



# FORCES *of* CHANGE

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

TEXAS *of* MIND  
STATE

THE MEADOWS MENTAL HEALTH POLICY INSTITUTE

## Our History, Mission, and Vision

The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute provides independent, nonpartisan, and trusted policy and program guidance that creates systemic changes so all Texans can obtain effective, efficient behavioral health care when and where they need it.

The Institute grew out of The Meadows Foundation's unyielding concern for the people of Texas. In 2014, The Meadows Foundation established the Institute as an independent nonprofit organization. With offices in Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio and projects in every region of the state, the Institute has become Texas's most trusted source for information and analysis on effective and efficient mental health policy.

We work at the state, regional, and local levels to help mental health systems improve, share best practices, develop resources, and increase public awareness that mental illness is treatable. The Institute's vision is for Texas to be the national leader in treating people with mental health needs.

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## Message from Chairman Martinez

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This is change you can see and feel. There is nothing abstract about it.

When I was asked to become the founding chairman of the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute's Board of Directors, I knew this was not an opportunity I could pass up, and I am glad I didn't. I am proud to have played such a role in an organization that has helped transform the way mental health care is provided in Texas.



2017 was a year of remarkable advances in mental health policy in Texas. The legislature set to work on its 2016 blueprint for better mental health care and succeeded far more than any legislature had in the past. State hospitals have been set on a long-overdue course

of modernization. And the Institute and Houston Endowment released a comprehensive report on the scope and quality of behavioral health services for children in Harris County.

Those are just three of many remarkable achievements the Institute took part in this year alone. Moving forward, I know, the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute will continue to redefine how mental health is addressed in Texas, whether through work with state policymakers, in partnership with innovative regional leaders, or by broadening the public discourse.

One last note: In October 2017, I stepped down as Chairman of the Board, satisfied that the Institute is on the proper course. The board unanimously elected my friend Lyndon Olson of Waco to take MMHPI to new places and new opportunities. We couldn't be in better hands.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "O. Martinez, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Dr. Octavio N. Martinez, Jr.**  
**Chairman of the Board**  
**October 2013 - October 2017**

## Message from Chairman Olson

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In 2017, the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute could be found wherever there was a mental health need in Texas.

In the wake of Hurricane Harvey, we spread the word on how the storm's stresses could continue to affect people along the Gulf Coast, particularly young people. Our team helped the Governor and the Texas Education Agency establish the Hurricane Harvey Task Force on School Mental Health Supports, pulling together state agencies, health systems, and over 70 private partners in support of roughly 1.4 million schoolchildren impacted by the storm.



We could be found in the Rio Grande Valley, where we partnered with the Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation to take an in-depth look at the systems providing mental health care to people living in this large, important, and rapidly-growing region of Texas.

And we worked with high-ranking officials across our judicial system, helping set the stage for a permanent Judicial Commission on Mental Health that will address the mental health needs of people who pass through our court systems.

It is an honor and privilege to take the helm as Chairman of the Board at this important time. The vision and leadership of the entire board, especially our inaugural Board Chair Dr. Octavio N. Martinez, Jr., have charted a course toward great change for behavioral health care in the state of Texas. Their collective wisdom and reputations inspire immense respect among community leaders, academics, and lawmakers, and that has helped the Institute quickly establish itself as a trusted entity in helping develop the best public policies related to mental and brain health.

I look forward to 2018 and all the important work we will continue to do together.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lyndon L. Olson, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Lyndon L. Olson, Jr.**  
**Chairman of the Board**  
**October 2017 - Present**

## Message from the CEO

A child's growth can be marked with pencil lines scratched on a door frame, each moving relentlessly upward year after year. For businesses, growth can be measured with increasing sales, market share, and bottom lines. For other organizations, growth can be counted by the number of contributors or employees they have, or even the followers they have on various social media sites.

The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute has experienced our fair share of growth since 2014, and I'm proud of how the Institute has become part of the fabric of our state's mental health community in a relatively short amount of time. But, in 2017, the Institute did more than just grow - we matured.



To a degree, that's a function of time. When the 85th Legislative Session rolled around, we had been part of a complete, session-to-session cycle. Building upon Texas's bold investments in 2015, we were able to help the House Select Committee on Mental Health analyze systemic issues and plan for the 85th. Then, in 2017, we helped Texas leaders from both parties and across our great state turn those plans into legislation, and by the end of the year, we saw much of that policy officially put into practice.

But our maturity also reflects our commitment to "design thinking," which has helped us both establish ourselves as a credible organization and grow with every project we undertake. At its essence, design thinking is about putting a priority on flexibility and innovation to respond to the needs before us in a value and data-driven manner. It is about always putting function before form and maintaining a hardnosed

willingness to redesign a project, a team, or even an entire organization, in order to best meet a need or solve a problem to achieve our vision and mission.

This approach is a natural fit for us, because the Institute is made up of people for whom creativity, collaboration, and commitment are among our first instincts. We're solution-oriented to begin with, so we bring people, communities, and organizations together to find ways to make mental health care for Texans better.

Put short, The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute is not only designed to educate and assist, but also to learn and evolve. The Institute is precisely the sort of organization the state of Texas requires in times of need and times of plenty. I'm proud to be a part of it, and I'm proud to serve such a great state.

As long as we remain dedicated to the task at hand and continue to follow our vision, we will ride out any storms - literal and figurative - that our people may face.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. Keller". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Andy Keller, PhD  
**President and Chief Executive Officer**

# 2017: Year in Review

In many ways, 2017 was like two entirely different years combined. There was the year featuring one of the most significant legislative sessions in memory as it relates to mental health issues, with real advancements on the state, regional, and local levels. And then, there was the year of the storm.

