHCA, we act as a pass through agency.

(05:25):

We apply it to the federal government for these funds and the federal government gives us these funds and we distribute it to sub-recipients throughout the state, like 35 of 'em. There's a map on the back, which I'll get to, and it's the sub-recipients that interface with the clients. They're the ones who determine if they're eligible, take applications, provide 'em guidance, determine how much they're going to pay for their utility bills. So in general, that's kind of how it works. But these sub-recipients, they tend to be community action agencies, private nonprofit organizations and units of local government.

(06:07):

And not only does it provide utility bill assistance, in some cases it can provide repair and replacement of HVAC units. In certain cases where eligible low income units just don't have an AC unit, their AC broke and it might need repair. So it does offer that too. And it offers some crisis related and crisis related situations. Like if a disaster is declared by the governor or the president, it can offer other things such as minor as blankets, fans even it can go to providing brief stays

or temporary hotel stays if they're out of energy and they're out of their house. But those are very unique circumstances, although we do get some disasters here, especially recently in the past couple of months. But as it's CEAP, it's part of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and that's through the US Department of Health and Human Services.

(07:19):

That's the federal government agency that distributes these funds to all the states, Texas being one of them. And they distribute it among the states by formula as well. So we received the money last year. It is usually in the vicinity of 170 million, but \$150 million is actually distributed in CEAP funds because a few million is reserved for administrative functions. And then the remainder of that, let's say 12 million approximately, is distributed for our weatherization assistance program, which I could get into in a little bit. But we receive the funds, we distribute it amongst our sub-recipients using rules that are written in our Texas administrative code. And I kind of gave the formula there on the third bullet. But the biggest factor of course is poverty, non elderly and elderly. That's how the distribution of funds to our 35 sub-recipients is determined. So naturally, the Houston area, the Dallas and Fort Worth, Austin and Bexar County areas are going to receive more funds than say a rural county in west Texas because based on

population and the poverty level, as I said, 35 sub-recipients, all 254 counties are covered.

(08:56):

And again, I'll get to the map in the back, but so everybody has access to this or is eligible to apply if they are under the 150% federal poverty guidelines and one member of the household must be a US citizen. So those are some of the basic requirements is just income and must be a US citizen or national. CEAP funds are utilized to provide utility assistance. When I say utility assistance, I'm talking about both gas and electric. It also can be used to fill up propane tanks for people who use propane. And we talked about repair and replacement in certain situations. Talked about a little bit about disaster. As I said, some of the funding that we receive from USHHS is also distributed to our weatherization assistance program, which in essence it makes a home more energy efficient, tries to secure the building envelope so that the cool air isn't escaping to the outside.

(10:12):

If I can say it that simply. To give you some data. In state fiscal year 2023 CEAP Sub-recipient organizations in Texas assisted 138,000 households, which approximates to about 450,000 persons. So to give you some idea of how many people we're

assisting with utility assistance through the Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program, as I said, we get lots of calls on this throughout the year, Jeremy knows. But there's a couple ways to find out for low income persons how to apply and mainly who to apply to. So we have a help for Texans website. I talked about this last time with the CSBG. It's a simple way to go in and I provided the steps there and the link, but basically there's a little radio button that says utility bill payment help. Once they get on that website, they would click that simply enter the city or county, click find help, and it would show you the agency that they need to call and apply to.

(11:21):

Another way, a little bit more complicated for somebody to read. But we also offer this option. We do have all of our sub-recipients and all of our programs listed on our website and I provided the link there for that as well. And then finally, if any of you have any questions, I put my contact information there at the bottom, email and phone number and then on the backside. So that's just a map of our 35 sub-recipients and the names and the abbreviations for them over there on their left. As you can see from the map, it just varies as far as the service area, the size of the service area and the counties. And so some counties, if you look up at PCS, which is Panhandle Community Services, they provide services for 26 kind of rural

counties except for Amarillo. But I mean they do do Amarillo, but that's more urbanized. And then other counties like Bexar County or Fort Worth, that's just a single sub-recipient of ours that receives funding for that single county. So anyway, are there any questions? That's my brief overview of CEAP. Again, as I started off with the basic thing, if you don't remember anything about all that I said, just remember that it helps low income persons pay their utility bills.

Diana Delaunay (12:52):

Yeah. Then I do have a question. I come from the Rio Grande Valley and we have a lot of resident aliens down there. So a resident alien would not qualify for this program. They must be a US citizen. Is that correct?

Gavin Reid (13:04):

No, it gets a little more complicated. Megan knows. So that's a good question. I'm glad you asked me to clarify that. So a US citizen or a national in a household would receive funding or would receive assistance, but there's another way for a resident alien, and I'm not sure about the definitions. Okay, I'll let Megan answer it.

Megan Sylvester (13:28):

Its not resident alien is like visa status.

Diana Delaunay (13:31):

Okay. Yeah.

Megan Sylvester (13:32):

So qualified alien is the definition that the Pura, which is the law that governs who's qualified and most resident aliens are qualified. And there are some people that are not resident aliens that are also qualified, but there are some resident aliens that are not qualified. So the definition, if they are the definition is in our rule, and you can count them.

Gavin Reid (14:02):

I'll add to that. There's a system, it's called SAVE system of alien verification. I forgot the E system. Entitlement. Entitlement maybe I don't remember. But we can run them through that system. And if they qualify through that system as I guess a legal working,

Megan Sylvester (14:24):

It's a qualified

Gavin Reid (14:25):

Qualified alien. Qualified

Megan Sylvester (14:27):

Alien.

