

# Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

## 2018 TX BoS CoC Board Member Elections Nominee Information and Paper Ballot

All seats are elected for a two-year term, from October 2018 through September 2020

### Seat 2 – Homeless Veterans:

- **MELISSA ESCAMILLA**

**Position:** Program Director at Endeavors

**Experience:** I currently serve as the Program Director for the Veteran Supportive Services Program at Endeavors in McAllen, Texas. We provide services to at-risk and/or homeless veterans in over 20 counties in South Texas.

Aside from working at Endeavors with homeless veterans, I also come from a veteran family and am aware of the challenges a veteran may face once they have transitioned out of the military. Some challenges may include disability, substance use disorder, income, mental health, and the lack of affordable housing.

Currently I serve as the Vice Chair of the Cameron County Homeless Coalition and participate in homeless coalitions across South Texas including Corpus Christi and Laredo.

**Reasons nominee wants to serve:** This past year I served as a board member representing homeless veterans in our continuum. I would like to continue to serve on the board to help advocate for homeless veterans within our continuum and promote any services our continuum can offer homeless veterans. I am passionate and dedicated to working for and with veterans with disabilities, homeless veterans and veterans in general.

I also am a board member of the Community Veteran Engagement Board in the Rio Grande Valley. As a board member I advocate for homeless veterans by educating and informing others, including the Veteran's Administration, about the needs of our veterans, including affordable, sustainable, and accessible housing, lack of community services, and barriers our veterans encounter.

I am a team player and encourage collaboration on all levels. I feel my approach to solving problems or providing options for homeless veterans will enable our communities to end homelessness among veterans.

**Other information:** I have over 16 years of experience working with special populations including people with disabilities and veterans. In May 2019 I will acquire my Doctor of Philosophy in Rehabilitation Counseling. With my PhD, I plan to continue to help at risk and homeless veterans, acquire my license in professional counseling.

I spent 13 years working with people with disabilities and currently the last three years with the veteran population. Last year, our team (Endeavors) and I were able to help veterans who were displaced and affected by Hurricane Harvey. We worked with our community partners to identify and house veterans who were displaced due to Hurricane Harvey.

In addition to my experience I am a mom to a combat active duty serviceman and come from a combat veteran family. I am hard working, dedicated, patriotic and passionate towards



# Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

helping veterans in our communities. One day I hope our communities end homelessness among veterans in our communities.

**BoS Counties served:** Aransas, Bee, Brooks, Cameron, Dimmit, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Kleberg, La Salle, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, Starr, Victoria, Webb, Willacy

- **JOHN MEIER**

**Position:** WCTRF-SSVF Program Manager at the West Central Texas Regional Foundation

**Experience:** John Meier is the Chair of the West Texas Homeless Network (WTHN) and Program Manager for West Central Texas Regional Foundation (WCTRF) – Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF). John served in the United States Marine Corps. He worked as a Math/Special Education Teacher in Texas for 8 years. John personally experienced homelessness in 2014 that led him to seek services from the Veterans Administration and SSVF. Since that time he has pursued the goal of making homelessness, “rare, brief, and nonrecurring” for Veterans in 25 counties in the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care.

**Reasons nominee wants to serve:** John Meier wants to be involved in the continuing growth of services offered within the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care, as well as continuing improvements in processes for delivering those services.

**Other information:** John Meier has tremendous experience building community collaboration and instituting system changes. John Meier's WCTRF-SSVF goal is to End Veteran Homelessness and getting to functional zero for Veteran Homelessness in the 25 counties served within the next year and half.

**BoS Counties served:** Brown, Callahan, Coke, Coleman, Comanche, Eastland, Fisher, Haskell, Howard, Jones, Kent, Knox, McCulloch, Mills, Mitchell, Nolan, Runnels, San Saba, Scurry, Shackelford, Stephens, Stonewall, Taylor, Throckmorton, Tom Green

- **TAMARA WRIGHT**

**Position:** SSVF Regional Coordinator at the Veterans Administration (VA)

**Experience:** I have been working in the field of ending veteran homelessness for over 7 years with the VA. I manage community planning processes for the SSVF program for the state of Texas and promote evidence based practices like coordinated entry, housing first, and reaching the federal criteria and benchmarks.