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*Hurricane Harvey arrived on August 25 as a sobering reminder that no matter how prepared we may be, nature is poised to exert its dominance at any moment.*

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Hurricane Harvey Reaches Peak Intensity (NOAA National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service)

With devastating winds and unimagined amounts of rainfall, Hurricane Harvey upended and devastated the lives of millions of our fellow Texans across the Houston area and throughout the Gulf Coast region. Once the flood waters receded and the rebuilding began, those affected – especially children and those who care for them – faced the additional challenge of dramatically higher rates of posttraumatic stress disorder and other mental illnesses, aggravated by the stresses they had endured.

In keeping with our mission and values, our policy experts stood ready to help, answering the call from Governor Greg Abbott and Texas Education Agency Commissioner Mike Morath to help form

the Hurricane Harvey Task Force on School Mental Health Supports, working alongside the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the state Health and Human Services Commission, and a Task Force of over 70 partners to respond to the needs of the 1.4 million children whose schools and lives were changed forever by the storm. By providing administrative, operational, and subject-matter support to the Task Force, we are helping these students, families, and schools return to normalcy and begin the road to healing.

Up until then, 2017 would have been remembered mainly for our state's exceptional progress in improving our mental health systems. Throughout the year, MMHPI worked hard to improve access to effective

# 2017: Year in Review



South Padre Island

and efficient care for Texans with mental health needs across our great state, and nowhere was that work more clearly evident than within the halls of the Texas Capitol during the 85th Legislative Session.

Building upon the findings of 2016's House Select Committee on Mental Health, the Texas Legislature increased funding by roughly \$750 million (anchored by the accountability of the Statewide Behavioral Health Strategic Plan) and passed 13 significant pieces of legislation and budget riders. This created strategic grants for local communities, dedicated funds to rebuild and transform outdated facilities and practices within the state hospital system, streamlined licensure for psychiatrists moving in from out of state, and expanded the state's authority to ensure that insurance companies treat mental health coverage the same as physical health coverage. On the whole, the 2017 legislative session represented a historic step toward our goal of making the Texas mental health system a model for the entire nation.

In addition to our work with the executive and legislative branches, we also worked with the judicial branch to improve the way courts deal with people with mental health needs.

The Mental Health Committee, formed in 2016 by the Texas Judicial Council and with the unified commitment of the Governor's Office and Senate and House leadership, saw much of its recommended legislation become law. Then, late in 2017, another one of its recommendations came closer to reality as the Texas Supreme Court and the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals came together to lay the groundwork for a permanent Judicial Commission on Mental Health, which will improve how the legal system addresses

mental health issues for decades to come.

Of course, the Institute was also built to focus on local issues and systems, and that certainly continued throughout 2017. Major studies, made possible through partnerships with organizations like Houston Endowment, the Harold Simmons Foundation, the Moody Foundation, Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation, and Communities Foundation of Texas, enabled us to help local mental health systems find ways to build on their strengths and close gaps like never before. In fact, we worked with Houston Endowment to complete a groundbreaking study of Harris County's children's mental health systems, released not long before Harvey made landfall. Supplied with fresh data, local governments, health systems, philanthropists, and lawmakers were more empowered to put into place smart, effective measures to improve the lives of their constituents.

With our influential Okay to Say™ campaign, we continued our efforts to change the conversation about mental health in Texas and beyond. Through public events, celebrity involvement, and ongoing social media campaigns, we advanced the idea that mental health issues are nothing to be ashamed of and that honest and open communication is a first and necessary step toward healing.

When it comes to communication, our annual, statewide conference, Engage & Excel, continued to solidify its growing reputation as one of the signature annual mental health gatherings in the state. In 2017, the second annual conference expanded to three days of events, with attendance surging by more than 60 percent. Plans are already underway for the third annual event, slated for October 2018 in Houston.

# At the Capitol: 85th Legislative Session

Changing how an entire state views and treats people with mental illness is a monumental undertaking. Luckily, Texas has courageous leaders in the legislature who have stepped up to the plate and are championing policy and funding initiatives that will transform the delivery of mental health services for our state. Thanks to bold leadership in both chambers of the Legislature – from leaders like Sen. Jane Nelson of Flower Mound, Sen. Charles Schwertner of Georgetown, Rep. Four Price of Amarillo, and Rep. Garnet Coleman of Houston – along with the House Select Committee on Mental Health’s important work during the 2016 interim, the 85th Legislative Session was primed for success.

The House Select Committee, created by Speaker Joe Straus and chaired by Rep. Price, culminated in a highly-detailed report at the end of 2016 that offered the 85th Legislature a clear road map toward system improvements that could serve as a model, not only for Texas, but for the nation. Rep. Price and other members of the committee – including Rep. Joe Moody of El Paso, Rep. Coleman, Rep. Andrew Murr of Junction, Rep. Sarah Davis of Houston, Rep. Senfronia Thompson of Houston, and Rep. James White of Woodville – hit the ground running in January by filing key pieces of mental health legislation spurred by the committee’s thoughtful work.

In the Senate, perennial mental health champions Sen. Nelson and Sen. Schwertner kept the momentum moving during the 2016 interim in their respective committees, the Senate Committee on Finance and the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services. They, along with Sen. Joan Huffman of Houston, Sen. Kirk Watson of Austin, and Sen. Judith Zaffirini of Laredo, began the 85th Legislature by filing transformative pieces of mental health legislation to expand jail diversion programs, establish mental health screenings for new mothers and adolescents, and enforce parity in mental

health benefits, among others. Senators Nelson and Schwertner also teamed up in a tight budget session to secure appropriations to update our state’s aging state hospital infrastructure.

