

Meet the Board

The Houston Recovery Center is managed by an independent Board of Directors. They come from a range of professional backgrounds, but all play active roles within the Houston community. The Board's first major initiative came to life in the form of the Houston Center for Sobriety, commonly referred to as the sobering center. Since opening our doors last May, their guidance has been an integral part of our daily operations. We are thankful for their ongoing service and support and are pleased to introduce them here.

Board Members

Board Members:

Kay Austin - Chairperson
Deborah Duncan
Dr. Arlo Weltge, M.D.
Dr. David S. Buck, M.D.
Elizabeth T. Nunnally

Ex-Officio Board Members:

Andy Icken
Executive Assistant Chief, Tim Oettmeier
Dr. David Persse
Stephen L. Williams

Kay Austin

Kay Austin has worked in the addictions treatment field in medical/surgical hospital settings and residential facilities since 1984 in both the private and public sector. Since 2005, she has served as the Chief Executive Officer of Santa Maria Hostel, where she has worked for the past 18 years.

In 2007, Kay was elected by the Texas Association of Addiction Professionals, Houston Chapter, the Addiction Professional of the Year. In 2011, she was inducted into the chapter's TAAP Hall of Fame. She also serves on the Board of the Association of Substance Abuse Programs. In 2012, Kay was asked by Mayor Annise Parker to serve as the Chair of the Houston Recovery Center.

During her career, Kay has worked with a general adult population, adolescent care, and, most recently at Santa Maria, with a specialized female population of women and their children. Kay's commitment to the clients she serves at Santa Maria is to select talented, committed staff to provide the best possible evidenced-based curricula and to assist these clients by offering court liaison services, family therapy, and co-occurring psychiatric and substance use services to meet their needs.



*Kay Austin, Chairperson
Houston Recovery Center Board*

Deborah Duncan

Deborah Duncan is a well-known television personality in Houston. After a few years working in radio, she made the switch to television. Her career took her from the news desk in Austin and Dallas, to hosting a talk show in New York, before bringing her to Houston. In 2002, Deborah joined KHOU-TV as an anchor on 11 News This Morning. Six years later, Deborah returned to the talk show format as host of Great Day Houston. The show, produced locally by KHOU-TV, airs weekdays at 9:00 a.m. on Channel 11.



Deborah Duncan is the recipient of many local and national awards for television excellence, including four Emmy Awards, three AWRT Star Awards, two Gracie Allen Awards and a Telly Award, amongst other honors. Her achievements on the air, however, are transcended by her commitment and dedication to community service. Deborah is passionate about many causes and chairs numerous community events. In addition to her board position with the Houston Recovery Center, she serves on the National Board of Directors for Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and is a Board Member for the Palmer Drug Abuse Program (PDAP).

Dr. Arlo Weltge, M.D.

Dr. Arlo Weltge is a Clinical Professor of Emergency Medicine at UTHealth (University of Texas Medical School in Houston). He holds academic appointments at the Baylor College of Medicine, UT Houston School of Nursing, and the Houston Community College Program in EMS. Dr. Weltge is a Board Certified Emergency Physician and currently practices as a clinical faculty in Emergency Medicine in the Memorial Hermann Hospital Texas Medical Center (MHH-TMC), a Level I Trauma Center and base for the Hermann Life Flight program, and the Harris County Hospital District's (HCHD) LBJ General Hospital, both in Houston.

Dr. Weltge has served in a number of professional roles including serving as President of the Texas College of Emergency Physicians in 1993-1994 and as Council Officer and Speaker for the American College of Emergency Physicians, as well as Council Officer from 2007- 2011. He is currently Vice Chair of the Harris County Medical Society's delegation to the Texas Medical Association (TMA), and a member of the TMA delegation to the American Medical Association.

In conjunction with serving on the Board of the Houston Recovery Center, Dr. Weltge has served on the Board of the Star of Hope Mission since 2006. He has been a member of the Executive Committee and a Board Officer since 2011.



*Houston Recovery Center Board Members,
Deborah Duncan and Dr. Arlo Weltge*

Dr. David S. Buck, M.D.