**Reasons nominee wants to serve:** I would like to provide input to the continuum regarding the federal plan, resources that are available, and represent veterans and the VA.

**Other information:** I am currently serving on the Maricopa Association of Governments CoC board and chair the Coordinated Entry Subcommittee in Phoenix. I believe I can be helpful to the Balance of State of Texas by providing perspectives from other areas of the country to help meet the goals of ending veteran homelessness.

**BoS Counties served:** All counties



# Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

## Seat 4 – Homeless Families

- **KATHERINE BISSON**

**Position:** Executive Director at Abilene Hope Haven

**Experience:** I have years of experience working with families. Before my current organization I worked at a youth shelter that served homeless, runaway, trafficked, and those involved with the juvenile justice system. We would intervene, and if possible, reunite with family/guardians. I have also worked for Communities in Schools as the dedicated homeless student intern where I assisted with attendance, education, self-esteem, and family conflict/crises. As a Rapid Rehousing case manager I worked closely with the homeless liaison and other community resources for the children, as well as working closely with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services as an advocate to leverage resources.

**Reasons nominee wants to serve:** I am the Vice Chair of our LHC (West Texas Homeless Network). I am also involved in many other community groups. I want to serve on the CoC Board to not only contribute my experiences, but also to gain more insight on a larger system level to better inform our programs and these community-wide efforts. I believe this will assist in making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

**Other information:** After receiving my Bachelor in Business Administration, I switched gears to pursue my Master of Science in Social Work. This shift was made by my desire to work specifically with children and families. I am motivated in my current position to ensure that families experiencing homelessness and connecting them to the resources that will best meet their needs. In addition, I adopted and know the importance of family of all types. I have a heart for families experiencing homelessness and would be a great advocate in this role.

**BoS Counties served:** Taylor

- **ARTURO GARCIA**

**Position:** Director at the City of Laredo Community Development Department

**Experience:** I have been working for the City of Laredo for nearly 17 years in housing and homeless related issues. I am a retired Army combat veteran from Operation Iraqi Freedom having served combined 20 year active/reserve service. I have a finance degree and a master's in business administration from Texas A & M International University.

**Reasons nominee wants to serve:** In my role in my employment, I am the lead for the Mayor's Challenge to end veterans homeless in our local community. This valuable and rewarding experience with our veterans has allowed us through help from THN to reach our goal locally. THN plays a big role in a lot of our counties that are part of the balance of state and i would like to request your support in being a part of the solution to help end our homeless issues in our state. I would like to be a part of our State wide support for assisting those most in need and if given the opportunity to serving as a board member, I will use my experiences to be part of the THN team that helps out our local communities throughout the state.

**Other information:** I would like to request for your support to serve on the THN board to help our homeless Texans. Thank you.

**BoS Counties served:** Webb



# Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

- **MELANIE THORNTON-LEWIS**

**Position:** Director of Social Services at The Salvation Army of Galveston, Texas

**Experience:** My training and experience in Social Work incorporates the Generalist Model (Health/Mental Health) with a concentration in APO (Administrative, Planning and Organizing). I have 25 years of experience in prevention/intervention, client-centered, and mission-driven programs. I have a proven track record in start-up programs and implementation, grant management, community advocacy and public relations. My passion is to advocate and champion with a focus on community partnering, client consummation and commitment.

**Reasons nominee wants to serve:** Although our agencies' Visions/ Mission statements are written differently, at the end of the day we all want that same outcome: Advocate for system changes and eradicate homelessness.

**Other information:**

\*September 2014- Present: Director of Social Services, The Salvation Army Galveston County (Galveston and Texas City)

\*Aug. 2009- 2014: Housing Coordinator (Social Services/Harbor Light) The Salvation Army Social Services

\*June 2007- May 2009: Program Manager (Health and Human Services) A.C.T.I.O.N CDC, Inc.