On the judicial side, the Texas Judicial Council’s Mental Health Committee, catalyzed by Institute Board Member and former Texas Supreme Court Justice Harriet O’Neill, spent 2016 examining the intersection of mental illness and the court system. The committee gathered input from stakeholders and studied best practices in the administration of civil and criminal justice for people with mental illness or those affected by it. Their work culminated in recommendations that were filed as legislation by Sen. Zaffirini and Rep. Price.

Throughout the 85th Legislature, our understanding of local mental health needs and solutions helped inform policy discussions vital to the future of our state. We provided expert and unbiased counsel to lawmakers and state agencies whenever asked, responded to any and all requests, delivered data-driven policy solutions for House and Senate offices, and provided invited testimony on 10 different occasions in support of key mental health legislation. One hundred and forty

days later, the dust settled, the legislature adjourned *sine die*, and we were finally able to reflect on what a transformative session had just occurred.

Total behavioral health funding appropriated by the 85th Legislature is estimated to be \$7.6 billion for the 2018–19 biennium. This represented an increase of roughly \$750 million over funds appropriated by the 84th Legislature. In total, since 2013, Texas has increased baseline mental health funding by over \$1.25 billion. Perhaps most critical among these new dollars is the most recent Legislature’s \$300 million appropriation for the planning and implementation of new state hospital construction projects. Deteriorating conditions at Texas’ state hospitals made headlines for years, highlighting the desperate need for significant repairs and improvements. In August 2017, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission put together a three-phase state hospital construction plan for the current and future biennia, allocating the \$300 million to Phase One projects. The beginning of a new era in the delivery of mental health services is now upon us, with initial and transformative steps being taken in Austin, Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas.

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*On the policy side, leaders in the House and Senate combined to pass more than a dozen significant pieces of mental health legislation into law*

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**HB 10 (H: Price; S: Zaffirini)** expands the state’s authority to ensure that insurance companies treat mental health coverage the same as physical health coverage and designates an ombudsman for behavioral health care access.

**HB 13 (H: Price; S: Schwertner)** creates a \$30 million grant program to support state-local collaborations to address gaps in behavioral health services.

**HB 337 (H: Collier; S: Menéndez)** allows county sheriffs the option of notifying the Health and Human Services Commission to suspend, not cancel, a person’s Medicaid benefits while in confinement, with benefits restored, in most cases, upon their release.

**HB 1486 (H: Price; S: Schwertner)** establishes training and certification requirements for peer specialists and authorizes Medicaid reimbursement for their services.

**HB 1600 (H: Thompson; S: Watson)** provides reimbursement for adolescent mental health screenings, meaning more children with needs will be identified – and helped – earlier.

**HB 2466 (H: Davis; S: Huffman)** provides reimbursement under Medicaid and CHIP for a maternal depression screening for mothers within their child’s first year.

**HB 3083 (H: Price; S: Hinojosa)** adds chemical dependency counselors to the list of mental health professionals who are eligible for the Loan Repayment Program for Mental Health Professionals.

**HB 3808 (H: Clardy; S: Menéndez)** adds licensed marriage and family therapists to the list of mental health professionals who are eligible for the Loan Repayment Program for Mental Health Professionals.

**SB 74 (S: Nelson; H: Price)** streamlines the credentialing process for those who provide services to children with high needs, meaning the children of our state will have more access to behavioral health services in the years to come.

**SB 292 (S: Huffman; H: Price)** allocates an additional \$37.5 million to help counties that want to divert low-level offenders with mental illness out of the criminal justice system and into community-based treatment.

**SB 344 (S: West; H: Sheffield)** enables emergency medical services personnel to provide transport to mental health facilities in cases deemed safe by a peace officer.

**SB 674 (S: Schwertner; H: Davis)** creates a fast-track licensure option for out-of-state psychiatrists, cutting the amount of time before they could begin helping Texans.

**SB 1326 (S: Zaffirini, H: Price)** puts into law recommendations from the Texas Judicial Council’s Mental Health Committee that address the criminal and judicial process for individuals with mental illness who are charged with crimes.

There is no doubt that more work remains to be done, but the 85th Legislative Session was both monumental and historic for mental health issues. We were there throughout, providing objective, trustworthy data and policy analysis, and firmly establishing our reputation as nonpartisan, pragmatic, and effective.

## Judicial Leadership

As former Texas Supreme Court Justice and current MMHPI Board Member Harriet O'Neill points out, no youth or adult enters or exits our juvenile or criminal justice systems without a judge serving as gatekeeper. In fact, both criminal and civil courts play major roles in identifying people with mental illnesses, allocating treatment resources, and balancing the protection of public safety with the need to address service needs.

### Hon. Harriet O'Neill

TEXAS SUPREME COURT JUSTICE  
1999 - 2010



As a result, the judiciary has a unique opportunity to have a profound impact on people's lives – for better or for worse. This is something the judiciary has increasingly acknowledged, in part due to the leadership of Justice O'Neill.

The state judiciary experienced great progress in 2017, building on the Texas Judicial Council's success in 2016 when it established a Mental Health Committee composed of judges, lawyers, legislators, clinicians, and advocates. Chaired by Justice Bill Boyce of the 14th Court of Appeals in Harris County, the committee made a series of recommendations to the 85th Legislative Session that covered issues related to jail diversion, competency restoration, and data collection and exchange. Most of these recommendations were enacted into law, with MMHPI providing technical assistance to the legislature on many of these initiatives.

The committee also made recommendations to the Texas Supreme Court and the Court of Criminal Appeals on the structure of a proposed permanent Judicial Commission on Mental Health for the State of Texas. This commission, to be jointly established in early 2018, will spearhead further improvements in the quality, effectiveness, and timeliness of decisions affecting people with mental illness who are involved in the justice system.

