Introduction to The Hackett Center for Mental Health

The Hackett Center for Mental Health, established in Houston, Texas in 2018 with a transformative gift from Maureen and Jim Hackett, is the first regional center of the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute. Under the leadership of Dr. Quianta Moore, a nationally renowned expert in research and policy, The Center focuses on Putting Policy into Practice™ by identifying solutions to the most pressing mental and behavioral health challenges for families and their children and supporting the implementation of best practices among communities, organizations, and systems.

Message from The Hackett Center’s Executive Director

Over the last year, The Hackett Center team has made great strides to fulfill our potential to impact Houston and the Gulf Coast community. The Center’s team is made up of diverse thought leaders, implementation strategists, policy analysts, health equity subject matter experts, and mental health clinicians who utilize their expertise to drive systemic change through work in the Hackett Center’s priority areas. Our priority areas are:

- **Building capacity** among mental health organizations and systems leaders through technical assistance and training.
- **Serving as a neutral convener**, facilitator, and collaborator for community-based organizations, academic institutions, and mental health care providers to synergize efforts.
- **Creating and supporting an initiative** that ensures all of the work throughout the Hackett Center, the Meadows Institute, and organizational partners serves and benefits all people, regardless of race, gender, economic status, etc.
- **Engaging communities and families** to gain insights that can inform and improve systems, research, policies, practices, and programs.
- **Improving evidence-based mental health prevention and care** for children and families through implementation of programs, evaluation, and scaling.
- **Acting as a strategic partner** of the Institute to bring its expertise to the Houston and Gulf Coast areas and pilot and scale projects.
- **Supporting and improving women’s mental health and fostering resilience** in mothers and children through a parental support program, Brain Builders.

I am pleased to report on our progress in 2023. The Hackett Center’s objective is to be a leader in supporting the development, implementation and evaluation of provider of behavioral health solutions for the Greater Houston and Gulf Coast regions, and, in partnership with Meadows Institute, throughout Texas. We offer our sincerest gratitude to Maureen and Jim Hackett, whose generosity continues to inspire us to make a difference in our local community and beyond.
The Hackett Center’s Systems Change Work

Children’s Mental Health Summit

The Hackett Center for Mental Health, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health (MAMH), convened in August in Boston, Massachusetts to host the 6th annual Children’s Mental Health Summit.

A group of 40 mental health experts from Texas and Massachusetts discussed diverse topics, including access to school mental health, smart justice, and community-centered mental health. These discussions centered around community-oriented, collaborative solutions for supporting and listening to youth and families through community capacity-building. Attendees discussed opportunities to partner on planning for statewide children’s mental health initiatives, improving connection between pediatric and maternal mental health care, and increasing access to school-based mental health services. Since its inception in 2018, the Children’s Mental Health Summit has resulted in several wins in mental health for Texas and Massachusetts.

Discussions during the inaugural Summit in 2018 led to the creation of Texas’ Child Psychiatry Access Network (CPAN), based on Massachusetts’ Child Psychiatry Access Program (MCPAP), through which primary care pediatricians can quickly consult psychiatry experts at the state’s medical schools for diagnosis and treatment options. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the youth mental health crisis, leading to collaborative efforts to improve children’s mental health through equitable solutions. These solutions include expanding telehealth services, school-linked and multi-tiered services, collaborative care, and trauma training. Other solutions involve improved responses to disaster mental health in schools, solutions for investing in workforce development, and addressing intergenerational trauma by caring for a child with an incarcerated parent. By bringing together experts with different approaches and distinctive ideas, the Summit has generated impactful strategies and fostered opportunities for collaboration.
**Community Health Assessment: The Knowledge for Impact Study**

Knowledge for Impact represents a dedicated effort to document lived experiences of the community in navigating the behavioral health system in Harris County. The Hackett Center is gaining deeper understanding of Harris County’s behavioral health care landscape from the perspective of residents, whose insight is essential to building stronger systems of care. The study is made possible through grants from the Cullen Trust for Health Care, Rockwell Fund, Inc., and the William Stamps Farish Fund.

With the help of community partners, including Community Care Cooperative, Texas Network for Youth Services, and Young Invincibles, Knowledge for Impact is engaging with over 600 Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian American opportunity youth (those 18-24 who are disconnected from traditional school or employment systems), and recent immigrant populations through qualitative focus groups and a quantitative survey. Participants are answering questions related to community perception of behavioral health needs, access to services and resources, and factors fostering resilience within their communities.

