

CEO Report



January 29, 2025



89th Legislative Session

Community Center Key Priorities

The Texas Council Board finalized legislative priorities for the 89th Session on **November 9, 2024**, focusing on critical issues impacting the state's system of care. These priorities aim to address challenges in IDD, MH, & substance addiction services.

Key Priorities for IDD Services:

1. Increase Wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs): Advocate for wage parity with State Supporting Living Centers (SSLCs) in residential settings (\$19.16/hour) & raise wages for DSPs in non-residential settings under HCS & TxHmL waivers.
2. Address IDD Targeted Case Management (also known as Service Coordination) Shortfalls: Secure funding to resolve TCM financial deficits.
3. Enhance Service Capacity: Expand community services for individuals with high behavioral, medical, or physical support needs.
4. Innovate Delivery Models: Explore alternative community-based service delivery approaches.
5. Reduce Medicaid Waiver Interest Lists: Continue investments to decrease waiting lists.

Key Priorities for MH Services:

1. Secure Population Growth Funds: Address population growth, avoid waiting lists, & maintain manageable caseloads.
2. Compensate for COVID-Era Funding Loss: Replace reduced MH & substance use disorder block grant funding.
3. Support Children's Behavioral Health: Fully fund the statewide children's behavioral health plan recommendations.
4. Enhance Crisis Response: Expand crisis response & diversion center capacity.
5. Sustain Inpatient Care: Maintain funding for locally purchased inpatient care.
6. Strengthen Operational Capacity: Ensure operational funding remains robust.



EXECUTIVE

LEADERSHIP TEAM

GREG ROWE, CEO

DEBBIE PENELUNA, CFO

ANNETTE HERNANDEZ, CAO

MONICA TELLO Chief HR Officer

MELINDA MCCULLOUGH, COO

GANNA BRAZEAL-HUFF, Chief IDD Services

EDDIE WALLACE Chief BH Services

JARED BARAN, CIO

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89TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION CONT...



HB 1 & SB 1 (State Budget for FY26-27)

On **January 21st** the House & Senate budgets were released in House Bill 1 (HB 1) & Senate Bill 1 (SB 1).

The Senate Finance Committee will begin meeting next week, with Article II (Health & Human Services) hearings on February 3 & 4, 2025. The first hearing is invited testimony

only, public testimony will be accepted on February 4. HB 1 & SB1 both included Base Wage Rate Attendant Services (IDD Direct Support Professionals & Community Attendants). Via Rider 23 both the Senate & House proposed to raise the Base Wage for Personal Attendant Services from \$10.60 per hour \$12.00 per hour. This is far from our advocacy of parity with the base wages at the State Supported Living Centers of \$19.16 per hour.

Capital Visits

On January 17th Cary Houston & I participated with many other Community Center Board members & CEOs in visits to the Capital. We met with both Senator Perry & Representative Darby's staff advocating for the following:

- Replacing COVID block grant funding that provided access to core outpatient & specialty MH treatment that allowed the legislature to defer additional investments over the past four years for maintaining capacity & avoiding waiting list. The HHSC Fiscal Year 26/27 Legislative Appropriations Request reflects the reduction in community MH services due to the end of COVID block grant funding. If these funds are not replaced, there will be a loss of treatment across the state.
- Invest \$125M in community MH services to maintain capacity & services for ongoing MH needs.
- Fully support Exceptional Item 12: \$48M for mobile crises outreach team teams, & \$12 on for crisis facilities.
- Appropriate general revenue & direct HHSC to utilize any available federal grant funds for sustaining these investments.
- Increase rates that support wages for direct support professionals in community IDD services bringing wages to parity with those paid to direct support professionals in state operated settings by investing \$238M GR annually.
- Support reasonable rates for local authority IDD service coordination by investing \$32 general revenue annually.
- Expand specialized outpatient services for people with IDD who have MH conditions by supporting HHSC Exceptional Item 17 at \$20 general revenue annually.



89TH SESSION CONT...

Bills of Interest

HB 1188, Christian Manuel

Directs a school district to refer each student receiving special education services under Chapter 29 Education Code who has or is suspected of having IDD to a Local IDD Authority for services or public benefits, including Medicaid Waiver services.

HB 1656, Donna Howard

Allows for a paramedic to detain a person for preliminary examination at a mental health facility under certain circumstances. The paramedic who detains a person must immediately transport the person to the nearest appropriate inpatient medical facility, or a facility authorized by the LMHA. A paramedic must immediately file with the facility a notification of detention after transport.

