



84th Legislative Report

Healthcare Workforce: Opportunities

coalitionforhealthyminds.org



84TH LEGISLATURE PRIORITY: MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USES DISORDER

The Coalition's priority for the 84th Legislature was to expand the mental health and substance use disorder workforce for the following reasons:

- An insufficient workforce creates barriers to care for all Texans, regardless of payer source.
- Strategies to address workforce shortages are well researched and best practices to grow the workforce have been developed in Texas and other states.
- Investments in mental health and substance use disorder by the Legislature and the through Transformation Waiver delivery system reform incentive payments (DSRIP) projects require an adequate provider network in order to be most effective.

See the recommendations of the Coalition before the 84th legislative session at coalitionhealthyminds.org.

PROGRESS IN 84TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SB 239 (Schwertner/Zerwas) Amends the Education Code to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to establish a student loan repayment assistance program for certain mental health professionals who apply and qualify for assistance. The Legislature appropriated \$2.1 for the biennium for the bill.

The budget included a significant investment in primary care* **Graduate Medical Education (GME)**: The 84th Legislature significantly increased funding for graduate medical education GME over the next biennium. Senate Bill 18 and Rider 51 of the budget provides a total of \$53 million for GME expansion grants for current and new programs. Depending on availability of prioritized funds, grants can be awarded for specialties determined to be at “critical shortage levels” and for funding advanced years of specialties including, but not limited to, psychiatry.

* According to the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law (www.bazelon.org), primary care physicians furnish over half of the mental health treatment in the country and about 25% of all primary care recipients have diagnosable mental disorders.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE SHORTAGES BEFORE THE 85TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- 1. House Select Committee on Public Health:** Per Speaker Straus' charge to Select Committee, Chair Four Price will lead the Committee in reviewing and making recommendations on issues including substance abuse, care for veterans, identifying illnesses early, and improving delivery of mental health care.
- 2. A number of House Interim Charges** will directly involve healthcare workforce issues: The House Committee on Appropriations will be examining issues in Texas Medicaid. The House Committee on Human Services will be studying the needs of the aging population including healthcare over the next 10 years including available care and services. The Human Services Committee also will be looking at Medicaid managed care including what can be done to increase the number of providers. The House Committee on Public Health will study opportunities for telehealth.
- 3. Senate Interim Charges** from Lt. Governor Patrick include healthcare workforce issues also. The Senate Finance Committee will be monitoring the support for and enhancement of graduate medical education. The Senate Health and Human Services charge regarding inpatient mental health system reform includes a directive to make recommendations how to maximize the state mental health workforce. The Senate Health and Human Services Committee will also study improving access to care through telehealth.

The Coalition endorses the **Person-Centered Recovery Model** of treatment and support in the training of licensed/certified providers. Recovery-oriented and person-centered care incorporates a philosophy of care that makes individuals responsible for their own recovery with the needed support of healthcare providers, family, and friends.

Workforce Fact

In 2014, more than 93 percent of the Texas population lived in 226 different counties with mental health workforce shortages. Underserved areas, populations, and settings exist in every county in Texas.

Invitation

The members of the Texas Coalition for Healthy Minds invite all stakeholders, including legislators and their staff, to seek us out for information and recommendations on the prevention and treatment of mental illness and substance use disorder.

Contact:

Gyl Switzer, Coalition Facilitator

Mental Health America of Texas, gyl@mhatexas.org

Texas Coalition for Healthy Minds Member Organizations

Association of Substance Abuse Programs
Austin Clubhouse
Austin ROSC Initiative
Center for Public Policy Priorities
Children's Hospital Association of Texas
Clarity Child Guidance Center
Communities for Recovery
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Easter Seals Central Texas
Federation of Texas Psychiatry
Grassroots Leadership
Mental Health America of Texas
Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc.
National Alliance on Mental Illness Austin
National Alliance on Mental Illness Dallas
National Alliance for Mental Illness Texas
National Association of Social Workers, Texas Chapter
Soberhood
Texans Care for Children
Texas Council of Community Centers
Texas Counseling Association
Texas Hospital Association
Texas Nurses Association
Texas Pediatric Society
Texas Psychological Association
Texas Suicide Prevention Council

All member organizations have a primary or important focus on mental health and/or substance use disorder.