\*Aug. 2001- Dec. 2006: Social Worker (Addictive Disorder Clinic/Dually Diagnosed), Jefferson Parish Human Service Authorities, Metairie, LA

\*Volunteers of America, New Orleans, La.: QMRP (Qualified Mental Retardation Professional): 1996-2001

\*Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese, New Orleans, La: Residential Supervisor (Survivors of Domestic Violence): 1993-2002

**BoS Counties served:** Galveston

## Seat 6 – Victim Services

- **DAISY LOPEZ**

**Position:** Program and Education Director at Friendship of Women, Inc.

**Experience:** I have served as a strong advocate in the movement to end violence for 14 years. I began my journey in the victim services field as a high school volunteer and have made this my life's passion. October 2018 will mark my 12 year anniversary at Friendship of Women, Inc. (FOW). FOW is a key leader of victim services and provider addressing domestic violence and sexual assault in Southern Cameron County. I currently oversee the coordination, management, and leadership of the outreach victim services, battering intervention and prevention program, community education and training, and primary prevention efforts at FOW. Over the years, I have served in direct service capacities such as Legal Advocate, Shelter Coordinator, Battering Intervention & Prevention Program Coordinator, and in management positions as project manager and director for various programs. I have also served on committees and expert panels in the field of domestic violence at local and statewide levels.



# Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

**Reasons nominee wants to serve:** I am interested on serving on the CoC Board because I am passionate about the needs and barriers facing victims in our communities, the biggest being housing crises and housing instability. I believe that our communities are also leading the charge in responding to these needs in unique and innovative ways. The underlying social issues impacting victims are the same issues impacting communities across the CoC. There is much to learn and much to be shared amongst service providers. I am interested in learning from and supporting programs to continue their amazing work and help be a part of designing future initiatives and programming.

**Other information:** I believe myself to be a highly motivated and devoted person in my field and I am always looking for ways to help make the clear case that the social issues impacting victims of domestic violence and sexual assault are intertwined with issues around education, health, housing, income, homelessness, and many more. I welcome the opportunity to continue to learn and hopefully apply my skills and knowledge to help focus on victim safety while addressing the homelessness crises affecting these families.

**BoS Counties served:** Cameron

- **MORGAN RALEY**

**Position:** Victim Advocate at Noah Project of Abilene, Inc.

**Experience:** Over the past two years, I have had the honor and privilege to work with survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in the West Central Texas region as a Victim Advocate at Noah Project in Abilene, Texas. Through this time, I have met with victims wherever they are at physically, emotionally, and psychologically to advocate for them in gaining empowerment and the true freedom of choice that comes with knowledge of safety. I have also had the opportunity during this time to work with our local coalition, the West Texas Homeless Network, in the development of Home Again West Texas for Coordinate Entry in Abilene. I have been able to use my experience working with victims to aid in creating a system in our community that is not only safe for everyone, but also empowers them to make stabilizing decisions for their future.

**Reasons nominee wants to serve:** Over the past year of working with the Texas Homeless Network and the CoC in bringing a coordinated effort to addressing homelessness in our community, I have seen the impact that stable housing can have for victims. Housing first can jump-start a victim's path to securing the future that they seek for themselves. Affecting that level of change on a larger scale would be an incredible honor and responsibility. I consider my life's work to be advocating for those who have been marginalized and feel their voices are not heard. By serving on the CoC Board, I would work to increase that voice for victims throughout the Balance of State.

**Other information:** During my graduate studies in Public Health, I chose to focus my studies on Community and International Health. While there, I learned that the health of individuals is largely related to the community's actions as a whole in the pursuit of health. I feel that the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care is a large community, and by taking responsibility to advocate for the issue of homelessness in our community, the impact on individuals will be



# Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

multiplied greatly for the good. As a member of the CoC Board, I would hope to aid in increasing this community's impact for everyone through accessibility, safety, and trauma-informed policy.

**BoS Counties served:** Callahan, Eastland, Haskell, Knox, Jones, Shackelford, Stonewall, Stephens, Taylor, and Throckmorton

## Seat 8 – Health/Medical *[Unopposed]*

- **LUÍS T. CERDA**

**Position:** Epidemiologist Supervisor at the City of Laredo Health Department

**Experience:** I directly supervise more than 700 disease reports a year for the last 3 years, and have total health care experience for 15 years. This experience includes direct patient care for more than 10 years and the last 5 years, I have actively participated in improving Public Health in the South Texas region. As part of my post graduate education (Master in Public Health), I developed programs to modify and improve Social Determinants for at risk populations as the homeless, drug addicts, veterans, social and racial minorities. My experience in disease investigation, prevention and control has given me a deep understanding of the importance of human living environments. Homeless situations or below standard living conditions determine health and social outcomes. Most, established a direct relationship between housing deficiencies and the incidence rate for some diseases.