SB 188, Jose Menendez

Establishes the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Trust Fund based primarily on funds accrued through a fee assessed on certain telecommunications services. The trust fund monies could be used to improve the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline; provide funding for the care of uninsured individuals; fund crisis outreach and response; staff crisis centers, MCOTs, and Youth Crisis Teams; fund data collection, evaluation, and quality improvement activities; and administer the fund itself.

SB 239, Mayes Middleton

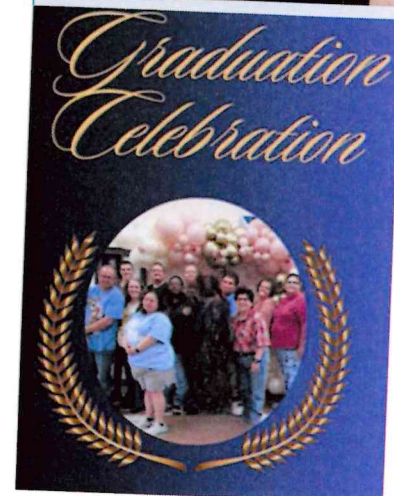
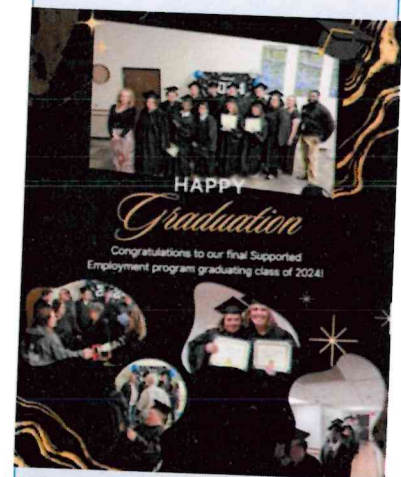
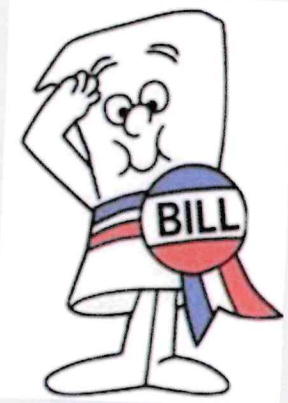
Prohibits a political subdivision from spending public funds to pay a nonprofit state association that primarily represents political subdivisions and hires or contracts with an individual required to register as a lobbyist. Likewise prohibits spending public funds to hire an individual required to register as a lobbyist. This could affect how the TX Council advocates for Centers.

Vocational Apprenticeship Program Graduation

On **December 20th** the Vocational Apprenticeship Program (VAP) held its final graduation ceremony graduating 11 talented individuals. Due to Federal funding ending that was associated with COVID relief HHSC discontinued this awesome program.

As a reminder, the VAP program provided individuals with IDD the opportunity to learn job & life skills. The program consisted of 22 weeks of class time where staff reviewed various subjects ranging from money management, social skills for a job, and job safety. Each individual participating received up to 20 weeks of a paid apprenticeship where they learn job skills in an employment role with the assistance of host sites; businesses in San Angelo that graciously worked with the program to provide the apprentices job experience.

Since its start in **August 2023**, 35 individuals graduated from the program and 53 participated in classroom activities.



MH QUALITY MANAGEMENT

FY24, Quarters 3-4 Children's MH Chart Review

On **November 14, 2024**, the QM Department completed a chart review for FY 2024, Q3-Q4, involving 44 Child & Adolescent MH patients. The review assessed compliance with TAC guidelines, Center P&Ps, & HHSC standards for progress notes & recovery plans. Scores were as follows:

TAC compliance: 94%

Medical notes: 95%

Progress notes: 88%

Recovery plans: 60%

Overall score: 82%

Due to the identified deficiencies, QM has requested a Corrective Action Plan.

Access to Routine Mental Health Services Mystery Caller Review

On **December 6, 2024**, the QM conducted a "Mystery Caller" survey to evaluate access to routine MH services within 14 calendar days. Using a survey tool from the Texas Council QM/UM Consortium, scores were recorded as follows: **Call 1 = 90%, Call 2 = 90%, Call 3 = 95%, & Call 4 = 90%.**

FY24, Quarters 3-4 MCOT Review

On **December 5, 2024**, QM reviewed 122 Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT) crisis encounters from March 1 to August 31, 2024. The review ensured compliance with TAC Chapter 306, HHSC Performance Contract requirements, & TRR Guidelines, verifying up to 120 elements per encounter. The **overall score was 95%.**



