

Alliance of Community Assistance  
 Ministries, Inc. (ACAM)  
 Association for Family and  
 Community Integrity, Inc.  
 Behavioral Health Alliance of Texas  
 Bering Omega Community Services  
 Care for Elders  
 Career and Recovery Resources, Inc.  
 Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese  
 of Galveston-Houston  
 CHILDREN AT RISK  
 Children's Defense Fund  
 Coalition for the Homeless of  
 Houston/Harris Co., Inc.  
 Coalition of Behavioral Health Services  
 Collaborative for Children  
 Communities In Schools  
 Community Family Centers  
 Community Health Choice, Inc.  
 Covenant House of Texas  
 DePelchin Children's Center  
 Depression & BiPolar Support Alliance  
 Greater Houston (DBSA)  
 Easter Seals of Greater Houston, Inc.  
 Family Services of Greater Houston  
 Fort Bend Regional Council on  
 Substance Abuse, Inc.  
 Good Neighbor Healthcare Center  
 Greater Houston Healthconnect  
 Harris County Healthcare Alliance  
 Healthcare for the Homeless-Houston  
 Houston Area Association for the Education  
 of Young Children  
 Houston Area Community Services  
 Houston Area Women's Center  
 Houston Food Bank  
 Houston Methodist Hospital  
 IntraCare Behavioral Health  
 Jewish Family Service  
 League of Women Voters Houston  
 Legacy Community Health, Services Inc.  
 Lesbian Health Initiative  
 March of Dimes  
 Memorial Assistance Ministries (MAM)  
 Memorial Hermann Healthcare System  
 Mental Health America  
 of Greater Houston  
 NAMI Greater Houston  
 National Association of Social Workers-Houston  
 Neighborhood Centers, Inc.  
 New Hope Housing, Inc.  
 Northwest Assistance Ministries  
 Phoenix Houses of Texas, Inc.  
 Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast  
 Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services  
 Santa Maria Hostel, Inc.  
 SEARCH Homeless Services  
 Spaulding for Children  
 Spring Branch Community Health Center  
 Springfield College School of Human Services  
 St. Joseph House  
 Texas Children's Hospital  
 Texas Health Institute  
 Texas Hunger Initiative  
 The Arc of Greater Houston  
 The Council on Alcohol & Drugs Houston  
 The Immunization Partnership  
 The Living Bank  
 The Network of Behavioral  
 Health Providers  
 The Rose  
 The Walk for Mental Health Awareness-Houston  
 The Women's Home  
 United Way of Greater Houston  
 Vita-Living, Inc.  
 Wesley Community Center  
 Worklife Institute  
 YMCA of Greater Houston

# One Voice Texas

A Collaborative for Health & Human Services



## Behavioral Health Funding and Access to Services

**Position Statement Approved by One Voice Texas: December 10, 2014**

### Issue/Concern:

The 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature allocated a significant amount of new funding to the state's public behavioral health system. Approximately \$300 million in additional funds were designated for mental health and substance abuse services in the 2014-15 state budget, with these dollars going to community-based mental health treatment services for children and adults, crisis services, state hospitals, and substance abuse prevention and treatment programs.

While this influx of dollars was a welcome change from the drastic cuts seen in previous state budgets, a prolonged lack of adequate funding has resulted in a public behavioral health care system in which access to services across the state continues to fall severely short of meeting the needs of Texans living with behavioral health disorders. Further exacerbating this problem is the fact that Texas continues to experience significant population growth as well as a shortage of qualified behavioral healthcare providers in many areas, including both rural and metropolitan communities. In addition, the limited resources that exist within the public system for community-based care continues to further the state's reliance on its expensive and publicly-funded crisis and institutional care systems, which include emergency rooms, state hospitals, local jails, and state prisons, for many of our most vulnerable Texans.

