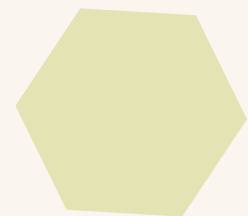


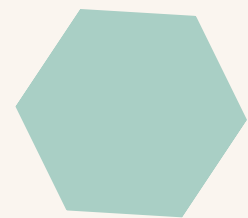
BREAKING THE SILENCE: SUICIDE PREVENTION IN SCHOOLS

By Rocio Bickei, M.A., LPC, Jessica Siegfried, M.S., LPC, LMFT, Kendra Cates, M.S., LPC,
Shuniqua Ortiz, M.A., LPC, and Edwina Thompson, MEdSC, LPC-S

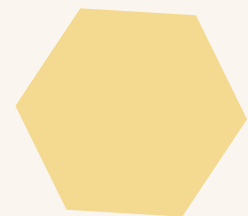
Summary



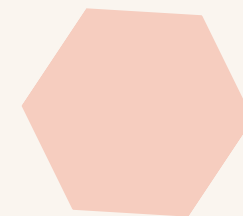
Ground Rules



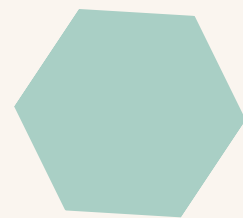
Introduction



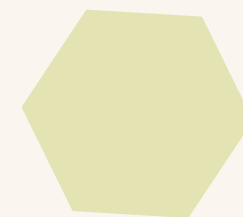
Prevention



Intervention



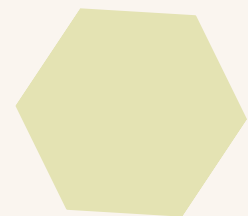
Postvention



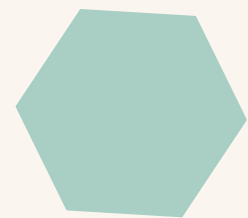
Resources



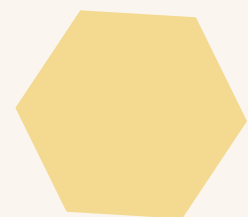
Ground Rules



safe space

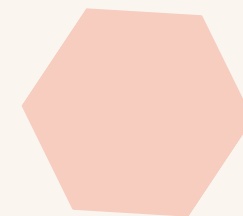


open dialogue

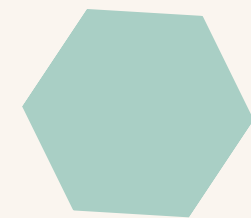


take break if needed

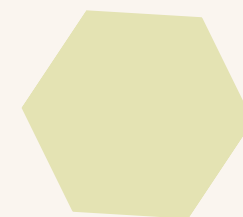
objectives/goals



reduce stigma



empower action



create collaborative safety
nets



Myth or Fact?



Students must have an assessment done in order to be able to return to school after a suicide outcry.

Myth

Sit

Fact

Stand

Myth or Fact?



Students must have an assessment done in order to be able to return to school after a suicide outcry.

Myth

Schools may not prohibit students from returning to school absent an emergency assessment, and schools may not mandate this assessment prior to their return to school.

✗ Myth

Fact

Myth or Fact?



Schools are required by Texas law to have suicide prevention protocols.

Myth

Sit

Fact

Stand

Myth or Fact?



Schools are required by Texas law to have suicide prevention protocols.

Myth

Fact

Under the Texas Education Code (TEC §38.351), school districts must implement best-practice suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention strategies.



Fact

Myth or Fact?



Every school has a suicide prevention protocol in place that aligns with state law.

Myth

Sit

Fact

Stand

Myth or Fact?



Every school has a suicide prevention protocol in place that aligns with state law.

Myth

While required by law in many states (e.g., Texas under Senate Bill 11), implementation and quality of plans vary. Collaboration ensures compliance and effectiveness.