The Hackett Center is on track to release the Knowledge for Impact study report in late summer 2024. The dissemination plan includes presentations and key informant interviews. This project has strong potential to guide investment and changes to systems, which will improve access to mental health services and identify and uplift strengths and assets that exist in diverse communities.

**Youth and Family Behavioral Health Navigation System**

A child’s mental health is deeply intertwined with the well-being of their family members and the community in which they live. Traditional approaches to children’s behavioral health care focus solely on the child, neglecting the holistic needs of the family unit. To fill this gap, the Hackett Center designed an innovative, multitiered initiative called the Youth and Family Behavioral Health Navigation System, which adopts a socioecological approach to empower the child, the family, their community, and the overall behavioral health system with sustainable support, access, and awareness that promote well-being.

Youth and Family Behavioral Health Navigation System was crafted to make connecting to care approachable for families using highly trained Child and Family Consultants who help with system navigation. The Hackett Center also designed a comprehensive, family-centered framework and a digital platform to securely house participant data, which will assist with cross-system care coordination. To aid the Youth and Family Behavioral Health Navigation System, The Trauma and Grief Center trained 145 behavioral health professionals in Trauma and Grief Component Therapy (TGCT), an evidence-based treatment for trauma-exposed or traumatically-bereaved youth.

Next steps for the Youth and Family Behavioral Health Navigation System include establishing community partnerships that align with the Hackett Center’s mission of improving mental health outcomes through awareness, access, and education. In collaboration with the Child and Family Consultants, these partners will provide access to quality mental health care and educational resources. The Hackett Center believes in the potential impact of the Youth and Family Behavioral Health Navigation System and is invested in implementing it across Greater Houston.
Early Relational Health
Maternal Mental Health and the Brain Builders Program

Ensuring that every person has a fair and just opportunity to fulfill their potential begins in early childhood. Positive maternal mental health and effective early childhood development work in tandem to improve the well-being and resilience of families with young children. The current health system offers minimal non-clinical support during the transition to parenthood, which contributes to feelings of disconnection and stress and negatively impacts relational health. There are very few freely accessible, two-generational, group-based programs that share the science behind responsive parenting skills with parents of young children. The Hackett Center’s Brain Builders was co-designed with Houston mothers to meet this need, providing science-based, skill-building support to help parents improve their child’s brain development. In 2023, the program reached 169 mothers through virtual and in-person meet-ups.

Thanks to the generosity of philanthropic investors, the Episcopal Health Foundation and the Powell Foundation, Brain Builders is expanding capacity-building efforts at mission-aligned organizations, increasing its footprint within Greater Houston. When embedded in existing programs and organizations, it can be scaled sustainably to support maternal mental health and child brain development. In 2023, the Brain Builders team trained 20 staff at 10 organizations to become Brain Builders facilitators, supporting them through program implementation by providing customized technical assistance. Initial capacity building efforts have been successful, with partnering organizations facilitating Brain Builders to fidelity.

The Center launched Brain Builders in Spanish in early 2023, and 50 Spanish-speaking mothers registered within the first year of the launch. The team translated and attuned Brain Builders to the many cultures within the Spanish-speaking community, and facilitators are delivering a strong and responsive program. Additionally, the Center launched the Brain Builders research study. Early results of the study show that all participants demonstrated increased knowledge about the important period of brain development in children, and almost 60% of those participants reported an increase in their confidence as a parent.
Convening Experts through Maternal Health Roundtables

Behavioral health is critical to the well-being of women and families, and it is particularly important during pregnancy and in the postpartum period. The systems that deliver perinatal behavioral health care and the many individuals and organizations that influence a mother’s behavioral health are siloed. To address this issue and uplift maternal behavioral health in Greater Houston, the Hackett Center partnered with Texas Health Institute, March of Dimes™, and Mental Health America Greater Houston to convene the region’s first Greater Houston Maternal Behavioral Health Roundtables. These cross-sector convenings facilitate shared learning and provide opportunities to build connections, learn about barriers and assets in the behavioral health ecosystem, and identify actions to address community-driven needs. The Roundtable continues to evolve in response to participant input and emergent opportunities. In 2023, representatives from 86 organizations attended three Roundtable gatherings. They represented multiple disciplines, including social services, community health work, public health, medicine, behavioral health, law, academia, policy advocacy, and local and state government. Together, Roundtable attendees are working to build capacity in local systems to maximize the effectiveness of existing resources and take collective action for stronger maternal behavioral health in the region.