David Buck, M.D., M.P.H., is a Professor at Baylor College of Medicine's Department of Family & Community Medicine, and an Adjunct Professor at University of Texas School of Public Health – Houston: Management, Policy and Community Health Division. He began working with the underserved developing medical and dental clinics for the indigent population in Houston in 1984 after working with Mother Teresa in Calcutta, India. In 1999, he founded Healthcare for the Homeless—Houston (HHH), where he is now President. He is also the founding Chair of Doctor's for Change.

Dr. Buck is the recipient of many awards and honors including: the 2013 American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) Public Health Leader National Award, the 2012 Texas Academy of Family Physicians (TAFP) Public Health Leader Award, 2011 St. Luke's Episcopal Charities Community Health Leadership Award, and 2010 University of Texas School of Public Health Leadership Luminary in Public Health. He served on the national HHS Advisory board for health reform: Consumer Oriented - Operated Program plan for health care exchanges. Dr. Buck currently serves on the boards of the Houston-Galveston Schweitzer Fellows Program, Healthcare for Special Populations, the Houston Recovery Center, I AM Waters and the Harris County Healthcare Alliance.



Elizabeth (Betty) Nunally

Betty has been with Star of Hope for 22 years, where she currently manages all client programs. Her responsibilities include strategic planning, staffing, budgeting and ensuring quality of services in all Star of Hope facilities: the Men's Development Center, Women and Families Emergency Shelter, Transitional Living Center, New Haven and The New Horizons Programs.



Betty holds a BA in psychology from Loyola University in New Orleans and an MBA, with concentrations in Marketing and Finance, from the University of St. Thomas. In addition to serving on the Houston Recovery Center Board, Betty also serves on the HR Advisory Committee for Catholic Charities of Houston and is a member of the Advisory Board for the Texas Homeless Network.

*Houston Recovery Center Board Members,
Dr. David S. Buck and Elizabeth Nunally.*

Andy Icken

Andy Icken currently serves as Mayor Annise Parker's Chief Development Officer for the City of Houston. He has oversight of the Houston Airport System, the Convention & Entertainment Facilities (Houston First Corporation), the Planning Department, the Office of Business Opportunities, the Housing and Community Development Department, the Fire Department, Economic Development, International Affairs and Development, Office of Sustainability, Convention & Visitors Bureau and Cultural Affairs.

Mr. Icken is past president of the Houston Minority Business Council and continues to serve on their Board of Directors. He is past Chairman and continues to serve on the Board of the Santa Maria Hostel – a United Way agency with a mission to provide residential drug and alcohol treatment to women and their dependent children. He is past Chairman of the South Main Center Association and serves on the Board of Directors for the Main Street Coalition; he also served on the Board of Directors for the Business Consortium Fund.



Tim Oettmeier (cont'd)

Criminal Investigations Command, Forensic Services Command, and the department's Technology Services operation.

Timothy received his Ph.D. majoring in Police Administration from Sam Houston State University in 1982.

Dr. David Persse

After graduating with honors in emergency medicine from Georgetown University School of Medicine, Dr. Persse completed his residency training in emergency medicine at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center in Torrance, California. After completing a resuscitation research fellowship at Ohio State University, Dr. Persse received a grant to complete his fellowship training in emergency medical services and resuscitation at the Baylor College of Medicine and the City of Houston

Emergency Medical Services program. From there, Dr. Persse became the Assistant Medical Director for the Emergency Medical Services system of Houston before becoming the Medical Director of the Los Angeles County Paramedic Training Institute, and the Assistant

Medical Director of the Los Angeles County EMS Agency. In 1996, Dr. Persse returned to Houston to assume the role of the Director of Emergency Medical Services for the City of Houston.



Exec. Asst. Chief Tim Oettmeier

Timothy Oettmeier is in his 40th year of serving the public as a member of the Houston Police Department, where he currently serves as an Executive Assistant Chief of Police assigned to Investigative Operations.



