

TEXAS 2020-2022 NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR CSBG CARES ACT FUNDING

COVER PAGE AND CERTIFICATION

CSBG Eligible Entity: Austin Public Health Neighborhood Services

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Was the Needs Assessment completed utilizing a subcontractor? Yes No

Certification of 2020-2021 of Needs Assessment

The undersigned hereby certifies that the needs assessment information submitted for CSBG CARES Act Funding is correct and has been authorized by the governing body of this organization. If not approved by the board, it will be presented to the board on June 10, 2020 for approval and at that time this certification page will be re-submitted to the Department.

Joe Deshotel

Board Chair (printed name)

Board Chair (signature)

Date

Executive Director (printed name)

Executive Director (signature)

Date

Submission Date: _____

Month/Day/Year

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1. **Describe the area and individuals impacted by this COVID-19 pandemic.** Provide information and data (quantitative and qualitative) on the estimated number of persons and households impacted by this COVID-19 pandemic and on the impact of the pandemic to the families and the community by city and county. Types of information to include, but not be limited to, the following: city/cities, zip codes, description of the neighborhoods (e.g., primarily low-income, availability of public facilities and social service agencies, etc.), and demographic information on the households/individuals (e.g., income, racial make-up, indirect damage such as loss of job, education, housing etc.). Data and information gathered can include statistics, newspaper articles, news stories, surveys, interviews, data from 211 or other organization's data on COVID-19 needs. Eligible entities will be required to maintain documentation for monitoring purposes.

This spring 2020 the global Covid-19 pandemic unsettled all segments of society. The social and economic consequences have been disastrous for a significant number of individuals in the City of Austin and Travis County area.

In 2015 Travis County indicators showed a decline in the poverty rate in the urban area of Austin while outlying areas continued to face the challenges of minimal economic and social opportunities. The COVID 19 pandemic's impact has brought the decline of poverty in Travis County to a halt and has now impacted all socio-economic groups, especially those which were already struggling with poverty. The people most affected are clients our City of Austin Neighborhood Services Unit (NSU) serves, including people below the 200% Federal Poverty Income Limit (FPIL). Most of our clients have depended on their income from businesses such as restaurant service, labor and construction service, medical services, music & entertainment industries and the leisure & hospitality sector of the city. Many are young families, single parent households and adults starting or changing their careers that have suffered financial loss. They also live in parts of the city where rents may be more affordable; far north & far east Austin and other outlying areas that are farther from social services and where transportation is a barrier.

The Texas Workforce Commission released the following information as it relates to unemployment in Travis County:

(From Travis County site: https://financialtransparency.traviscountytexas.gov/EDSI_EconomicRecovery)

In February of 2020, 1407 new applicants applied for unemployment benefits in Travis County. In March of 2020, 29,448 new applicants applied for benefits, a 1,993% increase from the previous month. This increase does not even represent the full scope of the unemployment picture because many applicants were unable to reach the Texas Workforce Commission during March 2020.

The Leisure & Hospitality industry experienced the greatest impact with the loss of 5,600 jobs. Other industries that experienced a loss in jobs include Education & Health Services (-2,300), Professional & Business Services (-1,200), and Trade, Transportation & Utilities (-600).

According to Molly Hubbert Doyle in her April 2020 article [Communities Step Up to Address Economic Impact of COVID-19](#): *"The financial impact of illness and loss of work will disproportionately affect lower income families. Many are already dealing with lack of emergency savings, food insecurity and limited healthcare options.*

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According to a 2019 report from the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, about 40% of Americans would not be able to come up with \$400 in a crisis."

During the next two years the Neighborhood Services Unit, under the umbrella of the Austin Public Health, plans to use the CARES Act CSBG funding to address the basic needs of our community (e.g. housing, education, employment and food insecurity). Fortunately, this is not new to us. Our neighborhood services unit has been in direct partnership with Catholic Charities of Central Texas, Easter Seals of Central Texas, Austin Energy and Workforce Solutions to address employment, career training, rent and utility assistance, and case management services. We have found the case management model to be most effective in helping people meet their financial and career goals with the ultimate focus being to transition people out of poverty. We plan to extend the success of this model to reach people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Last year we helped 77 people transition out of poverty. The CSBG Cares Act funding will assist us with exceeding that benchmark over the next two years. The estimate of 261,000 persons or 1 in 5 being without employment in Travis County speaks to the growing impact the COVID-19 will have on the livelihood of many Austinites in the years ahead.