Institute board members, senior fellows, staff, and interns played important roles in supporting judicial leadership's initiatives that addressed mental health. Whether serving as members of the Mental Health Committee or as resource experts, or by quickly sharing information, data, and best practices developed through our work, MMHPI is making strong contributions to helping the judiciary shape a stronger, more responsive judicial system in Texas.

# Mental Health Research Framework

Medical schools and other health-related academic institutions have always been vital components of the mental health systems in Texas. Beyond driving cutting-edge research and innovation, and training the next generation of mental health professionals, they are increasingly responsible for planning and delivering mental health care at the statewide and community levels, as well as facilitating the redesign of the state mental health hospital system.

For these institutions, research funding (both federal and private) is their lifeblood. However, in mental health care – an area of research that has traditionally been underfunded and undervalued – Texas institutions have struggled to attract what funding is available. In 2017, Texas grantees received a total of \$25 million from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), representing less than 2 percent of federal mental health research dollars. The same holds true for the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), which awarded just \$25 million to Texas institutions from its budget of \$1 billion.

With our assistance, the psychiatric and mental health research community in Texas is making efforts to facilitate and expand collaborative efforts across the state's facilities, with an eye toward attracting a greater share of research dollars.

In this capacity, the chairs of psychiatry from all of the state's public university systems came together under the leadership of Dr. David Lakey, Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs and Chief Medical Officer at The University of Texas System, to develop a Mental Health Research Framework. The framework's goal is to increase collaborative innovation within five focus areas: depression and mood disorders, bipolar and schizophrenia, first-episode psychosis, substance use disorders, and translational/population health.

We continue to offer our clinical and policy support to the chairs of psychiatry in this important endeavor. It is anticipated that the framework will be considered for inclusion in the State of Texas Behavioral Health Strategic Plan.

A portrait of Dr. David Lakey, a man with glasses, wearing a blue suit, a light blue shirt, and a red patterned tie. He is smiling and standing in front of a row of white flags with gold fringe and red and blue logos. The background is slightly blurred.

Dr. David Lakey

**VICE CHANCELLOR FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS  
AND CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER, THE  
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM**

# ENGAGE & EXCEL

COMMUNITIES TRANSFORMING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEMS

**When they come together, Texans are an unstoppable force.**

“This conference is a wonderful forum to get people together to think about how we might tackle these complex problems, and hopefully even come up with some solutions... or at least new partners or relationships to work from.”

— **Stephen M. Strakowski, MD**, Founding Chair of Psychiatry  
at the Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin

Two years after the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute was launched, a clear priority emerged: How can we help behavioral health policy stakeholders in Texas connect with each other and share ideas and solutions?

We convened mental health community stakeholders from across the state in Austin for the first Engage & Excel (E&E) in 2016. The conference attracted 160 attendees, generating incredible enthusiasm. Making it an annual event was an easy

decision. E&E has evolved into one of the signature annual behavioral health conferences in the state.

Engage & Excel brings together community leaders, behavioral health professionals, law enforcement officials, philanthropists, state policymakers, representatives from local government entities, and a host of other community members dedicated to improving mental health care in Texas. Attendees focus on enhancing local behavioral health systems by sharing best practices, discussing opportunities,



Assistant Commissioner Sonja Gaines addresses conference attendees



U.S. Sen. John Cornyn receives the Okay to Say™ Leadership Award from MMHPI Board Member Albert Hawkins

The 2017 conference, held in September, featured nearly 50 speakers and panelists and more than 260 participants. Attendees exchanged views and ideas, and facilitated networks capable of creating more effective local behavioral health systems, all of which can lead to stronger communities and better lives for all Texans.

Featured speakers, including State Rep. Four Price, Texas Health and Human Services Commission Associate Commissioner Sonja Gaines, and U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, challenged and inspired participants with ways to improve behavioral health care at the federal, state, and regional levels.

In 2018, E&E will “hit the road” and go to Houston for three days of collaboration in October. The move not only reflects E&E’s continued growth and success, it also offers greater opportunities for new attendee participation and broader reach for our statewide institute.

and developing innovative ways to address the needs of their communities.

We hosted the second Engage and Excel in 2017, and it again exceeded our expectations.



Conference attendees enjoy live music and barbecue during the Networking Reception in downtown Austin

MMHPI thanks our 2017 Engage & Excel sponsors for their generous support.





**Throughout 2017, Okay to Say™ spread its message of hope and recovery to people throughout Texas and, increasingly, across the country. What started out as a grassroots, community-driven campaign continued to evolve and gain momentum, changing both the conversation surrounding mental illnesses and the perceptions of people who have them.**

Okay to Say's™ message is simple: mental illness is treatable, all Texans deserve access to effective mental health care, and the first step is to talk about it with someone you trust. This message has been championed by our celebrity partners, including national political leaders as well as major stars in sports, business, and entertainment.

And Okay to Say™ is showing no signs of slowing down.

#### **AMONG THE 2017 HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Winner of the 2017 Public Relations Society of America Silver Anvil Award in public affairs, recognized as the most prestigious award in the communications industry, and one of the nation's five best campaigns.
- Social followers increased by 20 percent, with more than 150 million social impressions.
- Over 80 community partners and over 15,000 advocates were activated through our website and social network.
- In partnership with Mental Health America of Greater Houston, Olympic Bronze Medalist boxer Marlen Esparza shared her support, taping a video detailing how mental illness has touched her own life.
- Launch events in El Paso, Sherman/Denison, Southeast Texas, and an anniversary event in Amarillo.
- A Texas Association of Broadcasters (TAB) partnership that resulted in a run of advertising for 90 days in every Texas market. These PSAs ran over 36,000 times in a targeted and planned manner

from May 1 – July 30, with an overall airtime value of over \$2 million.