Gavin Reid (14:28):

Yes.

Megan Sylvester (14:28):

And like I said, most resident aliens are qualified aliens, but not all because of course, why would something be simple?

Diana Delaunay (14:38):

Well, I would imagine if they have their resident in card and it's still current,

Megan Sylvester (14:44):

Yes, they can go into the system and the system will say, yes, you are a qualified alien, or no, you are not.

Diana Delaunay (14:51):

Okay, thank you for that.

Gavin Reid (14:52):

You're welcome, appreciate it.

Jeremy Stremmler (14:53):

That. Yeah, I had a question. So of course we get a lot of phone calls about people asking about utility assistance. I think the number one question we get once we give them this information and they ask, will this help cover my water bills? We say no and say, why not?

Gavin Reid (15:12):

That's right. That's right. No, when you do say utilities, I mean, I've always thought of utilities water also, but it is just home energy. So it is within the name Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program. We do not have a program for water anymore. We did for a brief period a couple of years and it just ended several months ago. But anyway, yes. Good clarification.

Diana Delaunay (15:40):

I have another question. And is this just for that one month or will you look at their energy bill for the whole year and is it on a yearly basis?

Gavin Reid (15:49):

For the whole year.

Diana Delaunay (15:51):

For the whole year. Okay.

Gavin Reid (15:52):

So they determine based on their previous bills, when they apply the agency that they're applying to looks at their previous energy bills to determine how much to give them going forward over the next year to help them out because the agencies are trying to make the money last because they can't just give everybody the maximum amount, then the money would run out. You don't have enough money to spread out to others. So they try to do it as best they can by looking at previous home energy bills of the customer applying to cover them, but to save money for others who are applying. But to answer your question, the whole year, it's not just one month. Yes.

Diana Delaunay (16:43):

Thank you.

Gary Medina (16:45):

Mr. Reed is the only way to look for this information is just virtually, if I'm an elderly person and I call, I'm like, and I have no idea, I don't have access to a computer, I don't have internet. How would I call? And we're all familiar with 2-1-1. Do you have a collaboration with 2-1-1 where I can just call and like, yeah,

Gavin Reid (17:02):

Good. And next time, you know what, I'll add 2-1-1 on this thing. So yes,

Jeremy Stremmler (17:07):

If they call 2-1-1, they'll most likely give them our mainline phone number, which will then get a customer service rep in the housing resource center, which will then look up what their provider is and provide them the name and phone number of that organization.

Bobby Wilkinson (17:25):

Sounds awesome. You have it for eligibility and is normal times aren't we at 125% of the poverty level?

Gavin Reid (17:31):

That was CSBG.

Bobby Wilkinson (17:33):

Okay.

Gavin Reid (17:33):

This LIHEAP it's just always 150%.

Bobby Wilkinson (17:37):

We went to 200 during the pandemic for a bit.

Gavin Reid (17:40):

No, actually, again, that was CSBG.

Bobby Wilkinson (17:45):

This would've been 150 the whole time.

Gavin Reid (17:45):

We've been 150 the whole time. This one hasn't changed. But yes, CSBG is wavered back and forth between 125 and 200.

Bobby Wilkinson (17:55):

Also add that when we had extra allocations of this, we did some direct through Texasutilityhelp.com. That's shut down now. So it's just back to the network. So we don't have any direct from us through a vendor or to citizens.

Gavin Reid (18:13):

Right. Any other questions? Thank you,

Bobby Wilkinson (18:22):

Jeremy. Talking about the biannual plan report.

Jeremy Stremmler (18:24):

Yes. So as all of you know, received the final version in the meeting last week of the finalized version of the plan. I have a few hard copies if anybody wants to take one with them or look at it and just want to give a big thank you to everyone who provided comments or edits to the document when we sent out over a month ago and asked that you take a look at the draft making comments or edits, we incorporated those changes that people made. Most of 'em, of course, were from other state agencies getting final updates on the programs they list in the document. And again, this is our biannual plan that we put out. What our council has done, and we kind of edited this one in a way. We've definitely met all of our performance measures that we set forth over the last little, over a decade that the council is tasked with. And we highlighted how we've achieved those things and our continuing goal as agency members to continue to promote health and housing intersection as we move forward in our work on an annual basis. But so this plan and report is due to governor's, office oversight committees, things of that nature by August 1st. And so this meeting, since we don't have a quorum, and last year we approved, there was a majority of members present because it is required to be submitted. So

Bobby Wilkinson (20:17):

We're going to have to vote yes.

Jeremy Stremmer (20:19):

The majority vote.

Megan Sylvester (20:20):

Well, So we can write, it's not an official vote, but it's a recommendation by the majority

Bobby Wilkinson and Megan Sylvester (20:26):

Of members, present

Jeremy Stremmer (20:27):

Yeah.

Bobby Wilkinson (20:31):

All those in favor say aye.

All members (20:33):

Aye. Aye.

Bobby Wilkinson (20:36):

Any opposed? Okay.

Jeremy Stremmer (20:40):

Again, thank you so much for reviewing it and making edits and comments and we'll do it again.

Bobby Wilkinson (20:54):

Item five would be public comment. Any of the members or any members of the public want to, anyone on the phone have public comment, you don't board meeting with the chair. It's always like anybody. Encourage people. All right. Next steps. We're looking at October 16th, looking for a calendar invite from Jeremy and with nothing else. It's about 10:25 and we're adjourned.