

# Community Action Network

## Frequently Asked Questions About

# Adult Mental Health

November 2002



This document provides an update to information in the *Community Action Network Prescription For Wellness -Adult Mental Health Assessment* report released in April 2001.

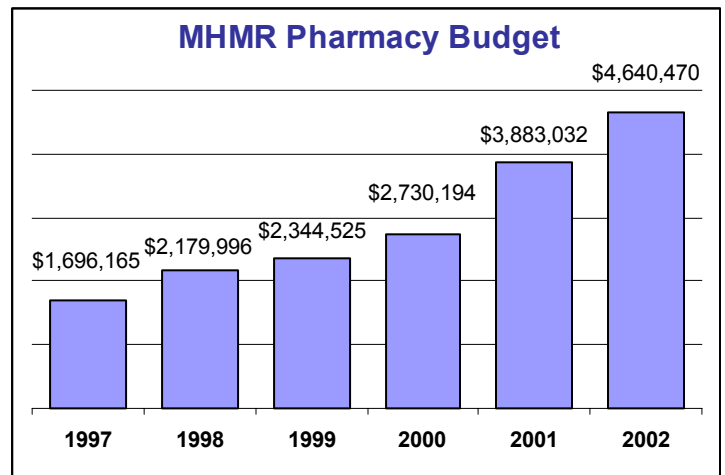
### Highlights

**Travis County Experiences 37% Decrease in Psychiatric Beds** From 1998 to 2002. The number of psychiatric beds in Travis County has gone from approximately **215 to 135**. This dramatic decrease in psychiatric beds can be attributed to a **50%** decrease in psychiatric hospitals from 4 hospitals in 1998 to 2 hospitals in 2002.

### Cost of Psychiatric Medication Continues to Rise

Nationally, there has been a 17% annual increase in the costs of psychiatric medications. Austin Travis County MHMR reports they will overspend their 2002 pharmacy budget by \$1.2 million; medication costs have increased 169.17% from 1998 through 2002. However, MHMR was able to reduce their pharmacy costs by obtaining up to \$1 million in medications for indigent persons from the pharmacy assistance program. In order to continue to bridge the gap between dwindling pharmacy budgets and increasing medication costs, it is estimated that the pharmacy assistance program will need to bring in an additional \$2 million. (Austin Travis County MHMR & Austin American Statesman)

\* Pharmacy Assistance Program provides free medications to indigent people – Medications are limited to participating Pharmaceutical Companies' formularies)



### Overview

An estimated 21% of all adults nationwide have a mental disorder. Based on Census 2000 figures, this translates to approximately **108,398** adults (18-54) in Travis County. Some feel guilt and shame and many do not seek treatment for disorders that are more common than cancer, diabetes, heart disease, or arthritis. However, mental disorders can be effectively managed and treated. Friends and family members can help by knowing which symptoms and signs to look for, such as in suicide. The answers are complex, no doubt, but as a community we can make a significant difference in the lives of those with mental disorders. (Source: Census 2000)

## Frequently Asked Questions about Adult Mental Health

### Q: What is Adult Mental Health?

Mental health is a broad term used to characterize an adult's ability to function in daily life. This can include effective mental functioning, satisfying interpersonal relationships, productive activities, and/or resiliency when faced with change and adversity in life. Having these attributes usually means one is healthy, personally successful, and shows emotional strength. It is important to the health of the individuals living in Travis County to understand how good mental health and resiliency can be promoted.

### Q: What is the prevalence of mental disorders in Travis County?

Approximately 21% of adult Americans have a mental disorder in any given year. In 2000 (based on Census data) this meant 44 million adults nationwide, **3.1 million adults (18-54) in Texas, and 108,398 in Travis County.**

There are many different kinds of mental disorders experienced by adults. However, the majority of mental health disorders can be categorized into three major groups:

<b>Anxiety Disorders</b>	<b>Mood Disorders</b>	<b>Psychotic Disorders (Schizophrenia)</b>
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Travis County does not fare much better than the national average in prevalence rates for any of these three categories of disorders. Based on prevalence rates from the Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health and Census 2000 figures, approximately **13.3% or 68,652** adults deal with an **Anxiety Disorder**, **7.1% or 36,649** adults in Travis County deal with a **Mood Disorder**, **1.1% or 5,678** adults deal with **Schizophrenia\***.