- Twenty-four new video testimonials, shot across Texas, of local civic leaders and spokespeople including:
  - o Bill Macatee, CBS Sportscaster
  - o Joe Totorice Jr., Jason's Deli Founder
  - o Iris Lopez, El Paso Weather Anchor

In the coming year, Okay to Say™ will work to gain the support of more communities, as well as local and national celebrities. We may even take things international!



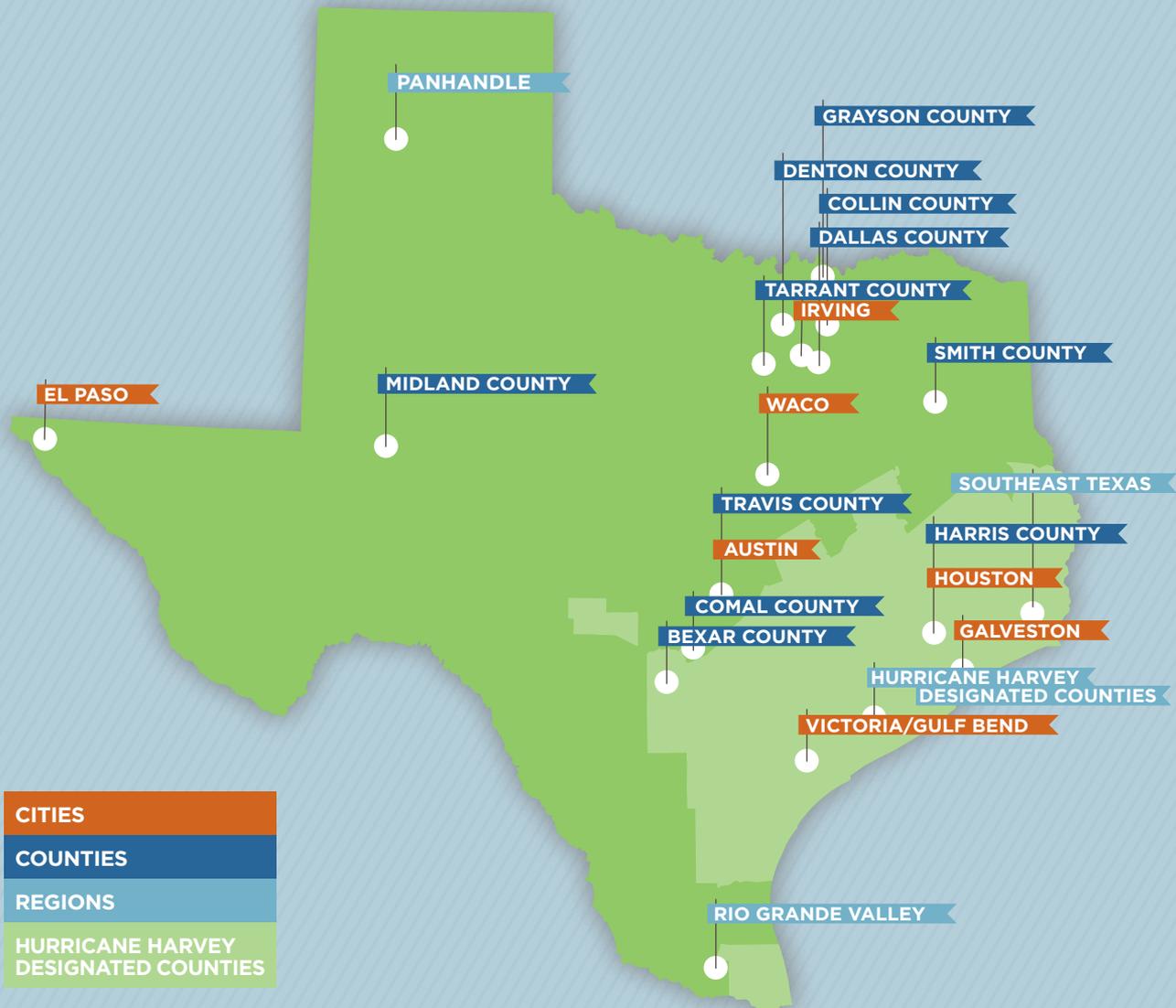
# Connecting with Communities

**Texas is a large and vibrant place.** It is home to nearly 30 million residents spread across 269,000 square miles. We are all different and we are all Texan at the same time.

Because of the size, scope, and variety of Texas communities, the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute works closely with local stakeholders from every corner of our great state to analyze their current mental health systems and develop recommendations that align with local priorities. We like to meet them where they are and help them get where they want to go.

Community leaders across Texas understand best the unique resources and challenges of their home towns. It

is by partnering with mental health providers, non-profit organizations, local governments, school districts, health care systems, law enforcement agencies, philanthropic groups, faith communities, and the general public that we can help them come together to build on their strengths to improve their regional behavioral health systems to best meet their needs. We are grateful for the opportunity to interact with communities across the Lone Star State and for the compassion they show in service to our fellow Texans.



# Rio Grande Valley

The Rio Grande Valley (RGV) is a region of Texas undergoing substantial change. It is an area of rapid growth and a booming economy, yet they also face a myriad of health challenges. Spread across four counties (Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy), the RGV presents an exceptional challenge in identifying and providing treatment for people with mental health needs.

That is what prompted the Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation (the Legacy Foundation) to call on us for an assessment of the behavioral health systems in the four counties, with the goal of providing the Legacy Foundation with specific strategies for developing a responsive, clinically effective, and efficient regional behavioral health care system for the RGV. Through this process, we identified opportunities for improvement across multiple areas.