✗ Myth

Fact

Myth or Fact?



Collaboration between LMHAs
and ESCs is optional but not
necessary for suicide prevention.

Myth

Sit

Fact

Stand

Myth or Fact?



Collaboration between LMHAs and ESCs is optional but not necessary for suicide prevention.

Myth

Strong partnerships between LMHAs and ESCs are essential for building sustainable prevention systems, resource sharing, and crisis response protocols.

✗ Myth

Fact

Myth or Fact?



LMHAs can provide staff training and help develop crisis response plans in schools.

Myth

Sit

Fact

Stand

Myth or Fact?



LMHAs can provide staff training and help develop crisis response plans in schools.

Myth

Fact

Many LMHAs offer QPR, ASIST, Mental Health First Aid, and assist in creating threat assessment or postvention teams.



Fact

the numbers

Why This Conversation Matters

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 10-24.
- 1,499 deaths by suicide from 2021-2022 for ages 10-24 in Texas.
- Texas youth reported slightly lower rates of suicidal ideation (Texas 21.7%, USA 22.2%).
- Firearms are the most common means of suicide in the USA and for Texas suicides, but the same age group has a slightly greater rate of firearm suicide in Texas (3.93 per 100,000) than the US average (3.28 per 100,000).
- The rate of suicide mortality for youth in the foster care system is more than three times the rate for youth in Texas.
- Children and adolescents with ID are at risk for suicidal thoughts, behaviors and death by suicide, with rates as high as 42%.



Behavioral Health Partnership Program Liaison

Texas House Bill 19 in the 86th Legislative session

Key Activities:

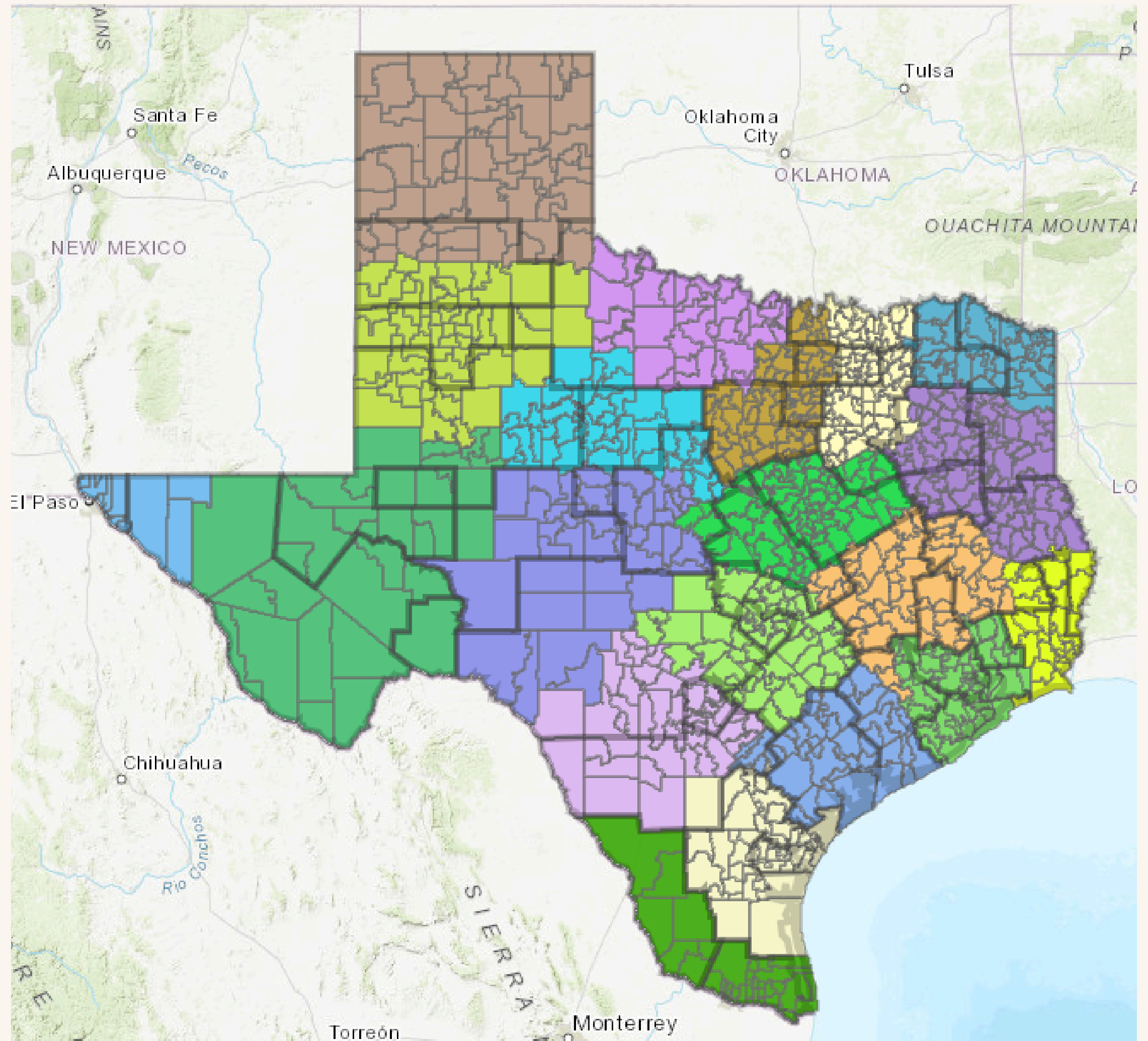
- Increasing awareness and understanding of mental health and co-occurring substance use disorders
- Mental Health First Aid
- Substance use prevention
- Grief and trauma
- Supporting children with IDD