Austin KXAN investigations mapped out the highest risk and most affected areas as being the following zip codes: 78721, 78723, 78742, 78753, 78758. These areas were a few of the Austin areas already being served by the Neighborhood Services Unit.

<https://www.kxan.com/investigations/austin-neighborhoods-most-at-risk-for-severe-covid-19-cases-hospitalizations/>

2. Describe any **gaps in services**, related to the identified needs. It may be helpful to reach out to churches, other social service providers/agencies, and city and county governments to gather this information. Organize your answer in terms of the cities and counties impacted if the gaps in services differ.

The provision of basic needs and case management services to persons in the City of Austin and Travis County affected by this pandemic is a top priority of the Neighborhood Services Unit. Below are some gaps we identified.

- **Food Insecurity Gap-** The percent of the population with low food access in Travis County is higher than the rates for the State and the US. Approximately, three in ten Travis County residents live in areas with low food access, or in other words are far from a supermarket or large grocery store. Residents living in low food access areas must drive to purchase groceries or use public transit to the grocery store. Public transit may not be an option for persons living in outlying areas of the county.

The Community Advancement Network reports approximately 15% of Travis County residents faced food insecurity in 2017. That means they had limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, according to [Feeding America](#), the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity. Rates of food insecurity in Travis County continued to decline after reaching a high of 18% in 2012 but the pandemic has changed that.

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Today, Travis County is experiencing a different story as the pandemic has caused persons to seek food from a food bank for the first time. The Central Texas Food Bank reports serving 46,000 Travis County residents with food boxes each week with people lining up in their cars for the drive-thru food distributions.

The federal government reports unemployment has dramatically increased for African Americans, Latinos, low -wage workers and people with no college education, exposing the deep seams of inequality within the world's wealthiest nation. The gaps in services mentioned here are a few that will exacerbate those inequalities among our Neighborhood Center clients. Many of whom lost their jobs due to this pandemic.

- **Education and Training Gap** - Texas is reported to spend less per student than the national average so it is important to look at whether students in K-12TH are prepared to fill the jobs to support their future.

Jason Saving, Senior Economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas states when students receive less education and fewer credentials, they are less likely to qualify for higher-paying jobs in today's economy. This limits their lifetime earnings and potentially reduces the rate at which Texas' economy will grow in the future.

Today's job market requires more from workers for two main reasons. First, automation and technological change are replacing many jobs that emphasize repetitive motion. On the flip side, higher-skilled jobs that mesh human creativity with new technologies are in ever-greater demand and offer an ever-higher pay premium compared to lower-skilled employment.

The data show that Texas spends about 20 percent less than the national average on a per-student basis (Chart 1). The Texas figure of \$10,124 trails other large states such as New York (\$23,894) and California (\$13,239). Overall, just 12 states spend less than Texas.

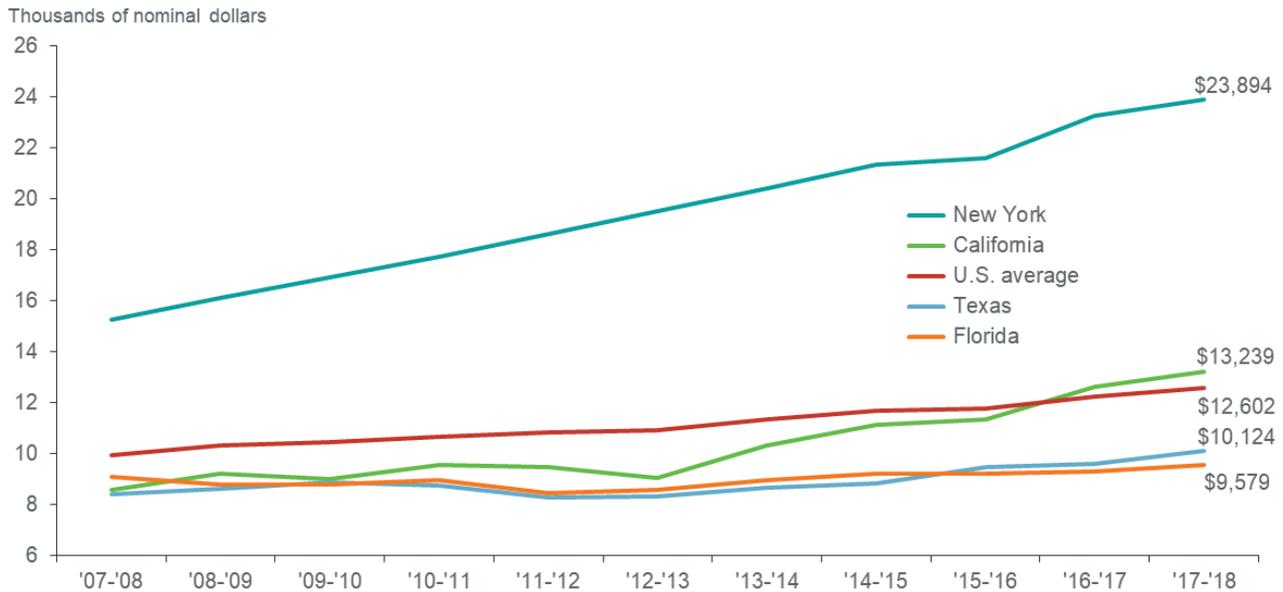
This is a concerning fact for students already struggling in Travis County to succeed during a coronavirus epidemic. Students who do not have access to WIFI and have been provided with an electronic tablet by the school system to continue their studies at home are at a further disadvantage to receive the education they deserve. Parents are attempting to juggle job loss or decreased hours of employment while overseeing their child's safety and education. This is almost an impossible task for Travis County families.