He is responsible for managing and administering the affairs of the sworn and civilian personnel assigned to the Special Investigations Command,

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In May of 2004, he was appointed by City Council as Houston's Public Health Authority. In this role, Dr. Persse is responsible for the medical aspects of clinical care quality management, disease control and public health preparedness. He is also a member of the Board of Directors for the South East Texas Trauma Regional Advisory Council and the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians.

Houston Recovery Center Ex-Officio Board Members: Andy Icken, Tim Oettmeier, Dr. David Persse and Stephen L. Williams (pictured next page).

Stephen L. Williams

Stephen L. Williams serves as the Director for the Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS). HDHHS is a full service public health department with 1100+ employees serving the 2.1 million residents of Houston. He oversees a nearly \$113 million budget, half of which comes from state and federal grants. He was the former Executive Manager for Travis County Health and Human Services and Veteran Services. He also served as Administrator of Public Health and Deputy Director of Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department.

Mr. Williams is actively involved in public health issues at the local, state and national levels. He chairs the Department of State Health Services Public Health Funding and Policy Committee (Senate Bill 969) and the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris



County and serves on the boards of the Harris County Healthcare Alliance, Harris County Systems of HOPE Governing Board, and the Texas AgrilLife Extension Service. He is an alumnus of the American Leadership Forum, Houston/Gulf Coast Chapter/Medical Community Class, a graduate of the National Urban Fellowship Program and Executive Leadership Institute, NFBPA. He is also a member of the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO), American Public Health Association (APHA), Texas Public Health Association (TPHA) and the National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA).

Thank you to all of our board members!

Your support has helped make the sobering center a reality. Since our opening, we have served over 4,250 diversions. Many of those clients continued to seek additional help with their addictions in order to better their lives. We look forward to your continued guidance and support as we near our second year of serving the City of Houston and its residents.

Ursula Williams - Legal Counsel

Ursula Williams currently serves as Staff Attorney/Assistant Police Administrator assigned to the Houston Police Department's Chief's Command Legal Services Unit. Before joining the Houston Police Department, Ms. Williams led a private law practice where a segment of her work was devoted to providing legal counsel to non-profit organizations. While Ms. Williams is not a member of the Board of Directors, she actively supports the Houston Recovery Center LGC Board as legal counsel.

Ms. Williams earned her BBA in Accounting from Baylor University in Waco, Texas and Juris Doctor from Southern University Law Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She is licensed to practice law in Texas and Louisiana.

2013 in Review

The sobering center was gradually opened to the Houston Police Department (HPD) in early 2013. First, we were available to HPD's Special Operations, located downtown, to orient staff, officers, and clients to a new way of responding to public intoxication. HPD Central and South Central were then directed to use the sobering center. On May 15, 2013, HPD announced that all stations could use the sobering center and provided officers with their policies regarding the diversion program. Finally, on August 6, 2013, HPD's training video was released, featuring an officer and a client (portrayed by an actor) using the sobering center. We were pleased to see that with each significant date, there was an increase in utilization.

While we expected intake to increase during the holiday months of November and December, our numbers actually decreased during that time. Contributing variables to the decline may include: the number of weekends in a month; the decreased number of officers working, and therefore arresting, during holidays; and the possibility that former clients who entered detox or other services, are achieving and maintaining their recovery. The latter is the greatest outcome we strive for.

As we continue to gain understanding of the trends and data collected from the sobering center, we will keep you, our readers, informed.

Staff Success Story - Alexander Allen

My journey to the Houston Center for Sobriety started at EMT school. I graduated in May of 2012, and started working at a transfer company at the end of that year. Several months after being in that job, I realized that I hated it. The hours were horrible and seeing how the people were treated at the nursing homes, without being able to do anything about it, was a horrible feeling. One Saturday morning, my dad sent me an email about the Houston Center for Sobriety, telling me to send in a resume and some references. I thought it was going to be some small side job I could work part time while still working for the transfer company. The email was sent at 8 am, and around 6 pm that same day I was called to come in Monday for an interview. I was so shocked, I immediately called my job and told them I wasn't working that Monday because I had something to do. That Monday, I went in for an interview with Mr. Kincaid. As soon as I met him, I knew he was a good man with a great purpose. After talking for about an hour and him telling me the benefits of this job, I was extremely interested. The interview was then over and then the waiting game started. After turning in my two weeks' notice at the transfer company, they said they didn't need me any more after the first week, so that weekend I called Mr. Kincaid to let him know that I was available. He told me to come in Monday, and although he wouldn't be able to give me the eight hours, that I could come in and get something. That was a blessing in its own. I had no job and was making no money at the time, but Mr. Kincaid was able to lend a helping hand.