We recommended the region support widespread implementation of integrated behavioral health, including universal screening for common comorbid behavioral health conditions as well as a population health management approach. These improvements could help meet the needs of approximately two-thirds of RGV children and 80 percent of adults with mild to

moderate behavioral health needs in cost-effective, less-intensive ways.

We also offered ways to increase capacity across the RGV to serve adults with highly-complex needs who are currently caught in cycles of “super-utilization” of crisis, emergency room, inpatient, and justice system services. We also identified a need for the region to develop a comprehensive, regional, and integrated crisis system to help meet these needs.

Opportunities also exist to develop the behavioral health workforce in the region. These include strategically focusing on end-of-pipeline opportunities to keep emerging professionals in the region, expanding the use of certified peer support specialists, and increasing the use of telemedicine.

# Judy Quisenberry

GRANTS DIRECTOR, VALLEY BAPTIST  
LEGACY FOUNDATION



SPOTLIGHT

## Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation

The Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation (the Legacy Foundation) invests in and serves as a catalyst for ideas, medical education, research, and programs that improve the health and quality of life in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV). In this capacity, the Legacy Foundation works with other organizations to promote healthy lifestyles and provide increased access to healthcare for all.

Judy Quisenberry, who has served as Grants Director since the Legacy Foundation's inception in 2011, oversees all aspects of the Foundation's grantmaking and communications strategy, as well as community partnerships and collaboration efforts. Prior to joining the Foundation, Quisenberry served as Senior Director of Development for Valley Baptist Medical Foundation.

"In our short history, we have placed a high priority on projects related to mental health," Quisenberry said. "It ranks in our top three areas of funding to date."

In 2016, the Legacy Foundation funded the Institute to conduct an assessment of the local behavioral health systems in the foundation's four-county funding region (Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy counties) to

identify specific strategies for improving coordination and service provision.

"The report, as a whole, gave us a much broader view of the various mental health systems operating in our four counties," Quisenberry said. "It gave us a much deeper understanding of both how they work together and the challenges some have in working collaboratively with other sectors."

What particularly resonated with the Legacy Foundation was our recommendation that integrated behavioral health (IBH) is the best way to serve the needs of RGV residents.

"Patients will have greater access to mental health services through their primary care provider due to our severe workforce shortages in all areas of behavioral health," she said.

She hopes that the IBH efforts they have funded in at least five settings so far will take root, so that other clinics and primary care providers will adopt the approach to provide more comprehensive services to their patients.



Regina Rogers and Kim Phelan are, in a variety of ways, the hearts of their community. Both from Beaumont, Regina and Kim have been key leaders on a variety of issues, including advancing mental health awareness and improving the quality of mental health care. While many people can draw a crowd, few have the ability to rally their fellow community leaders quite like they do.



They were integral to the success of the 2017 Okay to Say™ Southeast Texas Rollout, the state's largest Okay to Say™ event ever. A packed house of more than 350 enthusiastic supporters turned out to sing the praises of speaking openly about mental health, with business and community leaders alike spreading the message.

For Regina, you can say giving back is in her blood line. She is the daughter of celebrated philanthropists Ben and Julie Rogers, the latter of whom founded Mental Health Association (MHA) of Southeast Texas and served as its president for more than 25 years.

"I am passionate about continuing her legacy of reducing the stigma associated with mental illness," Regina said. "I'm especially passionate about providing encouragement to young people who are often in the juvenile justice system because of trauma-related events that have occurred through no fault of their own."

Kim started her career as a prosecutor for the Jefferson County District Attorney's office, where she saw first-hand the challenges particularly faced by juveniles caught up in the justice system. In private practice, and as president of the newly-resurrected MHA of Southeast Texas, she has continued to advocate for the underserved of Southeast Texas in the courtroom and out.

"Our community has an ethical obligation to invest in all children," said Kim. "It's an investment that, when appropriated wisely, will not only save our children from a lifetime of potential repeated hospitalizations and incarcerations, but also save our state and taxpayers from the hefty price tag that accompanies both."

Even before Hurricane Harvey made landfall along the Gulf Coast in fall 2017, both women realized this was a new and daunting challenge for everyone.

"We are seeing more children detained, and more serious mental health issues with them and their parents and guardians as a result of the displacement of thousands of families," Regina said. "They lost their homes and all of their possessions from the flooding and still have no permanent solutions in sight."

MHA of Southeast Texas, the organization originally founded by Julie Rogers decades ago, has worked tirelessly with Save the Children, MMHPI, MHA of Greater Houston, and others to meet the immediate needs of those affected by the storm. Harvey also underscored the ongoing importance of building a strong behavioral health community to help foster recovery. To that end, MHA of Southeast Texas has served as the "connector" for relief efforts and has been instrumental in helping facilitate and generate funding support for local programs that will build a stronger overall community.



## Houston Endowment: Building Ideal Systems for Children

We received funding from Houston Endowment – a private foundation that partners with others to improve the quality of life in the Houston area – to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the scope and quality of mental health services and supports for Harris County children, youth, and their families, within the framework of an “Ideal System of Care.”

This ideal system we defined has four components:

- **Integrated Behavioral Health in pediatric primary care settings and school;**
- **Specialty Behavioral Health Care;**
- **Rehabilitation Services, including intensive home and community-based services; and**
- **A Crisis Continuum, including psychiatric inpatient facilities and residential treatment.**

Findings from the assessment were released in an October 2017 report that describes a range of contemporary best practices within each component and focuses on research-based practices that have demonstrated the best outcomes across demographics and populations. The report also identifies system strengths and service gaps, and offers strategic

recommendations and opportunities to move toward the “Ideal System.”