High school students in their last years of high school with hopes of attending a college or university or receiving hands on training in a lucrative trade will not be fully prepared for this new phase of their lives. Teachers, so important in bringing the school year to a close have not been available to offer the individual attention necessary for this to happen. There may be emotional and social gaps as a result to aid the student to move forward with confidence as education and employment opportunities come their way.

The Austin Public Health Department's Neighborhood Services will focus on the education and training gap by connecting young adults, parents, and families to training that will open employment possibilities and bring them up to speed as a result of time lost during the pandemic.

Please note the graph below which displays the educational divide of financial support for Texas students.

Chart 1:
Texas Per Capita K-12 Spending Rises but Trails National Average



NOTE: Data refer to spending per student enrolled in the fall of each school year.

SOURCE: National Education Association.

Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas

However, spending [does not tell the whole story](#). Texas students score [only slightly below](#) the U.S. average on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which is widely considered to be the gold standard for student testing. Minority students in Texas score somewhat better overall than their national counterparts, though work remains to be done on closing the education gap between white and nonwhite students.

- The Child Care Gap-** Safe and affordable childcare in Austin and the state of Texas as a whole has been a challenge for a long time before the Covid- 19 crisis became a reality. Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, there was only one childcare spot for every 2.71 children in Texas. Workforce Solutions Capital Area estimates that 70% of the childcare programs that contract for subsidized child care — serving individuals with relatively lower incomes and eligible to serve essential workers — are not currently operating. These numbers are unwelcome news as our Texas governor gives the directive for restaurants, malls, movie theaters, retail and hair salons to open their doors. Parents who have not been essential workers may find themselves scrambling to find safe childcare they can afford when they learn their jobs are back. The fortunate ones have a relative or friend who will step in quickly to fill this childcare need. If there is not a subsidized licensed childcare center or vacancy in a provider’s home, then how will the parent afford a private childcare provider? If the provider is an unlicensed home will it be a safe environment for the child? Will the family go without a basic need such as food or medicine to pay for a private childcare spot?

“The gap in services pushes low-wage families toward unregulated, potentially dangerous child care options,” said Cathy McHorse, a member of Austin and Travis County’s Child Care Task Force. “As an advocate, I feel like we’re trying to reopen our economy on the backs of our most marginalized low-wage

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workers in those industries, and we know our child care providers are also some of the most low-wage workers in the state.

3. Describe what **outreach** has been done or will be done to identify potentially eligible households/individuals that have been or continue to be impacted by this COVID-19 pandemic. Discuss which entities (schools, city government, non-profits, churches, etc.) will be contacted to do outreach and where outreach has or will occur. If intake has occurred during outreach, please provide information on the number of applications taken. Organize your answer in terms of the cities and counties impacted.

Since our centers were closed to the public in March, we have adapted some of our core services to meet the current need for food access and rent and utility assistance. We have a call center taking calls for people needing emergency food deliveries due to quarantine, lack of resources, and lack of transportation. We are delivering food to 140 households per week. We also have a call center assisting with rent and utility assistance without in person contact. In April, we assisted 39 households with over \$33,000 in rent and utility assistance. We made over 100 direct referrals to our Catholic Charities partnership.

