



## TULSA DOWNTOWN COORDINATING COUNCIL

### Downtown Indigent Response Study and Assessment

We should start this discussion with the recognition that the reference “indigent” is received by many as a negative reference. While there is a small percentage of this population including drug users and panhandlers whose conduct warrants a negative reference, the vast majority of this population is homeless or ill prepared to live a better life. This assessment attempts to address the needs of the few as well as the many.

#### **Introduction/Purpose**

The Downtown Coordinating Council and Tulsa Regional Chamber initiated a dialog with downtown service providers to identify ways to support the research and work that has and is being done in the area of indigent response. We specifically focused on the downtown area, inside the IDL.

These discussions were approached by recognizing the exceptional work various service agencies are providing on an ongoing basis. We did not want to get into new analysis or group study. We wanted to hear from these service providers about the need in terms of service delivery; to continue to work toward minimizing indigent living situations specifically downtown; and to identify any role the City and Chamber can play to improve the current conditions.

**Study Areas and Participating Organizations:** The discussion was divided into five categories

**Encampments** – Tulsa Regional Chamber, Youth Services of Tulsa, Tulsa County – Social Services, John 3:16 Mission, Community Service Council, City of Tulsa – Security, Mayor’s Office of Constituent Services, DCC

**Migration** - Tulsa Regional Chamber, Salvation Army, Mental Health Association of Oklahoma, Iron Gate, First Baptist Church, John 3:16 Mission, Community Service Council, City of Tulsa – Security, Mayor’s Office of Constituent Services, DCC

**Panhandling** - Tulsa Regional Chamber, Salvation Army, Mental Health Association of Oklahoma, John 3:16 Mission, Community Service Council, community volunteer, City of Tulsa – TPD, Security, Chief City Prosecutor, Mayor’s Office of Constituent Services, DCC



## TULSA DOWNTOWN COORDINATING COUNCIL

**Personal Safety & Symptomatic Incidents** – Tulsa Regional Chamber, Counseling & Recover Services of Oklahoma, Mental Health Association of Oklahoma, John 3:16 Mission, Family and Children Services of Oklahoma, Community Service Council, Tulsa Area United Way, City of Tulsa – TPD, Security, Mayor’s Office of Constituent Services, DCC

### **Category Findings/Recommendations:**

#### Encampments:

Actions needed:

1. Funding to support multidisciplinary intervention teams
2. Assure coordination between law enforcement and the intervention teams
3. Resolve the issue of on-street feeding stations

Migration: The movement of indigent population from overnight housing to locations for food and services

Actions needed:

1. Communication with shelter residents to explain expectations and reasons for concern; e.g. TPD BOK Center opening model
2. Funding public transportation – Morton CHS bus has limited their schedule due to funding reductions
3. Adapting transportation to distributed housing system

#### Panhandling & Personal Safety:

Actions needed:

1. Create an alternative or proxy for supporting individual needs vs. panhandling, e.g. public donation boxes; a card purchased to provide indigent access to services and facilities; announce as part of public education program
2. Improved panhandling ordinance



## TULSA DOWNTOWN COORDINATING COUNCIL

3. Create a public information campaign regarding the impact of contributing to panhandlers
4. Revisions to the current enforcement model
  - Stop the giving – institute a public education initiative
  - Indigent court modeled after juvenile court with alternatives to jail or fine
  - Court needs help with referrals to services – define resources
  - Need to define alternative to court for mental illness victims
  - Review The University of Tulsa approach to on campus panhandling

### Symptomatic Incidents:

#### Actions needed:

1. Demographic research to better identify and understand the apparent increase in indigent population downtown
2. Investigate and develop a response to reported referrals to Tulsa social services from other cities, agencies and institutions
3. Improved communications system between individuals, businesses and service agencies to improve response.
4. Public education initiative describing typical response capabilities, and reporting protocol, especially the threshold of “self-harm” as one of the response criteria
5. Create and fund downtown specific multidisciplinary response team and provide a central point of contact
6. Develop and institute a response protocol with a service delivery tree or model for business and individuals to follow
7. Re-establish the public inebriant alternative