“We hope that this assessment will equip decision makers in the provider community with information they can use to enact changes necessary to best serve Harris County’s children,” said Ann Stern, President and CEO of Houston Endowment.

Findings from the assessment are incorporated into nine strategic recommendations, including:

- **Expanding integrated primary care, with an emphasis on health systems and school-based care.**
- **Building capacity for the delivery of intensive services by helping providers to offer comprehensive service arrays that can be reimbursed through Medicaid.**
- **Make sure that residential treatment – when it is used – provides brief, intensive, family-based services as close to home as possible.**

The timing of the report, completed before Hurricane Harvey ravaged the region, gave us an up-to-date, accurate picture of the mental health care system of Harris County right before the storm, and ideas toward how to help the region heal in its aftermath.

# TEA's Hurricane Harvey Task Force

The last rains from Hurricane Harvey fell in September 2017. However, for too many Texas children and teachers, the effects of that storm will linger much, much longer.

The scope of the problem comes into focus when you consider more than 1.4 million students attend school in more than 200 school districts across the region affected by the storm.

That is why we volunteered to help when asked to support the Hurricane Harvey Task Force on School Mental Health Supports (Task Force). We were charged by Governor Greg Abbott and Texas Education Agency (TEA) Commissioner Mike Morath with providing administrative, operational, and subject-matter support for the Task Force, a partnership of the TEA, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Health and Human Services Commission.

Institute analysis found that affected Texans' needs for mental health care could increase significantly in the months following Hurricane Harvey's onslaught, absent an aggressive effort to expand care to address needs early. Two years after the storm, children between the ages of 5 and 11 could be expected to suffer five times the rate

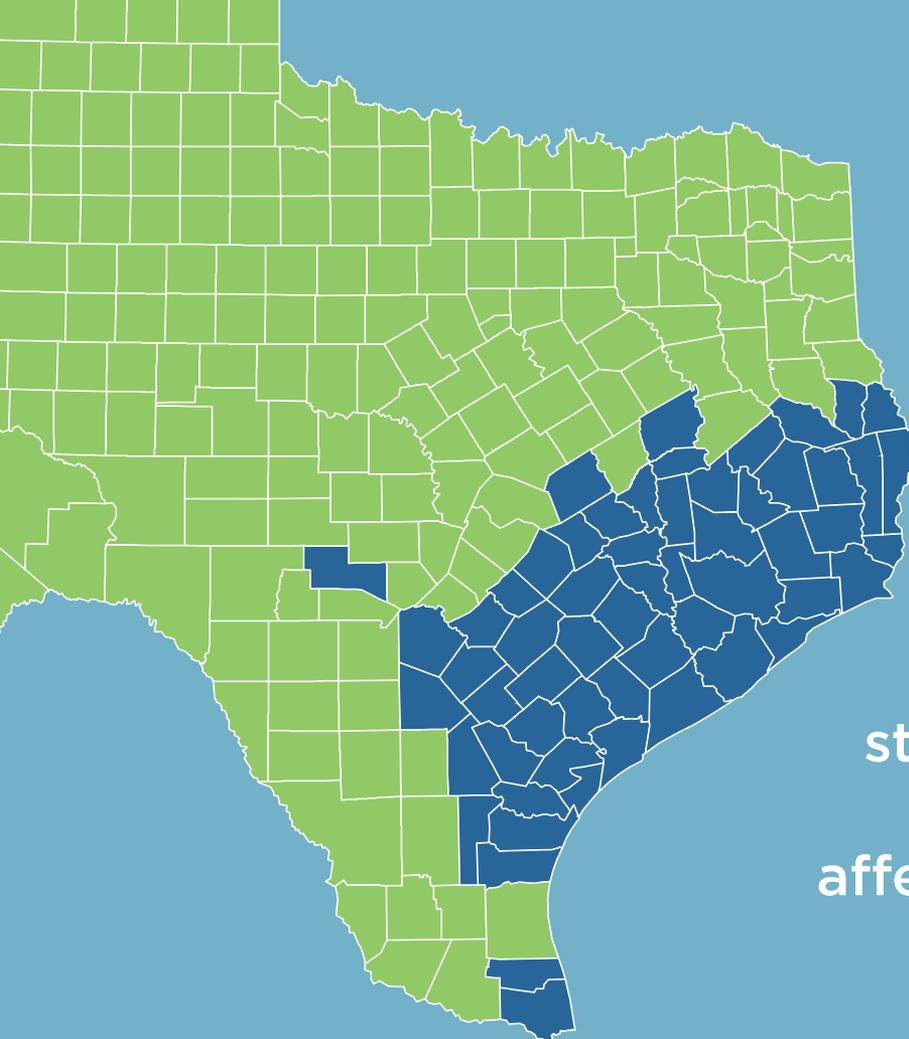
of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as would be expected without the storm. Young people between the ages of 12 and 17 could expect three times the rate of PTSD, and nearly twice the rate of other mental illnesses. Additionally, adults in the affected areas, many of whom are caregivers to these children and youth, could be expected to experience even greater instances of PTSD or other mental health concerns.

The Task Force seeks to identify and respond to school mental health needs and to initiate and support federal, state, and local coordination to impacted schools with appropriate resources.

In the short term, the Task Force is focused on responding to post-disaster mental health needs, but the longer-term goal of the Task Force is to create an infrastructure to more efficiently and effectively connect students to mental health resources in their communities, to respond to both cataclysmic disasters affecting millions and the personal losses and strains that affect us all.



