**Interviewee**: President Mike Nichols

**Organization**: Coalition for the Homeless in Houston, Texas

**Interviewer**: Professor Don Kettl

**Video** **Length**: 23 minutes 16 seconds

**Date**: March 25, 2020

**Brief Overview**:

Mike Nichols, the President of the Coalition for the Homeless in Houston, Texas, discusses the dynamics of leading a coalition composed of 100+ different member organizations to address homelessness. Houston is considered national leader by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for their extensive efforts in the past decade to reduce homelessness. President Nichols discusses the development of the coalition, obstacles that have delayed potential progress, and issues on the horizon for policy makers with the growth of pandemic COVID-19.

**Discussion Points**:

* Development of the Coalition for the Homeless
	+ In 2011 Houston is identified by HUD as a location struggling with homelessness.
	+ Led by former Mayor Annise Parker and The Way Home movement, public funders, nonprofit service providers, and a variety of other disciplines organize to confront the issue of homelessness in Houston.
	+ Between 2011 and 2018, 18,000 individuals experiencing homelessness placed in supportive housing to receive wrap around services through the “housing first,” strategy to address homelessness.
		- 85% of these individuals have remained in housing, reducing HUD’s annual Point in Time homelessness count from over 9,000 to 4,000 individuals.
	+ Currently utilizes a dashboard with a data-driven focus that includes a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) that keeps tracks of services provided and received for over 50,000 individuals a year.
* Systemic obstacles in addressing homelessness identified by President Nichols
	+ Texas Department of Corrections.
		- Releases about 45,000 people a year statewide with about 10,000 arriving in Harris County. Many lack employment, identification, housing, or other supportive resources that could lead them to homelessness.
	+ Mental health system.
		- Harris County Psychiatric Center releases 9,000 individuals per year with around 3,000 of them experiencing homelessness.
	+ Struggling state healthcare system.
		- Failure for state government to expand Medicaid.
		- Houston has lacked respite care for over a year.
* Relevance to COVID-19
	+ Potential policy related issues.
		- Current identification system is not functioning because of the inability for people to locate individuals experiencing homelessness.
		- What does one do with a person experiencing homelessness who tests positive for COVID-19? How and where should they quarantine?
		- What is going to happen in the future with all of the people who are released early from jail?
	+ Actions.
		- 19 handwashing stations have gone up in homeless encampments or common traversed areas.

**Find Interview Here**: <https://youtu.be/Po-Rhs6_ZSs>