

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 21, 2023

Media Contact: [press@mmhpi.org](mailto:press@mmhpi.org)

## **Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute Launches Texas Blue Chip Program**

DALLAS, Texas – The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute is proud to announce the official launch of the Texas Blue Chip Program, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at offering law enforcement officers an additional access point for confidential and free mental health services in collaboration with the Texas Law Enforcement Peer Network (TLEPN). In response to events such as the May 2023 shootings in Allen, the Texas Blue Chip Program is now operational for police officers across the Dallas-Fort Worth and greater North Texas region.

The Texas Blue Chip Program introduces specially designed poker chips that are accessible at police stations throughout the region and virtually on the TLEPN app. These chips grant an officer access to discreet and confidential counseling sessions with selected mental health providers who are supported by the program through generous funding from Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT) via CFT's Support for Allen Fund.

The Meadows Institute drew on the expertise of Chief Will Johnson, who chairs the Police Professional Standards, Ethics, and Images Committee at the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). The result is an adaptable program based on the successful Blue Chip initiative originally introduced by Chief Johnson during his leadership tenure at the Arlington Police Department (Texas).

According to B.J. Wagner, senior vice president of health and public safety at the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, "While officers may have avenues for private mental health care through insurance or peer networks, many still hesitate to seek help, even in the aftermath of traumatic incidents. The Texas Blue Chip Program offers an additional anonymous channel through which officers can obtain assistance on their own terms."

Anticipated to extend its reach statewide, the Texas Blue Chip Program stands as a vital support system for law enforcement personnel during the most challenging junctures of their careers. Jeff Spivey, executive director of the Caruth Police Institute at The University of North Texas at Dallas (UNT Dallas) and Chair of the IACP Officer Safety and Wellness Section emphasizes, "Whether confronting extreme weather events, mass shootings, fatal traffic incidents, or the chronicity of day-to-day police work, the Texas Blue Chip Program is designed to provide support precisely when officers need it the most. Neglecting to address the repercussions of these experiences can lead to

unmanaged stressors, contributing to heightened risks of post-traumatic stress, substance abuse, and suicide. It is our duty to offer resources and support to those who dedicate their lives to ensuring the safety and well-being of our communities.”

“Hundreds of individuals, families, and businesses donated to support CFT’s Support for Allen Fund in the wake of the recent tragic shooting at Allen Premium Outlets. We know that law enforcement officers are deeply affected by both short-term and long-term trauma following a mass shooting event, and we knew that some of the dollars raised through our Support for Allen Fund should be earmarked to support those who were on the frontline as they process and heal from what they experienced. We are grateful to the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute and the Texas Law Enforcement Peer Network for providing a safe and confidential way for our local frontline responders and their families to access the mental health support services they need,” said Wende Burton, Chief Philanthropy Officer at Communities Foundation of Texas.

The urgency of this program is underscored by the distressing statistic that Texas recorded the highest number of law enforcement officer suicides in 2022, with a total of 16 lives lost.

###

#### **About Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute**

Launched in 2014, the Meadows Institute helps Texas legislators, state officials, members of the judiciary, and local, state, and national leaders identify equitable systemic solutions to mental health needs, and has become Texas’s most trusted source for data-driven mental health policy. The Meadows Institute is making a significant impact in multiple areas, helping Texas and national leaders shift the focus of new investments toward early intervention, addressing the mental health crisis in our jails and emergency rooms, and helping all people with mental health needs recover and be well. Learn more at [mmhpi.org](https://mmhpi.org).

**MEADOWS MENTAL HEALTH POLICY INSTITUTE**

T (972) 884-4660

3003 Swiss Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75204

[mmhpi.org](https://mmhpi.org)