A volunteer and an evacuee play together at a shelter at St. Thomas Presbyterian Church in Houston. (Jay Janner/Austin American-Statesman via AP)



# Texas Counties Affected by Hurricane Harvey<sup>1</sup>

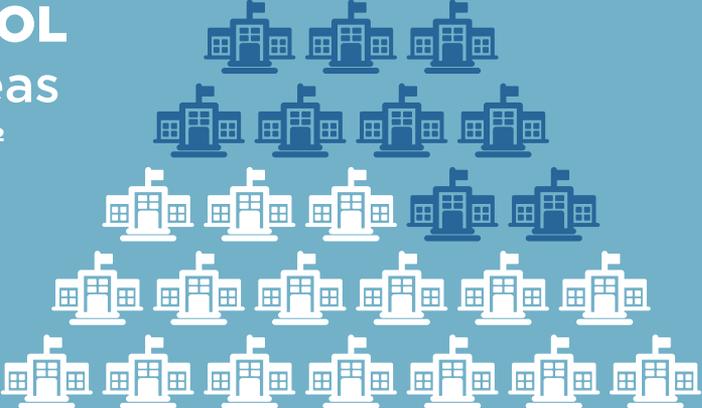
Of the **1.9 MILLION** students in the region, **1.4 MILLION** are in affected school districts



# 74%

Over **90** of the **250 SCHOOL DISTRICTS** in affected areas have **substantial needs**<sup>2</sup>

# 36%



<sup>1</sup> Governor Abbott's disaster proclamation, September 20, 2017 <http://www.lrl.state.tx.us/scanned/govdocs/Greg%20Abbott/2017/proc09202017.pdf>  
<sup>2</sup> MMHPI. (January, 2018). School Mental Health Challenges and Needs Post-Harvey Survey: Overview of Key Findings and Next Steps.



For more than a decade, the children of Texas – and particularly North Texas – have found a champion in The Rees-Jones Foundation, established by Jan and Trevor Rees-Jones in 2006.

“One of the Foundation’s highest priorities is to address the critical needs of children that have been impacted by trauma, abuse and debilitating mental health conditions,” said Trevor Rees-Jones. “We are so thankful that there are organizations of excellence like MMHPI, which work toward facilitating solutions and services that will greatly improve the lives of these children.”

In 2017, a grant from Rees-Jones enabled us to develop a plan to increase and sustain the capacity of children’s services providers to offer Medicaid

Targeted Case Management and Mental Health Rehabilitative Services to foster children and youth with intense and complex mental health needs.

Working with six providers, we contributed technical assistance in assessing existing intensive services and developing plans to create capacity to deliver these services. We also helped develop plans to implement capacity for the highest levels of care by up to 500 percent, and to more than double capacity among youth and children with less intensive needs.

As studies have shown, as many as 95 percent of Texas children do not receive the intensive mental health care they need, and plans such as those enabled by Rees-Jones are critical to improving the lives of all Texas children.



## Simmons, Moody Studies Point Way Forward in North Texas

For children with mental health needs who require more than an office visit but less than the restrictiveness of inpatient care, many Texas communities have little to offer.

Our studies of North Texas mental health systems, funded by the Harold Simmons Foundation and the Moody Foundation, found a distinct lack of community-based care for children with the most intensive needs. These intensive family services are intended to meet the needs of youth who are involved with multiple child-serving agencies and at significant risk of being removed from their homes or schools.

Several North Texas school districts, including Dallas Independent School District (DISD) and Grand Prairie Independent School District, are building and expanding school-linked behavioral health services to help meet this need.

Perhaps most promising, Children’s Medical Center of Dallas (Children’s Health) is also expanding its behavioral health care capacity so more children can get help. The expansion of early screening and integrated care settings – including schools and primary care settings – has the greatest potential to help. Over 80,000 children and youth a year are getting connected to appropriate services more quickly, and those identified as having serious or complex conditions are getting linked with the intensive services they need earlier on, rather than having to wait eight years, on average after symptoms emerge. Early and proactive care has been the key to tackling childhood diabetes and cancer, and childhood mental illness – a disease that strikes 75 percent of its victims before adulthood – needs to be taken just as seriously.

# Trauma-Informed Care

Responding to the needs of children who have experienced significant trauma is an obvious step toward preventing future mental health issues. Sadly, this fact became all too relevant in the wake of 2017's Hurricane Harvey, which affected some 1.4 million students who now face the possibility of increasing rates of posttraumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues in the months and years to come.

Even before the storm, however, the Supreme Court of Texas's Judicial Commission for Children, Youth, and Families (the Children's Commission) asked us to examine what constitutes trauma-informed care and how communities and agencies across the state have implemented it to address the needs of children and youth involved with the child welfare system.

## AMONG OUR FINDINGS, WE LEARNED THAT:

- Child-serving systems are in the process of training staff on trauma-informed care.
- However, despite the availability of training that promotes knowledge and treatment of trauma, more needs to be done to train child welfare staff and foster parents.
- Systems are focusing on approaches that are easy to understand and can be implemented by a large cross-section of professionals, parents, and foster parents.

As a result of our work, the Children's Commission convened a Statewide Collaborative on Trauma-Informed Care, and will continue working toward improving this critical area of need.



*Without change there is no innovation,  
creativity, or incentive for improvement.*

*Those who initiate change will have a  
better opportunity to manage the change  
that is inevitable.*

**- William Pollard**

# Our Thanks to Supporters

No good idea goes very far without support. Thanks to generous financial and in-kind support from across the state, the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute has been able to identify, implement, and share transformational ideas about behavioral health reform. We will honor our supporters' trust in us by working unceasingly towards our shared goal: making Texas a national leader in treating people with mental health needs.

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