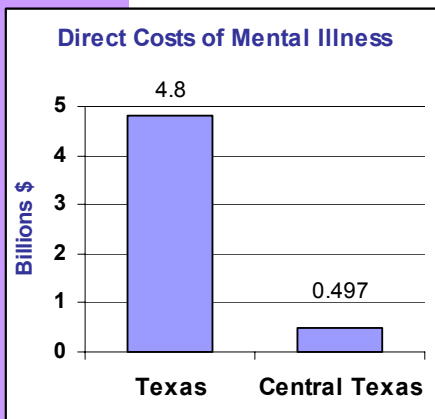
#### Prevalence of Mental Disorders in Travis County

Disorders	Prevalence	Travis County
Anxiety Disorders	13.3%	68,652
Mood Disorders	7.1%	36,649
Schizophrenia*	1.1%	5,678
All Disorders	21%	108,398

Based on Census 2000 estimated population of 516,183 adults (18-54)

\*Because Schizophrenia comprises the highest percentage of all psychotic disorders it is often the only disorder where prevalence data is reported.

### Q: What is the cost of mental disorders in Travis County?



Left untreated, mental disorders profoundly disrupt a person's ability to think, feel, and relate to others or their environment. But the impact of mental disorders goes well beyond the person dealing with the disorder. It is estimated that \$6.9 billion, or 7.3% of total U.S. health care costs, was spent in 1996 on the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders in the United States. The Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation estimates that mental disorders directly cost the state **\$4.8 billion** directly and another **\$6.5 billion** in indirect costs. It is estimated that Central Texas spent **\$497 million** in 2001 on direct costs related to the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. (Source: Texas Healthcare Spending – Windows on State Government, Surgeon General's Report & Census 2000)

## Frequently Asked Questions about Adult Mental Health

### Q: What kinds of mental health services are available in Travis County?

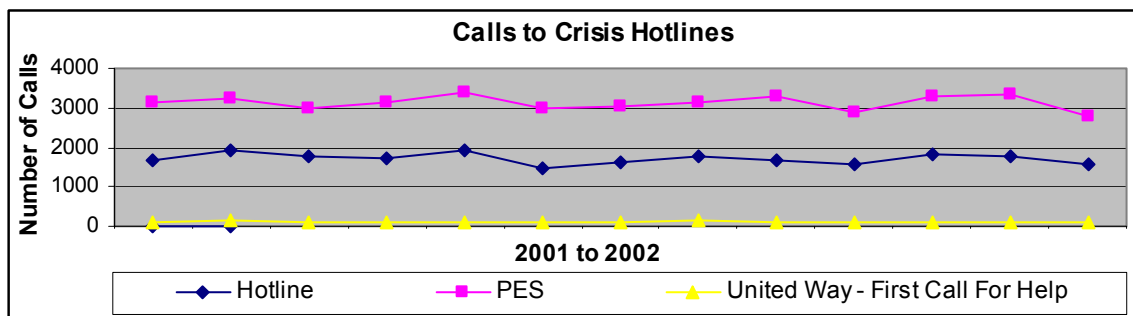
In Travis County there are approximately **103 mental health related agencies that offer up to 161 services and programs**. The total number of mental health professionals (M.D.s, LPCs, LMSWs, LMFTs, Ph.Ds) registered in Travis County is 3,074. Because medication has become the first line of treatment for many mental disorders, so has the demand for psychiatric services. From 2000 to 2002 there has been a **9% increase in the number of psychiatrists** listed as residing within Travis County. It is estimated that there will be a **15% increase in the Travis County population by 2010**. Currently there is a Travis County resident to psychiatrist ratio of **5000:1**.

Mental Health Professional	Registered in Travis County	Professional to Resident Ratio
Psychiatrist	157	5000 to 1
Licensed Professional Counselor	709	1000 to 1
Licensed Master Social Worker – Advanced Clinical Practitioner	1549	500 to 1
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist	234	3000 to 1
Licensed Psychologists	425	2000 to 1

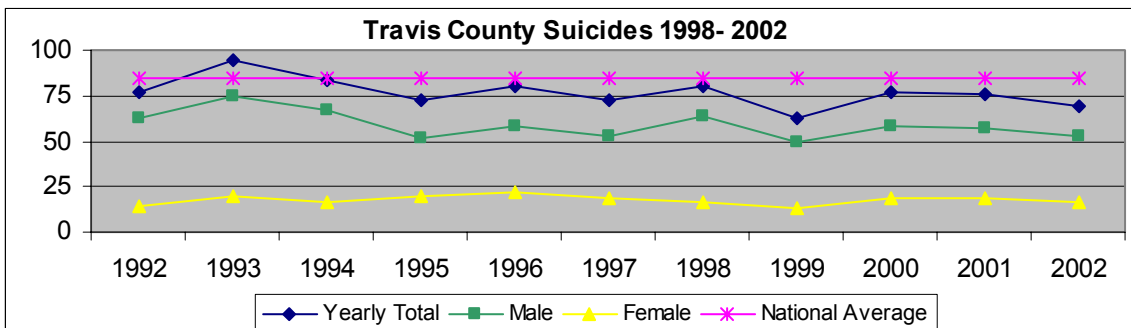
Ratios Based on 2000 Census Estimate for Travis County