FY25 Crisis Hotline/Avail Mystery Caller Review

QM conducted a "Mystery Caller" survey of the MHMRCV crisis line contractor, Avail Solutions Incorporated, from **December 16, 2024**, to January 4, 2025. Five anonymous calls assessed criteria such as tone, courtesy, helpfulness, & overall satisfaction. **Scores: Call 1 = 100%, Call 2 = 94%, Call 3 = 82%, Call 4 = 100%, Call 5 = 81%.**

FY24, Quarters 3-4 TCOOMMI TAC Review

A Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments (TCOOMMI) chart review was completed on **January 3, 2025**, evaluating patients with open assignments between March 1 & August 31, 2024. Chart content compliance with TAC guidelines & Center P&P was assessed. Scores: **TAC = 97%, Medical Notes = 83%, Progress Notes = 79%, Recovery Plans = 72%, Overall = 82%.** A corrective action plan was required.

FY25 Certified Family Partner Review

On **January 15, 2025**, the CM conducted a review of the MHMRCV Certified Family Partner (CFP) program (part of Children's MH) using the FY20 Peer Review Tool provided by HHSC. The review assessed job descriptions, postings, service documentation, policies, & training. The **program scored 63%.** A corrective action plan was required.

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2024 FINANCIALS

Financial Highlights

The Center experienced a negative margin for the two months ending 2024. November saw a negative margin of \$44,727 & December saw a negative margin of \$15,768. The year-to-date margin is a negative \$72,819.

Month	Revenue	Expenses	Margin-Actual	Margin-Budget
November	\$1,359,853	\$1,404,580	\$(44,727)	\$15,692
December	\$1,239,419	\$1,255,188	\$(15,768)	\$19,266

Division Breakdown	November	December
Mental Health	\$4,880	\$78,507
IDD	\$(58,330)	\$(45,766)



Financial Recap

Variances Revenues

Local & Fees – \$24,035 under budget in November & \$18,312 under budget in December

- Most of this category is attributed to Clubhouse Donations being under budget by \$16,316 in November & \$17,312 in December. Debbie & I are planning to bring the Board a proposed budget amendment for the February or March meeting as this, along with several other adjustments, needs to be made to show a true variance in the future months.
- The Center received the Jail Continuity of Care contract & funding from HHSC in December. Financials will not reflect true budget numbers for several months.
- The SAMHSA MH Awareness Training program received \$10,808 more than budgeted for November.
- TVC Grant was under budget \$4,432 in November.

CCP/DPP Income – \$10,675 under budget in December

- Funding from the Charity Care Pool & Directed Payment Program is an amortized amount that stays the same each month and was calculated at the beginning of the fiscal year. DPP appeared to be lower than anticipated.

HHSC Allocations – 80,263 under budget in November & \$112,370 under budget in December

- Crisis Diversion Center – under \$22,983 each month. Budgeted revenue for this program is set at \$84,880 monthly. Continue to build the program.
- Inpatient Hospitalizations – under \$54,269 in November & \$60,608 in December. This is primarily due to variances with 2 budget categories of HHSC funding, Private Psychiatric Beds & Tier I Community Based Crisis Programs. We are working to align funding appropriately from these programs after the Shannon/Rivercrest merger.
- Other programs under budget include AMH Outpatient Clinic – \$5,236 in both November & December due to vacant positions, Mobile Crisis Outreach Team \$5,417 both months due to a vacant position, and the Employee Navigation Program was 3,958 under budget in November & \$4,755 under in December. In November COPSD services were \$7,687 more than anticipated & the Jail Based Competency Restoration program was \$4,068 more than anticipated. Additionally, in November the Vocational Apprenticeship Program was \$9,592 under budget.

Other Federal – \$5,840 over budget in November & \$7,358 over budget in December

- The City of San Angelo HOME grant is being fully utilized as the HHSC funded Supported Housing & Rental Assistance funding has been exhausted. The new Office of the Governor's grant should assist with the need for housing assistance.

Expenses continued on page 6

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2024

FINANCIALS CONTINUED



Variances

Expenses

Salaries – \$26,227 over budget in December

- Salaries were over budget \$19,527 with the largest variance being administration salaries of \$9,060. The variance is due to December being budgeted slightly lower than other months of the FY.
- Overtime was over budget by \$11,669 with the largest variance being HCS \$7,261 over monthly budget. This is due to vacant positions at the group homes. Gana has informed me that they just recently filled all vacant positions.
- Part-time salaries were under budget by \$4,103.