To inform the community of these services, we have updated our listings with the United Way's 211 call center and database, the City of Austin website and Facebook pages, and Aunt Bertha. We've gotten the word out through a number of collaborations, including a collaboration with Austin ISD and Austin Voices and the Food Access group lead by the COA Office of Sustainability. We work closely with our department's Health Equity team, which has extended our outreach to community partners, especially in northeast Austin, a community with high need. We are working closely with our partners at Meals on Wheels of Central Texas and Family Eldercare to reach seniors. Several community organizations have created resource lists for specific populations and services. Our COVID-related services are listed in those guides from Councilmember Greg Casar's Office, and the NACER interactive guide through Austin ISD.

When we return to serving the public in person and expand our services, we will continue to update the community through the above channels. In addition, we have a strong partnership with Workforce Solutions (WFS), including three career counselors co-located in our neighborhood centers. We will continue to work closely with WFS solutions to assist and support individuals whose employment was affected by the pandemic. Before the current crisis, we had begun offering services through two satellite locations at two different YMCA sites. We will resume services at those locations and continue to do outreach in those areas of north and far east Austin in conjunction with the YMCA and other community partners. We are also able to assist families with rent and utility assistance using Neighborhood Housing and Community Development funding.

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4. Describe the **need** for funds to assist persons impacted? Types of information to include, but not limited to:
 - a. an estimate of how many households and/or individuals still in need of assistance
 - b. the type of assistance these households need,

As stated previously, the needs must be as a result of COVID-19. If needs differ across your service area, organize your answer in terms of cities and counties impacted. Consider households who may have lost their job or have been temporarily unemployed for a period of time due to this pandemic. It may be helpful to reach out to churches, other social service providers/agencies, and county governments to gather this information.

The Texas Workforce Commission reported April 3, 2020 that over half a million Texans filed unemployment claims due to the COVID -19. Travis County residents filed 14,539 claims. At this same time last year only 503 filed claims in the county. The need for funds to assist the overwhelming number of persons without jobs during the months possibly years it will take for families to recover is significant. The Austin Public Health Department's Neighborhood Services assisted 76,279 persons in 2019. The impact of the COVID- 19 will most likely double the number of persons reaching out to Neighborhood Services for help over the next two years.

Funds will be needed for education and training especially for persons unable to return to their jobs as the closure of small businesses could make a return impossible. During a person's training and/ or job seeking there will be needs for rental and utility assistance until a connection is made for income. Transportation costs to include bus passes or the cost of gas, car repair and upkeep usually a necessity in a city the size of Austin where employment may be on the opposite side of the city or far end of Travis County where a family resides. Families will need to use what savings or income they have from an unemployment check to purchase food, medications and medical care, if they have lost health insurance they had depended on from a job. In some cases, the COVID -19 may have arrived at a time when the household was seeking employment or might have been in a homeless situation therefore, not being eligible for an unemployment check during the pandemic recovery. The Austin Public Health Neighborhood Centers have been providing food delivery, rental and utility assistance to Travis County residents from the time the governor's order to shelter in place was implemented for public safety reasons. The neighborhood centers will depend on state and federal funding to meet the demand for financial assistance, education and food access needs brought on by the pandemic.

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5. Identify the **top needs** determined from your Needs Assessment. Consider all the data (qualitative and quantitative) and information that was gathered in this process.
 If the plan is to not address one of the needs, provide a brief explanation as to why not in column five; such as lack of capacity/resources or that another organization is addressing the need.

Top Needs Identified	Currently addressing the need		Plan to address the need with CSBG CARES Act Funds		How will need be addressed with CSBG CARES Act Funds	If not addressing, explain why.
	Yes	No	Yes	No		
1 Housing	Yes X	No	Yes X	No	1. Cares Act funding to be used to increase the rent capacity of persons seeking work and/or while receiving vocational training. Funding will also be used for one-time rent and utility assistance for households affected by the pandemic.	
2 Education	Yes	No X	Yes X	No	Cares Act funding to be used for enrollments in vocational classes through community college which will help client receive a certificate of completion and obtain a middle to higher level job. Purchase of textbooks, laptops to facilitate classroom learning and employment success.	

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3 Basic Needs	Yes X	No	Yes X	No	Cares Act funding to be used for the provision of gift cards to assist with food and medication.	
4 Health	Yes	No X	Yes	No X		We will not be addressing this area with CARES Act funding as we have other funding for public health nursing services. In addition, our partner Community Health Care is meeting the health care needs of the community served.
5 Childcare	Yes	No X	Yes	No X		Childcare assistance will be explored as a future goal with payment of 2-3 months of childcare while household stabilizes once they obtain employment.