Monday, my first day of work, I wasn't sure what to expect. As I arrived, I was greeted very well, and all the management staff I met were some of the nicest people I had met. Then work began. I was working on all kinds of different things - from document formats to ordering supplies. I was able to see the ribbon cutting for HRC and all the people that came out to witness such a historic event for Houston. It was a great experience for me at my age. Then, a week later, more of the staff began to come in for training. It was a scary feeling to have so many new faces at HRC, but little did I know they were going to be some of the coolest people that I had ever met, even with all different backgrounds and all kinds of personalities to deal with. Then the fun part began, we all had to take the nonviolent crisis intervention class for two days and it was great! I was able to see complete strangers turn into great co-workers, and people I didn't know start getting along so well that it was an amazing thing to see.

One day during training I got a phone call from the Chief of the Caney Creek fire department telling me that the job I had tested for a while back finally had a spot open and I had three days to make a decision. The long and hard thinking process began. I was so confused. I had a difficult decision to make. On one hand, I had a firefighter job, on the other hand, my job with the Houston Center for Sobriety. I went through a hard and long thinking process, but I am still here, so I think we know what I decided in the end.

Today I am happily working at HRC. It's been a great experience and a very educational journey. I have been able to meet and work with some great people and have also been able to learn a lot of new things - not only from the company but also from the amazing people that I have the opportunity to work with. I have had the opportunity to learn what drug addiction can do to a person, not only physically but emotionally, and have also learned that there is help and hope for the people that want it. For the ones that are not quite ready here at HRC, we have people that have been there and will be ready when the time is right. I know my journey here has just started and I'm excited to see what the future has in store for me and HRC.



*Houston Recovery Center EMT
Alexander Allen*

Client Success Story

I awoke in the bushes outside of the zoo to the sound of screeching monkeys and decided my drinking had once again become problematic. I was emaciated from lack of food, exhausted from lack of proper rest, and was in dire need of a shower. Not sure where to turn, I decided to head back to the sobering center. Several days earlier, I had been in a blackout under the Pierce elevator doing God knows what, when I was taken into custody by the Metro Police. In lieu of taking me to jail for my zillionth public intoxication, they dropped me off at the sobering center. As the name suggests, they sobered me up and released me back onto the street. Upon that release, they made it clear that if I became serious about my problem and needed help to stop drinking, they would be there. Looks like I was about to take them up on that offer.

Upon my return, the staff was exceptionally courteous and helpful. It's hard to explain how much it meant to someone in my position to be treated with a basic level of respect. At that point, I was a derelict and devoid of hope, saddled with the soul-crushing hopelessness known only to those who call the streets their home. Through God's Grace, all of that was about to change.

The center arranged for me to check into a treatment facility where I safely detoxed. Whilst at that facility, I came into contact with a network of sober-living homes that boast an astoundingly-high 85% success rate. Ultimately, I moved into one of those homes and it's where I stay today. I live in a nice house with good friends that is 100% conducive to an alcohol-free lifestyle. My life is immeasurably better than what it was. And getting better all the time. I have God to thank for that. It is my belief that God uses people as instruments and channels through which to conduct his will. That said, I have the people at the sobering center to thank as well, for allowing themselves to be those instruments. It's hard to get into the whole butterfly effect of what may have happened had it not been for the options given to me through this new center, but suffice it to say I would likely be either homeless or locked up. There is an outside chance I could have died. Thanks in no small part to the city and the sobering center, I didn't lose my freedom or my life. And I think that's super.



*Houston Recovery Center Client - Daniel H.
November 2013*