**Reasons nominee wants to serve:** I would like to serve this organization because I can provide my expertise in Public Health and disease prevention. At the same time, I would be able to provide up to date information on important emerging public health threats and the latest disease trends and behavior. Access to health care prevention services for at risk populations will also be important part of the knowledge that I can provide to this important organization. Providing affordable dignifying housing should be a priority for thriving societies as well as provide access to health care and preventive services. Families and individuals need those two basic important factors to overcome difficult situations as drug addiction, poverty, mental health issues, and devastating diseases such as tuberculosis. I can give my input and knowledge to this organization to develop better plans and policies in regards to housing in Texas.

**Other information:** I am a professional Public Health individual with post-secondary education. I am an advocate for improving the standards of living. My background is multicultural since I have lived in three different countries in the course of my life. I have visited the poorest communities in our Continent as well as the wealthiest neighbors. I understand that housing is a basic principal and foundation for human development. I am also an advocate for children's rights and I believe that social determinants for our children should at least reach a minimum acceptable level. Housing and health must be the stepping stone for social development. Our commitment with these two principles as society shouldn't be short term investments rather midterm and long term sustainability. I work on a daily basis with population that cohabit in poor living conditions (homeless, veterans, children, low socioeconomic, rural and drug addicts) and I consider housing as the most important social determinant of health.

**BoS Counties served:** Duval, Jim Hog, Webb, Zapata



# Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

## Seat 10 – Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program Recipient

- **MARCELA CERVANTES**

**Position:** Housing Manager at the City of Laredo Community Development Department

**Experience:** I have worked for the City of Laredo Department of Community Development for over 7 years. I am currently responsible for the administration and operational oversight of the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program, Housing Rehabilitation Program and HOME Program. As part of my responsibilities, I monitor and ensure compliance with programs goals, local/federal regulations requirements, and contract provisions. I developed the City of Laredo ESG Policy and Procedures Manual and the Laredo/Webb County Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures. I also have experience in shelter management for storm victims.

**Reasons nominee wants to serve:** I would like to serve on the board because I care about making a difference. My expertise working with federal funds, strong work ethics, and passion for helping others can assist in our mission to end homelessness.

**Other information:**

- I participate in the annual homeless Point in Time count and the Stand Down for the Homeless Veterans Event.
- I am responsible for hosting the weekly meetings for the Laredo's Homeless Veterans Master List and the monthly evaluation meeting for the Coordinated Entry Process.
- I am a member of the Laredo Homeless Coalition.
- I graduated from Texas A&M University with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration – Finance.

**BoS Counties served:** Webb

- **CHRISTY PLEMONS**

**Position:** Director of Social Services at The Salvation Army, Temple Corps

**Experience:** I have extensive knowledge and education that supports my experience in social services, grant management, HUD regulations, associated software, and management of staff/operations of service to those in need. As The Director of Social Services for The Salvation Army, Temple, my roles consists of obtaining and managing grant and contracts in excess of 2 million dollars over 15 months, ensuring compliance, proactively researching new grant opportunities. I also serve as a community liaison, staff and field intern supervisor, and rehousing officer. Before arriving to the Salvation Army, I was the Senior Housing Program Analyst for the City of Waco and effectively utilized HUD's grant management system to serve those in need. I am expert in finding solutions to housing barriers, utilizing programs, and implementing direct practices to maximize grant resources. What also makes me uniquely qualified is that I have current and previous experience serving on various boards across 11 counties.

**Reasons nominee wants to serve:** I want to serve because I understand the importance of collaboration, community involvement, advocacy, and have extensive knowledge and understanding of how to maintain and ensure compliance of HUD regulations. Through my work at The City of Waco and direct practice at The Salvation Army I understand the unique





# Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

challenges of meeting grant requirements while serving those in need. I would be an asset to the board due to my education and experience with clients who are struggling to find safe and affordable housing. I am passionate about maximizing the available resources to provide excellent, caring, and compassionate service. State-wide, I feel a major issue being faced when working with homeless populations are barriers to safe and affordable housing, lack of resources, criminalization of homeless, and the lack of public awareness and understanding. The need is vast and being a part of Tx BoS CoC Board will help provide working knowledge for the greater good to those in greatest need.

