

## TCOG Launches “Getting Ahead” Program to Help Participants Build Economic Stability

SHERMAN, June 2, 2017 – Texoma Council of Governments (TCOG) Executive Director Susan B. Thomas, PhD, announced today the launch of a new program to help Section 8 clients and others build economic stability and take charge of their future direction. Created by [Aha Process!](#) and facilitated in partnership with [MasterKey Ministries of Grayson County](#), “Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin’-By World” is a 16-week program of investigation that positions participants as the experts regarding their lives and problem-solvers in building resources for themselves and the community.

Using the technique of co-investigation, participants and facilitators work to better understand poverty, its causes, and the rich/poor gap in today’s society. After getting a clear picture of their lives now, investigators explore a theory of change that moves them from the concrete thinking used to solve the constant barrage of everyday problems into more abstract thinking necessary for building future plans. The course explores the hidden rules that help participants build relationships of mutual respect, navigate new environments and take action with the support of the group and community members willing to serve as advisors and mentors going forward.

“‘Getting Ahead’ is about helping people find their future stories and discover the joy of being in charge of their learning and their lives,” said TCOG Executive Director Susan B. Thomas, PhD. “Our goal is to help participants realize that ‘what it’s like now’ isn’t ‘how it has to be.’ It is also about bringing our community together to better understand and address the tough issues that lead to economic instability.”

Sponsored by TCOG with support from the community, “Getting Ahead” offers participants a weekly meal provided by area churches and businesses, and childcare through the Foster Grandparents Program. “Getting Ahead” currently runs in more than 200 sites across the nation; this first Texoma-based program made up of 12 participants will meet weekly through mid-August.

The Texoma Council of Governments is a voluntary association of the local governments in Cooke, Fannin, and Grayson Counties. Established in 1968, the Texoma Council of Governments promotes economy and efficiency in the coordinated planning and development of the tri-county region through its community and economic development activities. Either directly, or through contractors, the Council provides housing, utility assistance, and weatherization services for low-income citizens in the region and assists the elderly through a variety of Area Agency on Aging programs. The Council also facilitates the delivery of grant funding for homeland security and criminal justice.

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