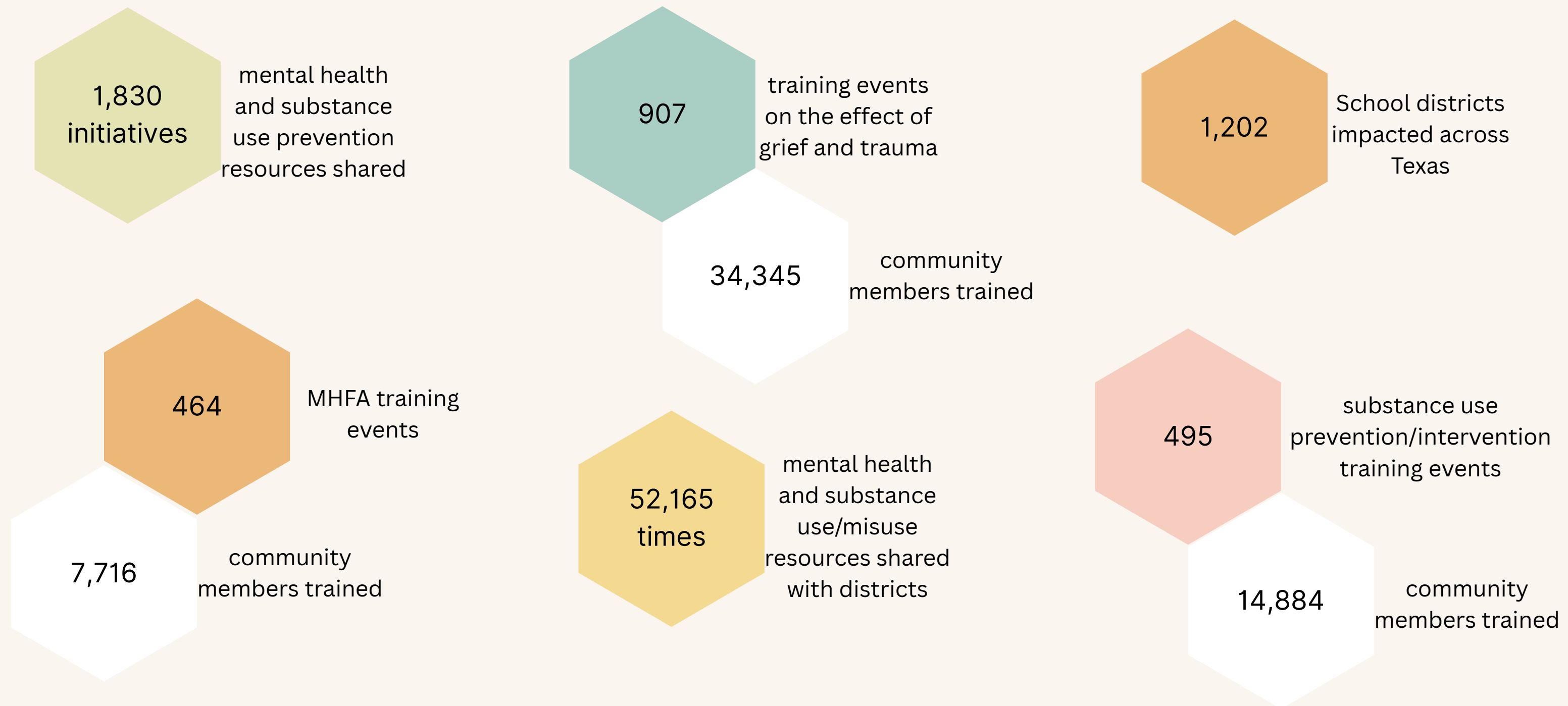
ESC/LMHA Partnership

THERE ARE 20 EDUCATION SERVICE CENTERS AND 39 LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES.

Our role is to bridge the gap between the two entities to achieve our mutual goal of supporting our communities.



Last Fiscal Year BHPPs...



Programs/tools

AS+K

PFA-S

QPR

SOURCES OF STRENGTH

YMHFA

TMHFA

AFSP

YAM

HOPE SQUAD

CALM

TASSS

CSSR-S

Program/Tool	Description	Cost	Time	Type
ASK+	Brief suicide screening in clinical/youth settings	Free	<5 min	Intervention
pFAS	Postvention guide for schools after suicide	Free	Varies	Postvention
YMHFA	Adult training to support youth in crisis	~\$170/person	6–8 hrs	Prevention / Intervention
tMHFA	Trains teens to help peers in distress	Varies	3 × 90 min	Prevention
HOPE Squad	Peer-nominated suicide prevention team	~\$500–\$1,000/yr	Ongoing	Prevention / Intervention
CALM	Reducing access to lethal means	Free	~2 hrs	Intervention
QPR	Gatekeeper training: recognize and refer	~\$3–\$30/person	1–2 hrs	Prevention / Intervention
AFSP	Education, advocacy, postvention resources	Free–Varies	Varies	All 3
TASSS	TX school suicide prevention framework	Free	Varies	All 3
Sources of Strength	Peer-led protective factor promotion	~\$5,000/yr	1 day + ongoing	Prevention
YAM	School-based mental health education	Varies	5 × 45–60 min	Prevention
C-SSRS	Suicide risk assessment tool	Free	5–10 min	Intervention

Partnering for Prevention

MCOT

MST

C&A


IDD

ECI

CIT

When possible, we invite LMHA staff—like those from MCOT, Children & Adolescent Services, or MST—to join us so schools can put faces to names and understand available supports.

Our goal is to bridge the gap before a crisis occurs—so when one does, schools feel confident, prepared, and know exactly who to call.

 We want to hear from you!

- How have you partnered with ESCs or schools in your area?
- What do you wish schools and ESCs better understood about LMHAs?

Interventions

CRISIS COLLABORATION: WHAT'S WORKING, WHAT'S MISSING?

- What typically happens after a school calls the crisis line in your catchment area?
- Where do you see gaps in communication or coordination?