**Other information:** I have a passion for advocating, collaboration, and educating communities partners about the importance of quality data, eliminating barriers to services, and identifying gaps in community resources. I am a community advocate and have dedicated my life to improving the lives of the others through research and collaboration. Through my work at the City of Waco and at The Salvation Army, I network daily with local, state, and federal agencies to advocate for those that don't have a voice. I believe in empowering clients with the resources that will improve their quality of life. My Master of Social Work from Tarleton State University as well as my experience has also taught me that each client is unique and has different needs. My job is to listen, be compassionate, and advocate for clients without discrimination. I understand the importance of networking and know that it would be extremely difficult to strive for functioning zero without public awareness and collaboration.

**BoS Counties served:** Bell, Coryell Hamilton, Lampasas

## Seat 12 – Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice

*No nominations received*

## Seat 14 – Faith Community or Faith-based Organization

- **NAME:** Daphne' Adams

**Position:** Family Service Manager at Christian Community Action

**Experience:** What I bring to the position is my background in the human service field and my experience in being a director of multiple programs. With over fifteen years in the social services field, which includes over ten years dedicated to working with the homeless population, all dealing with individuals who are directly homeless or at-risk of homelessness. I have experience working directly with youth, child welfare, domestic violence/sexual assault victims and children. My education and experience, as well as my personal life mission, is through love and compassion, lead others to grow to their maximum potential and fulfill their purpose. I have the ability to multi-task and prioritize tasks while staying focused on the overall goals.

**Reasons nominee wants to serve:** The opportunity is an exciting prospect that I feel qualified and able to undertake. I am passionate about working collaboratively to end homelessness with other agencies. I am dedicated to following a vision and identifying ways to execute deliverables. Currently serving in a leadership position, I see the importance of agency relationships in order to end homelessness. I am the Programs Manager, where I am responsible for the operational success of the agency, ensuring seamless team management and





# Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

development, program delivery, and quality control and evaluation. I also work with the staff to identify professional development gaps and create programs to identify goals, objectives, policies and procedures to address the gaps and create consistent, high-quality work within the agency. Statistical reports, management of grants, identification of department budgets and areas of profit and loss, procedures, and presentations for management review are also things that I do daily.

**Other information:** As a graduate of Oklahoma State University in Human Development and Family Science, particularly focused on the Child and Family Services specialty with a minor in Spanish introduced me to the concepts of viewing the family in a world perspective, professional skills and ethics within the field of human services, while fueling my interests in family policies, laws and advocacy.

**BoS Counties served:** Denton

**SEE THE PAPER BALLOT ON PAGE 10 or vote electronically at**

**<https://thn.wufoo.com/forms/q1o1mij40r20ds6/>**



# Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

## 2018 CoC BOARD MEMBER ELECTIONS

### BALLOT

To vote for a nominee, check the box beside the nominee's name. Select no more than one nominee per seat. If you do not wish to vote for any nominee(s) in a specific seat, leave the box(-es) blank.

**\* Ballots are due October 10, 2018, at 11:59 P.M.**

#### SEAT 2

- Melissa Escamilla
- John Meier
- Tamara Wright

#### SEAT 4

- Katherine Bisson
- Arturo Garcia
- Melanie Thornton-Lewis

#### SEAT 6

- Daisy Lopez
- Morgan Raley

#### SEAT 8 [unopposed]

- Luís Cerda

#### SEAT 10

- Marcela Cervantes
- Christy Plemons

#### SEAT 12

*No nominations received*

#### SEAT 14 [unopposed]

- Daphne' Adams

Please fill in the information below to complete your ballot:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

County/counties where you live and/or work: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe how you are affiliated with homeless services in the TX BoS CoC:

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Scan and email a completed ballot to: Mary Stahlke, CoC Manager, at [mary@thn.org](mailto:mary@thn.org) or mail a completed ballot to: Mary Stahlke, CoC Manager, c/o THN, 1713 Fortview Road, Austin, TX 78704