



## Youth Services

Providing appropriate services and supports for children and youth who may experience mental health challenges is a key step towards ensuring a healthy and productive adulthood. Because half of all mental illnesses manifest by age 14, and 75% by age 24, the early years of a person's life and the ways in which their needs are addressed make an inestimable difference in their life's trajectory.

Prior to 2003, the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (TDMHMR) included a separate children's services division. Decisions in the 78<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session included elimination of TDMHMR and significant cuts to community based mental health and intellectual & developmental disability services. Currently, the Health and Human Services Commission has a children's mental health team within its behavioral health services division, but child and youth services have not recovered from the significant changes that occurred in 2003.

More recent legislative sessions have included a focus on children and youth services, partially due to the school shootings at Sandyhook in 2013 and at Santa Fe in 2018. In 2013, the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature passed HB 3793 to allow Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs) to provide Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training to educators at no cost. This has since grown to allow free MHFA training to all public-school staff as well as those in colleges and universities, and LMHAs have now trained tens of thousands of people across Texas. In 2019, after Santa Fe, the 86<sup>th</sup> Legislature passed a host of bills related to children's mental health, including SB 11, which authorized creation of the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium (TCMHCC). The tragedy in Uvalde has galvanized efforts for a continued focused on prevention, early intervention, and treatment. We anticipate youth services will be a significant priority for the 88<sup>th</sup> Legislature.

### Select Children's Programs

#### *Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Waiver*

The YES Waiver provides intensive services for children 3-17 who might otherwise need inpatient care. Services are delivered within a strengths-based team planning process that builds on family and community support. YES services are family-centered, coordinated and effective at preventing out-of-home placement and promoting lifelong independence and self-defined success. YES Waiver services are available across the state.

#### *Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC)*

CSC is an evidence-based, recovery-focused program designed to meet the needs of individuals with early onset psychosis between the ages of 15 and 30. CSC's team-based approach includes clinicians, education and employment specialists, and peer support. The program's goal is to reduce duration of untreated symptoms through shared decision-making and active

engagement in community-based services. CSC programs are currently found in 23 LMHA local service areas.

#### *Multisystemic Therapy (MST)*

MST is a community-based treatment for at-risk youth with intensive needs and their families. It is most effective for youth who have committed violent offenses, have serious mental health or substance abuse concerns, are at risk of out-of-home placement, or who have experienced abuse and neglect. Currently two LMHAs operate MST teams in El Paso and Houston, but an additional seven teams will be developed in the coming months.

#### *Residential Treatment Center (RTC) Project*

The RTC Project began in 2013, when the 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature allocated \$2 million to HHSC to work with the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to address the intensive needs of children 5-17 with serious emotional disorders who were otherwise at risk of relinquishment to state custody in order for them to access treatment. In 2021, the 87<sup>th</sup> Legislature passed SB 642, which allowed for direct referrals from LMHAs to the RTC Project without requiring DFPS involvement, which had been identified as an additional potential barrier to access.

### Student Mental Health

#### *School-Based Clinics and Services*

Across Texas, LMHAs have partnered in various ways with their local school districts and campuses. These collaborations include on-campus mental health and substance use services provided by qualified LMHA staff, in-school provision of telehealth and telemedicine, campus-based crisis triage, and integrated primary and behavioral health care for students and their families.

#### *Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHAT)*

TCHAT is a program begun through the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium, which was codified in SB 11 by the 86<sup>th</sup> Legislature. It allows students to access psychiatric care remotely in a school setting, with services provided by staff at Health-Related Institutions (HRIs) based on regional partnerships. LMHAs and other community providers partner with the HRIs and schools to offer ongoing care for children who need more intensive services or treatments beyond the time-limited care provided through TCHAT.

#### *HB 19 Non-Physician Mental Health Professionals in Education Service Centers (ESCs)*

In 2019, HB 19 created further partnership opportunities for LMHAs and ESCs by developing and funding new roles for non-physician mental health professionals (NPMHPs, which include psychologists, advanced practice registered nurses, and licensed clinicians) who are employed by an LMHA but office in regional ESCs. The NPMHP is tasked with providing and facilitating training and education on youth mental health and substance use challenges, coordinating with local districts, and serving as a general mental health resource for staff. The role serves as an important conduit for information between the LMHA and ESC systems and has helped strengthen these relationships.