

Behavioral Health

May 2009 FAQ

Presentation to the Community Council

May 18, 2009

Behavioral Health

- The term “behavioral health” refers to services for individuals at risk of, or suffering from, mental illness and/or addiction.

Behavioral Health in Texas

- According to estimates:
 - 17% of Texans have a mental illness
 - 26% of Texans have abused alcohol or an illegal drug in the past month
 - Texas ranks 47th in per capita mental health spending

Behavioral Health in Central Texas

- Austin and Travis County's suicide rates exceed that of the State of Texas.
- The supply of behavioral health professionals in Travis County has decreased since 2002

Behavioral Health in Central Texas

- The number of individuals presenting to emergency rooms with primary behavioral health complaints increased 84% between 2006 and 2007.



Behavioral Health in Central Texas

- The Central Texas Region exceeds the state and the nation in the percentage of people reporting:
 - Alcohol abuse and dependence
 - Drug abuse and dependence
 - Needing but not receiving treatment for alcohol use and drug use
 - Serious psychological distress
 - Major depressive episodes

How does our community care for people with behavioral health issues?

- Screening, assessment, and treatment
- Prevention/community education
- Specially trained law enforcement officers
- Mental health and drug courts
- Mobile crisis outreach team
- Implementing best practices

How can we enhance behavioral health services in our community?

- Ensure a behavioral health continuum of care by securing sufficient funds to meet the needs for crisis and non-crisis behavioral health services
- Increase coordination between community-based behavioral health service providers.

How can we enhance behavioral health services in our community?

- If you are an employer, offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Implement innovative strategies such as an integrated healthcare model

What is integrated healthcare?

- Integrated healthcare means systematically combining physical and behavioral health services
- Local example: E-merge



Why is integrated healthcare important?

- Over half of the people in need of behavioral health services seek treatment from their primary care provider, who is not trained to provide this type of treatment.
- Persons with behavioral health problems die 25 years younger than the average American

Where are the gaps in our behavioral healthcare system?

- The funding does not meet the needs of people with the diagnoses of bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, major depression, and addiction disorders and results in waiting lists for services.
- The funding does not address the needs of people with other behavioral health diagnoses.

Where are the gaps in our behavioral healthcare system?

- There is an increased need for non-crisis services as a result of Texas's improvements to our statewide crisis services.



Where are the gaps in our behavioral healthcare system?

- Our community's lack of adequate behavioral health services often drives people to seek behavioral health services in other communities and creates a personal burden that deters treatment because of disruption of family and work obligations.

What often happens to people with unmet behavioral health needs?

- A large number of people with behavioral health issues end up in jail or prison.
- Long waiting lists for treatment have impacted jail over-crowding, as the courts often hold offenders in jail until a treatment bed is available.



What often happens to people with unmet behavioral health needs?

- Mental illness prevalence rates in prisons significantly exceed those of the general population.
- More than 80% of inmates show indications of serious drug or alcohol abuse

Priority Issues

- Treatment does work.
- Funding is insufficient to treat serious behavioral health diagnoses.
- Mental illness and addiction are often co-occurring.

Behavioral Health Frequently Asked Questions

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