Improving Care Coordination through Systems of Care

Be Well, Be Connected

The Hackett Center, in collaboration with the Institute’s data team, completed its four-year involvement with Houston’s SAMHSA-funded System of Care grant, Be Well, Be Connected (BWBC), in September 2023. The Center served as the evaluation and technical assistance partner for Baylor College of Medicine and the Houston Mayor’s Office of Education. BWBC focused on providing intensive behavioral health treatment services to youth ages nine to 17 experiencing persistent disruption in their lives due to serious mental illness. BWBC provided the unique opportunity to improve mental health outcomes for youth by expanding intensive, community-based service delivery and school-based care models, engaging with the Houston community, integrating across child-serving organizations, and creating long-lasting impact for youth who need intensive behavioral health treatment. 75 clients and their families were served from August 2020, with 90% of clients, parents, and caregivers reporting that they received the help they needed.
The Next Day Project

The Hackett Center, in partnership with the City of Houston's Mayor’s Office of Education, Baylor College of Medicine (BCM), and Texas Children’s Hospital (TCH), received a $4 million grant to address the epidemic of youth suicide in Greater Houston through evidence-, trauma-, and culturally-informed processes. The Next Day Project, a four-year initiative running 2023-2027, aims to screen 40,000 youth and will serve youth aged 6-17 years at risk for serious emotional disturbance (SED) who present with suicidal ideation, have attempted suicide, or present with non-suicidal self-injury.

The initiative coordinates Houston-based care systems for detection, assessment, monitoring, referral, tracking, and treatment with partners from BCM’s Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, emergency centers and clinics at Texas Children’s Hospital, pediatricians and primary care providers, independent schools districts and charter schools, local community organizations, and state-funded programs, including Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHATT) and the Child Psychiatry Access Network (CPAN). The initiative also aims to increase the knowledge, skills, and resources of providers through specialized training to expand the community’s clinical capacity to provide intensive care management and multi-agency treatment.

The Hackett Center is looking forward to serving as the evaluator for The Next Day Project, continuing its partnership with the City of Houston and Baylor College of Medicine. The Hackett Center will conduct a rapid-cycle and equity-centric evaluation by coordinating with Next Day Project staff to collect data, analyze qualitative and quantitative data, and provide recommendations for program quality improvement.

Trauma and Grief Center at The Hackett Center for Mental Health

Multidimensional Grief Therapy: Supporting Bereaved Youth

Multidimensional Grief Therapy (MGT) (Kaplow et al. 2023) is a relatively new, theoretically derived, assessment-driven intervention designed to reduce maladaptive grieving (grief that keeps kids “stuck” and unable to adjust), promote adaptive grieving (grief that helps children to feel and cope better after a death) and help bereaved children and adolescents lead happy, healthy, productive lives. MGT is the only evidence-based treatment designed to specifically address childhood grief in the U.S., and a recent study found that MGT significantly reduced maladaptive grief reactions, depression, and posttraumatic stress (Hill et al., 2019) among bereaved youth. The TAG Center continues to lead efforts in this space by training school- and community-based clinicians through their MGT Learning Collaboratives.
(LCs), involving a two-day training and a full year of ongoing consultation provided by TAG Center clinicians. These LCs are helping to create a grief-informed continuum of care across the Greater Houston region and nationally by equipping communities to effectively address the grief-related needs of bereaved youth.

**Learning Collaboratives by The Numbers**

The TAG Center had a productive and successful year hosting Learning Collaboratives (LCs) to train mental health clinicians both locally and nationally. In 2023, TAG hosted nine LCs, eight in Trauma and Grief Component Therapy (TGCT; Saltzman, Layne, Pynoos, Olafson, Kaplow, & Boat, 2017) and one in MGT. This involved training 476 clinicians nationally, 333 in Texas, and 161 in the Greater Houston area. Among youth who completed both a baseline and follow-up assessment (approximately 569 youth nationally), 80% showed decreased PTSD symptoms, 81.8% showed decreased maladaptive grief reactions, and 60% showed decreased depressive symptoms, demonstrating the efficacy of these interventions.

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**Patient Story**

“Life for “Jamie” hasn’t been the same since his mother died of Covid-19 in 2022. The 6-year-old ran away from school every day in search of her — convinced she’d return if he simply looked hard enough to find her. With help from his TAG-trained clinician, and through the effective use of MGT, Jamie has now come to accept his mother’s death and find healthy ways to feel connected to her (e.g., keeping her photo in his pocket at school) and carry on her legacy (e.g., doing things he knows would make her proud).

“He has grown so much in your care,” said Jamie’s grandmother.

“He has techniques he can use for the rest of his life.”

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**The Hackett Center is thrilled to recognize its 2023 supporters**

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