

NEWS RELEASE

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Much Needed Document Bank for the Homeless opens at the ARCH

Austin's homeless people can now store documents and important records at a newly installed document bank located at the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH). Organized by the Downtown Cluster of Congregations, Front Steps, Trinity Center and the Salvation Army, the bank will be run by Front Steps, the non-profit that manages the ARCH.

While each of these social service agencies has their own Identification Assistance Program, a program designed to help homeless individuals and families obtain valid Texas identification cards or birth certificates, no one agency was providing a safe place for clients to store their documents. In many instances the agencies end up helping many of the same clients and paying for the same documents, over and over again.

"Living on the streets, it is all too common for identification documents to be lost or stolen," said Carol Swicker, Front Steps Director of Programs. "Trying to get a replacement ID when you don't have other documentation can be an extremely frustrating "catch-22" situation."

"You can't get your birth certificate without your ID, and you can't get your ID without your birth certificate. We're hoping by providing an opportunity to store items like a birth certificate, social security card, school records, etc., replacing a lost ID will become a much easier process. It's hard to do much of anything – work, access medical care, cash a check – without a valid ID."

The Front Steps Document Bank provides a safe and secure place to store the documents most people would store in a lock box or safety deposit box.

At this time, the Bank accepts the following documents: driver licenses, passports, citizenship certificates, naturalization certificates, Dept. of Homeland Security documents, military identification cards, birth certificates, court orders, school records, insurance policies, vehicle titles, military records, marriage licenses, divorce decrees, voter registration cards, pilot licenses, concealed handgun licenses, Texas inmate ID card and consular documents.

Also accepted are any other documents listed on the Department of Public Safety website as being supporting forms of documentation required to obtain a Texas driver license or identification cards.

Documents may be expired, temporary, from any state and either originals or copies.

For those homeless clients looking for a safe place to store important documents and for those who are tired of replacing a much-needed Texas I. D., the document bank is open every Wednesday and Friday morning from 8-9 am and 9-10 am on Thursday.

ABOUT THE ARCH:

The ARCH, managed by Front Steps, is a day resource center, an emergency overnight shelter and a homeless health clinic located downtown at 500 East Seventh Street.

The day resource center provides clients access to showers, lockers, laundry facilities, clothing, telephones, mail and messaging services, A.A., community referrals and information and case management.

Co-located in the ARCH, along with Front Steps, are eleven agencies that also provide services for the homeless community including MHMR ACCESS, Family ElderCare, Legal Services, House the Homeless, New Entry, Goodwill, Austin Advocate, AmeriCorps, The Men's Clothing Closet, A New Entry, ART from the Streets and the Homeless Health Clinic.

ABOUT THE DOWNTOWN CLUSTER OF CONGREGATIONS:

The Downtown Cluster of Congregations meets monthly to work together to improve the quality of life among the poor, the addicted, the mentally ill, the abused and the homeless in the downtown area. The Cluster includes both congregations and human services agencies including Austin Area Interreligious Ministries (AAIM), St. David's Episcopal Church, Central Presbyterian Church, St. Mary's Catholic Church, First Baptist Church, St. Martin's Lutheran Church, Front Steps, Salvation Army, Trinity Center, Caritas, Travis County Department of Health and Human Services, and the Care Communities.