### Specific Policy Recommendations:

- At a minimum, maintenance of the current levels of state funding for and access to services provided by the public behavioral healthcare system through community-based treatment, crisis services, state hospitals, the public school system, and programs for individuals involved with the criminal justice system;
- Continuation of the Texas Medicaid 1115 Transformation and Quality Improvement Waiver;
- Continuation of state funding for grants administered by the Texas Department of State Health Services for the establishment and expansion of community collaboratives to provide services to persons experiencing homelessness and mental illness;
- Continuation of state funding for the Harris County Mental Health Jail Diversion Pilot Program and other local jail diversion programs that target justice-involved individuals living with behavioral health disorders;
- Continuation and expansion of Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Waiver that provides home and community-based behavioral health services to youth who would otherwise need institutional care, such as inpatient psychiatric care, or whose parents would otherwise seek to relinquish custody to the state in order to obtain appropriate care for the youth;
- Support for initiatives that increase the number of funded beds in private residential treatment centers for children/youth with severe emotional disturbances who are at risk of parental relinquishment of custody to the state due solely to a lack of behavioral health treatment resources;
- Support for initiatives that increase access to home and community-based services for persons with behavioral health disorders who are most at risk of institutionalization or re-institutionalization;
- Support for initiatives designed to help individuals foster recovery and function as independently as possible in their communities, including peer recovery support services and treatment/support models;
- Support for initiatives that better utilize existing funds and draw down additional federal funds, place an emphasis on and expand cost-effective community-based services rather than institutionalization and/or hospitalization, oppose further cuts to Medicaid reimbursement rates, increase the number of behavioral health care professionals throughout the state, and further promote jail/prison diversion services for individuals living with behavioral health disorders;
- Support for additional opportunities to develop coverage models for low-income and vulnerable populations living with behavioral health disorders;
- Support for initiatives that address housing and supportive services needs of individuals living with behavioral health disorders;
- Support for initiatives that provide behavioral health treatment and support services to parents/families involved with the child welfare system; and
- Support for initiatives that promote the expansion of integrated healthcare through the systematic coordination of physical and behavioral healthcare services throughout Texas.

Texas One Voice: A Collaborative for Health and Human Services – Advocates for Comprehensive High Quality Health and Human Services.

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### **What Can Be Accomplished?**

Community-based behavioral health care that provides mental health and/or substance abuse treatment as well as supportive services can be provided at a cost that is substantially lower than keeping these individuals in, or returning them to, institutional care and or the child welfare and criminal justice systems while improving their outcomes and quality of life.

### **How Will This Impact State Funding?**

By coordinating these programs, Texas will increase the probability of drawing down additional federal funding, will reduce duplicative overhead costs, and will save money on more costly systems such as foster care, inpatient treatment and prison.

### **Supporting Facts/Research Resources:**

- ✓ Texas has nearly eight times as many people with serious mental illness in prison as it does in psychiatric hospitals. (*Treatment Advocacy Center and the National Sheriffs' Association*)
- ✓ Texas as a whole has added approximately 400 local projects focused on providing behavioral health services through the Texas Medicaid 1115 Transformation and Quality Improvement Waiver. (*The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute*)
- ✓ Fifty-five of the projects funded through the Texas Medicaid 1115 Transformation and Quality Improvement Waiver in Region 3, which includes Harris County, have a behavioral health focus. (*Harris Health*)
- ✓ Local law enforcement has become the de facto mental health service provider in many parts of the state. In Houston, calls for service to the Houston Police Department's Mental Health Division, which deals with individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, have continued to rise over the last few years: 15,122 calls in 2007; 29,272 calls in 2013. (*Houston Police Department Mental Health Division*)
- ✓ In its first year of operation, the Houston Center for Sobriety provided 5,345 diversions from the City of Houston Jail for individuals who would otherwise have been arrested and charged with public intoxication. These individuals were instead provided with information on and access to treatment services, including peer recovery support services. (*Houston Center for Sobriety*)

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