### Q: Have the number of crisis calls increased since September 11<sup>th</sup>?

Calls received by Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES), Austin Travis County MHMR Hotline, and



United Way – First Call for Help did not show a significant increase after September 11<sup>th</sup>. No clear trend, positive nor negative, is evident between September 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 and September 1<sup>st</sup> 2002.



### Q: What key indicators are being tracked in Travis County?

#### I. Suicide rate

The World Health Organization recently reported that a **suicide occurs every 40 seconds** around the world. On average there are **76 suicides per year** in Travis County, or **a suicide every 5 days**,

## Frequently Asked Questions about Adult Mental Health

(Indicators: Cont.) and **9.5 suicides per 100,000 population**. This is below the national average of 85 suicides per year but still above the **National Target of 6 suicides per 100,000 population**.  
National Average based on 1996 figures

### II. Proportion of homeless adults who have a mental disorder

It is estimated that there are approximately **3,977 homeless persons** within Travis County on any given day, a 10% increase from the 3,600 reported in 2000. Of these, an estimated 3341 are single adults. It is **estimated that half (1671) of homeless, single adults also deal with a mental illness**.

(Source: Homelessness Assessment & ATCMHMR)

### III: The proportion of persons with a mental illness who are employed

Austin Travis County MHMR reports that of all the consumers seen from April 1, 2000 through October 1, 2002, **18% reported being employed** (full or part-time), **56% reported being unemployed**, and the **26% were either retired, students, homemakers, or unknown**. The Texas Rehabilitation Commission reports that from 2001 to 2002, **2.3%**, or **3,695** persons, on their total caseloads reported having a mental disorder as a disability and were seeking assistance to become employed.

### IV: Substance Abuse

Because there appears to be such a strong connection between mental illness and substance abuse it is important that as a community we look at this area as a risk factor. In Travis County it is estimated that **50% of people diagnosed with a mental disorder also have a substance abuse diagnosis**. The prevalence of substance abuse within our community is a reflection of mental health issues that are not being addressed. **In 2000, there were 415 adult and youth deaths related to alcohol and drugs in Travis County**. Not only are mental illness and substance abuse highly correlated, but both are prominent risk factors from many physical disorders.

### V: Criminal Behavior and Incarcerations

The Texas Council on Offenders with Mental Illness (TCOMI), which provides community based services, reported that of **260,000 people on probation statewide, approximately 11% are, or have been, clients of the state/local MHMR system**. In Travis County, TCOMI provided case management services to over 267 people in 2001.

### Q: What can I do to help?

➤ Become a volunteer for a mental health organization such as National Alliance for the Mentally Ill-Austin (NAMI) or contact the United Way Capital Area's Volunteer Center at 512-323-1898 to learn of volunteer opportunities with other organizations serving individuals with mental health problems.

➤ Let your local political leaders know your position on mental health issues.

*Please see the CAN Urgent Issues Action Plan at [www.caction.org](http://www.caction.org) for additional information about specific and Community-wide approaches to addressing Health in our community.*

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## Additional Information

To access the 2001 CAN Prescription For Wellness refer to: [www.caction.org](http://www.caction.org).

To obtain a copy of this document, The CAN Community Overview, or any other CAN report, please visit the CAN website, email Brenda Ahrens at [bahrns@austin.isd.tenet.edu](mailto:bahrns@austin.isd.tenet.edu), call 512-414-8203, or write to The Community Action Network, 1111 W. 6th Street, Suite B220, Austin, Texas 78703

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**CAN Partners:** Austin Area Research Organization ~ Austin Independent School District~ Austin Area Human Services Association  
Austin Area Interreligious Ministries ~ Austin Travis County MHMR Center ~ Capital Metro ~ City of Austin  
Community Justice Council ~ Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce ~ Health Partnerships 2010 ~Higher Education Coalition  
Travis County ~United Way Capital Area ~ WorkSource-Greater Austin Area Workforce Board

