Policy Analysis Part 1

Intake Process Policy

The unofficial name of the agency policy at hand is referred to as the Intake Process Policy. It is the policy of The Beacon of Downtown Houston, as of September 24, 2020, that: “Housing assessments and status checks are available Mondays through Thursdays. Intake process begins at 7 a.m. and services are available on a first come, first serve basis” (*The Beacon| Homeless Services| Houston*, n.d.). During the intake and/or registration process, The Beacon staff, volunteers and/or interns are to ask each client applying for services for their personal identification number and name. This information is collected in order to connect the client with their existing Homeless Management Information System record and/or have a new client complete an intake form or program application. Once the client has been enrolled in The Beacon Services, they are then provided with a system generated number and serviced in the specified order. Those who are in need of housing assessments, are seen by the on-site New Hope housing assessor to complete a housing assessment that will help link them to the most suitable housing options.

The organization’s goal is to help end homelessness and restore hope by providing empowering services. In 2014, The Beacon partnered with The Way Home to provide coordinated access to housing interventions and emergency shelters and services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The objective is to utilize the Homeless Management Information System to keep track of client-level information without duplicating data among a host of homeless assistance and homelessness prevention programs within the Continuum of Care. The system stores and tracks information in relation to the client’s history of homelessness, needs, goals, services rendered and from what HUB in addition to service outcomes. As a result, all coordinated access service providers are able to collaboratively work together in efforts to end homelessness both locally and nationally.

The services provided by The Beacon of Downtown Houston are usually intended for individuals and families experiencing homelessness or chronic homelessness only. In recent development, those who are at-risk of becoming homeless within the next five or less days are also temporary beneficiaries of the agency policy and may be eligible for the new diversion program. The diversion program was recently implemented to help decrease the rising number of ineligible clients since the impact of the pandemic. Applicants can render services including but not limited to civil legal aid services, food, laundry and showering services, as well as counseling and mentoring services. The agency’s target area is Greater Houston; however, clients from all areas are welcomed to apply for services.

The Beacon serves as a coordinated access HUB for the National Coalition for the Homeless and its overall goal is to help provide the necessary basic needs to homeless individuals and families. The agency’s use of the Homeless Management Information System and the Housing-First model helps to achieve this goal by bridging delivery service gaps. Organizations who implement the Housing-First model believe that it is imperative to focus on securing stable housing before being able to successfully combat other concerns such as substance and alcohol abuse. I am also in support of this theory, as it is not only logical but also helps to create independence and increase self-sufficiency within those in need.

One legislation that played a role in bringing forth the agency policy is the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This legislation includes nine titles that provide rights and a plethora of services for the homeless population ranging from supportive permanent housing, transitional housing, emergency shelter and food assistance, education, healthcare and job training. It was first introduced to House as the Urgent Relief for the Homeless Act on January 8, 1987 by Democratic Representative Thomas S. Foley (*Congress.gov | Library of Congress*, 2019). On March 5, 1987 the proposal passed the House by a Yea-Nay vote of 264 - 121 and was then introduced to the Senate on March 10, 1987 (*Congress.gov | Library of Congress*, 2019). After careful consideration, amendments and a conference, Senate agreed by a Yea-Nay vote of 301 – 115, on July 09, 1987, leaving the House to present it to the President (*Congress.gov | Library of Congress*, 2019). On July 22, 1987, President Ronald Reagan signed the proposal after the death of the Chief Republican Sponsor, Stewart McKinney. The act was renamed to the McKinney-Vento Act following the death of another representative, Bruce Vento by President William Clinton (*Congress.gov | Library of Congress*, 2019). In all there was a total of 111 cosponsors, 14 House and Senate roll call votes and two committees that contributed to the passing of this legislation. This bill was proposed during a time when the world was very chaotic and indifferent. It was during this time that the Vietnam and Reconstruction Era played out. Other world events such as the assassination of John F. Kennedy took place as well as the Civil Rights movement and bombing of the Chinese embassy. It was also around this time, that poll taxes were implemented to indiscreetly deny blacks of the civil rights which significantly impacted voting around this time (*United States American History*, 2019).

References

*The Beacon| Homeless Services| Houston*. (n.d.). The beacon. <https://www.beaconhomeless.org>

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