Here's something that worked in some districts:

- A signed release can allow school counselors to communicate directly with LMHA case managers.
- Some ESCs/LHMAs have staff who actively join Crisis Response Teams to support smoother transitions.



Postvention

Suicide postvention is the suggested course of action individuals and groups can take after the tragic loss of someone to suicide. Postvention can include individual and group support, peer support, and professional counseling. Early studies demonstrate that postventions help with the grieving process and decrease the incidence of complicated grief, suicidal ideation, and poor adjustment to the loss.



Postvention



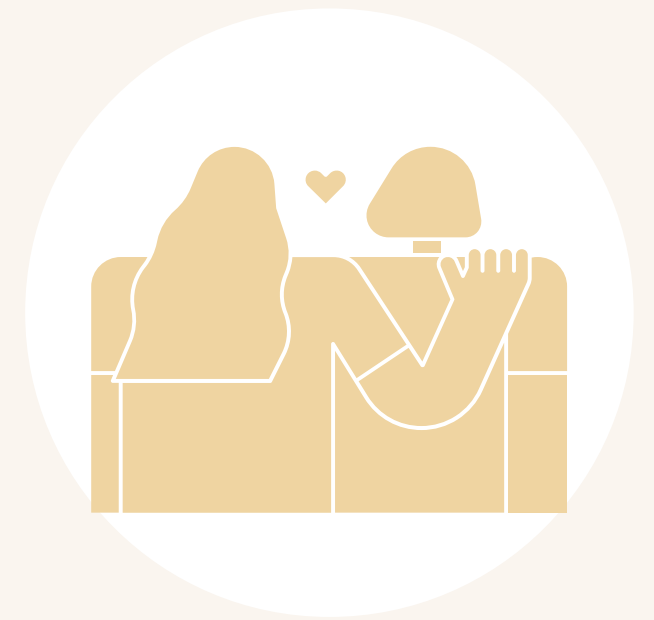
Coordinate team response
with school counselors and
LMHAs



Staff debrief & support



Classroom guidance on
processing grief and fear



Linking to resources as needed
for staff/students

Yarn Knot – Breaking the Silence Together



We're going to participate in a brief exercise. Here are the rules:

- You cannot remove the string from your wrists
- You cannot break the string
- No biting, flossing, sawing, burning, or cutting the string
- Seriously... the string shouldn't break
- If the string broke something has gone terribly wrong!



Yarn Knot – Breaking the Silence Together



Sometimes we feel like we're trying everything to get unstuck, but really, we're trying the same thing over and over, and in some cases we get even MORE tangled.

Many of us feel stuck in problems, and sometimes it's hard to see the solution. Sometimes getting unstuck is simple when we have strategies, techniques, or help.



Resources

- Community Mental Health Collaboration
- Local & National Crisis Resources
- Suicide Prevention Programs for Schools
- Staff Wellness & Vicarious Trauma
- Takeaway Tools & Templates



ASSISTANCE TELEPHONE

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Resources

- Partnership opportunities with LMHAs (referral lines, care coordination)
- National resources: 988 Lifeline, Crisis Text Line (text HOME to 741741)
- School-based programs: SOS, Sources of Strength, Hope Squad, Mental Health First Aid
- Encourage mental health check-ins for staff
- Distribute:
 - Suicide warning signs reference sheet
 - Local emergency contacts
 - Template suicide risk response flowchart
 - Self-care plan worksheet for staff

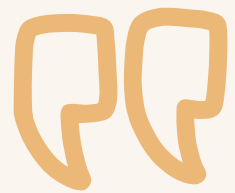


ASSISTANCE TELEPHONE

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Q&A



“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear... all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

— Leo Buscaglia

Your presence
matters more than
you know.

Just being there is
powerful.

Your commitment to
prevention saves
lives.

Together, we are
creating safer
spaces and stronger
systems.

Because of you,
someone feels seen,
heard, and valued.



THANKS FOR
YOUR ATTENTION!