Travel & Training - \$8,796 under budget in December

- Administration, Clubhouse, and Employment Navigation programs were all under.

Facility Costs – \$36,082 over in November & \$21,713 over budget in December

- The major contributors included the replacement of two sump pumps for the Clubhouse, payments to Ener-Tel for sprinkler replacements at Beauregard, & a blower motor for the furnace replaced at MH Respite.

Vehicle Operating Expense – \$7,490 over budget in December

- This is primarily due to license & registration fees for the three new Toyota Sienna vans for IDD services.

Contracted Services- \$86,707 under budget in November & \$148,856 under in December.

- Contributors to this variance are tied to Inpatient Hospitalizations, Crisis Diversion Center, HCS provider services.

Client Support - \$6,983 under budget in December

- Crisis Diversion Center under \$5,882 (rental/housing assistance – the program just began
- Supported Housing Utilities under \$2,799 (Windy Meadows)
- IDD Vocational Apprenticeship Program under \$2,240
- MH Supported Living over budget by \$4,513, Rental & housing assistance with the HOME grant.

Other Expenses – \$12,180 over budget in November

- The Bunch of Blessings catered lunch was over by \$3,643.
- The final Spherion invoice for CFO recruiting was over \$3,000.
- Mental Health Awareness Training Program was over \$10,675 due to advertising. This is reflected in the Local Fees Revenue above.





OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR GRANT

Last February West Texas Counseling & Guidance (WTCG) & MHMRCV applied for a State Crisis Intervention Grant through the Office of the Governor to support projects that promote the prevention, intervention, and reduction of crime & violence and provide essential crisis services to at-risk populations within Texas communities. Federal Funds were authorized under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act for this grant opportunity. Partnering with WTCG the goal is to "ensure that individuals in the Concho Valley experiencing a crisis have access to wrap-around services to avoid preventable inpatient hospitalization, jail, law enforcement interaction, or use of more restrictive treatment due to mental health crises". WTCG agreed to be the lead on the project & submitted the grant on behalf of both organizations. Part of this grant would improve connectivity with SAPD and MHMR's Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT) through technology (tablets & a secure platform) to allow SAPD to contact MCOT for a virtual response & safety planning. The grant would also help enhance MHMR's MCOT and diversion center services as well as the zero-suicide program.

The focus of the grant is based on gaps identified in the 2022 Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) Mapping.

Funding would be available for a 12-month period beginning October 1, 2024, with the possibility of reapplying annually.

SAPD Funding:

28 iPads for San Angelo Police Department and 5 for MHMR crisis team

Data (T-Mobile) for 33 hotspots @ \$25/month for each iPad. Will be used to better connect to MHMR crisis staff.

Secure platform for video conferencing for crisis staff & law.

Staff Funding:

Crisis Team Member & Part Time Peer Support

Rental/Housing Funding:

Rental/Housing Assist with crisis diversion due to lack of housing - \$53,000 annually.

Rapid Housing Assistance for immediate crisis diversion due to lack of housing = \$17,500.

Other Funding:

Transportation Expenses, IT equipment, office supplies, Electronic Health Record expenses, Marketing/Outreach materials

Total Contract: \$215,899.60



IDD QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

FY2025 PASRR, HCS, TxHmL & GR Local Authority Chart Review - December

IDD Quality Improvement (QI) staff completed a monthly General Revenue (GR), Home & Community-Based Services (HCS), TX Home Living (TxHmL), & Pre-Admission Screening Resident Review (PASRR) chart review on **December 30, 2024**. The purpose of the review was to ensure the charts are up to date with accurate paperwork. QA staff utilized the survey audit tool provided by the Contract Accountability & Oversight (CAO) Unit within HHSC. The CAO unit utilizes this tool for each program to ensure compliance with specific elements of a LIDDA's Performance Contract as well as specific State & program rule requirements.

Three records were selected at random in each program.

Scores:

FY '25, PASRR = 100% FY '25 HCS = 98.37%
FY '25 TxHmL = 100% FY '25 GR/CFC = 100%

HCS Provider Chart Review

IDD QI completed an HCS Provider services full audit review on **December 16, 2024**. The purpose of the review was to ensure the charts are up to date with accurate paperwork. Six charts were reviewed (2 each month).

Scores:

Oct- 100%
Nov- 96%
Dec- 93%

TxHmL Provider Chart Review

The IDD QI completed a TxHmL Provider full audit review on **December 16, 2024**. The purpose of the review was to ensure the charts are up to date with accurate paperwork. Six charts were

reviewed (2 each month).