6. Describe the **plan to coordinate services and/or funding** with other organizations/entities (e.g., churches, local governments, schools, non-profits, etc.) to meet the needs of individuals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, describe any efforts that will be undertaken with coordinating partners to avoid duplication of services. Organize your answer in terms of the cities and counties impacted if they differ in coordination of services.

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The coordination of services and funding for utility and rent has been activated through partnerships with Catholic Charities of Central Texas, Austin Energy and Easter Seals of Central Texas, Inc., to assist cases which are most appropriate for one-time rent and utility assistance, case management (with the goal of transitioning clients out of poverty) or wrap around services. The case management model will be utilized as we work together with our employment support partnerships consisting of Workforce Solutions, Skillpoint Alliance, Goodwill Industries of Central Texas, and Capital IDEA. It is our plan to reach out to the Austin Community College to promote our services to their students who seek employment, financial support to enroll in training and social services/support to overcome barriers caused by the pandemic. Before COVID-19, strategy, planning and outreach was taking place at local YMCA centers to connect families with the neighborhood services. Our outreach staff had already been stationed at the North and East YMCA locations with plans to expand services at a South location. Appointments were in the process of being made on a continuous basis and the project was demonstrating that families could be connected to our services through this partnership. We have plans to continue this connection when our neighborhood centers and the YMCA reopens to reach persons in the north and far east sides of Austin where unemployment has hit a large number of persons during the pandemic. The partnerships providing rent, utility and employment assistance will work together to provide distinct services to the client to avoid duplication of services. For example, as we provide rent and utility services, we are closely monitoring our capacity on a weekly basis to assure we can manage the number of cases we are assisting. When capacity reaches its peak the calls for assistance are referred to our partner agency, Catholic Charities of Central Texas. As a result, the neighborhood centers are positioned to provide the social services needed to address the psychosocial and economic needs of our clients and their immediate families due to the pandemic.

7. Describe how you plan to provide the proposed CSBG CARES services through your current **service delivery system** or through partner organizations or subcontractors. Organize your answers in terms of the cities and counties impacted if they differ.

During the COVID -19 pandemic we have continued to provide basic needs services such as food access and rent and utility assistance by creating new service delivery models that include remote processes. Since our neighborhood centers continue to be closed to the public our plans are to continue this form of service delivery with the addition of the CARES Act CSBG funding. As soon as we receive the greenlight to reopen our neighborhood center doors to the public, we will hire additional staff to increase our capacity to assist persons who have experienced a financial strain to connect with our social services. We will hire job counselors to be members of our social work and community worker team. The job counselors will help to bring in clients through outreach in the community who may not be aware of our assistance. Social media outlets, such as the City of Austin's Facebook pages and Austin Texas website, United Way 211 and Aunt Bertha will provide the communication channels to support this outreach. The newly hired job counselors will develop company relationships to bridge clients to the jobs that will provide the income to be able to afford rent or the purchase of a home, transportation to get to work , healthcare insurance and a future financial cushion to get through a life crisis or setback from an event such as a pandemic or natural disaster. The job counselors will provide coaching for a successful interview experience, employment leads and teach

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resume writing. Their work will supplement the case management support provided by the social workers who will assess the psychosocial needs of the client household and identify how CSBG CARES Act funds can best be utilized for the client. This decision will be made with the client and identified in their individual service plan that targets the client's goals. Funds will be used to increase the availability of gift cards for gas, food, work tools, medication all of which are needed to strengthen employment success. We will continue our partnership with Workforce Solutions for referrals and connections to training that will not duplicate what is offered through our partnership with the Austin Community College.

CSBG CARES Act funds will be used to pay for short term courses at the Austin Community College or other qualified vendors that will result in obtaining a certificate, establishing a new skill or enforcing the skills the client already possessed. We will focus on short-term, 2-3 months, training or certificate programs that qualify people for living wage jobs. We also will focus on paying for programs that are not easily accessible for free through other programs.

We are currently working with rent and utility assistance funds provided through the COA Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department (NHCD). CSBG Care Funds will be used to expand our rental and utility assistance to a greater number of persons and their families in Austin and Travis County. Most of the CSBG Care Funds will be used towards rent and utility assistance and the hiring of the three job counselors to work closely with the Neighborhood Services Self-Sufficiency Case Management Team with the goal of helping clients gain living wage jobs.