Scores:

Oct- 100%
Nov-100%
Dec- 99%

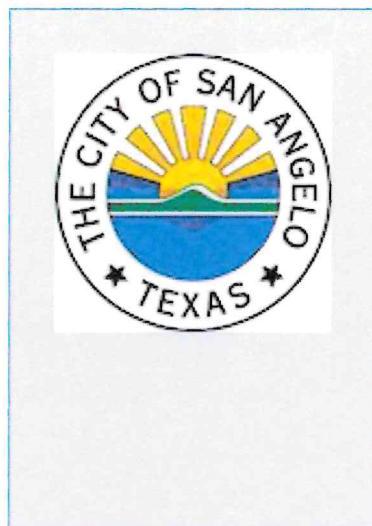
CLASS Chart Review

IDD QI completed a Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS) full audit review on **December 16, 2024**. The purpose of the review was to ensure the charts are up to date with accurate paperwork. One chart was reviewed (The CLASS program has 12 individuals enrolled). Score: 100%



**Medicaid
Waiver
Program**





SAN ANGELO CITY COUNCIL

On **January 21st** the San Angelo City Council accepted the donation of equipment (iPads) from MHMR to be used for SAPD patrol officers. Chief Travis Griffith presented the resolution to the council and honored me with a law enforcement coin for support to the San Angelo Police Department. Funding for the iPads will come from the new Governor's grant.

A RESOLUTION BY THE CITY OF SAN ANGELO CITY COUNCIL ACCEPTING THE DONATION OF EQUIPMENT FOR THE SAN ANGELO POLICE DEPARTMENT.

WHEREAS, Section 51.076(a) of the Texas Local Government Code provides that a municipality may hold property that it receives by gift, deed, devise, or other manner; and

WHEREAS, My Health My Resources (MHMR) has offered to donate equipment valued at \$38,100 to the City of San Angelo for the benefit of the San Angelo Police Department; and

WHEREAS, the donation consists of 33 iPads, one year of cellular data for the 33 devices, and software to securely communicate between MHMR and the San Angelo Police Department; and

WHEREAS, the San Angelo Police Department has identified a need for this equipment which will further the mission and purpose of the department

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF SAN ANGELO, TEXAS:

Part 1: That the City of San Angelo hereby accepts the donation of equipment valued at \$38,100 from My Health My Resources (MHMR) for the San Angelo Police Department, including 33 iPads, one year of cellular data for the 33 devices, and software to securely communicate between MHMR and the San Angelo Police Department.

Part 2: That the equipment shall be used solely for the operations and training of the San Angelo Police Department sworn officers.

PASSED and APPROVED this 21st day of January, 2025.

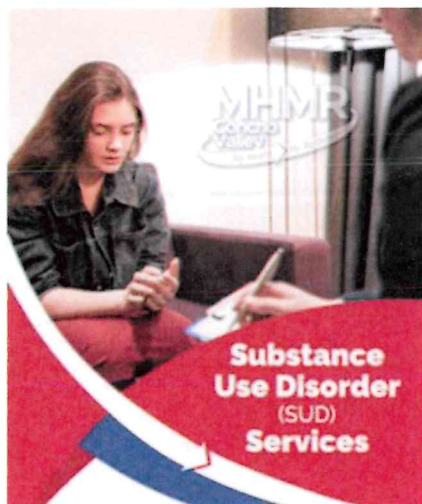
THE CITY OF SAN ANGELO, TEXAS:

SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT SERVICES GRANT

The Center applied for a 5-year grant to provide substance use treatment services for adults & youth. Funding would be used to address substance use problems & promote behavioral health & wellness by increasing the capacity of the statewide treatment system. The grant was submitted on **January 21st** & if accepted would begin **September 1, 2025**.

Currently we have 2 small contracts with HHSC to provide SUD counseling for adults. These contracts will be ending in August 2025. As a CCBHC we are required to provide substance disorder services. We learned last summer that CCBHCs are now required to provide youth treatment services. Matt Schwartz, our SUD program coordinator, recently went through a lengthy process of application to obtain youth treatment services licensure for the Center. We were notified on **January 20th** of approval, just in time for our submission. We now have a license with a slot capacity of 90 that includes adolescent outpatient services.

If approved, up to \$971,609 would be available to "bill" for services over the next 5 fiscal years.



Texas Council Report – January 2025

Texas Legislature

Legislative Priorities for the 89th Session

The Texas Council Board of Directors finalized legislative priorities for the 89th Session on November 9, 2024. These priorities reflect the breadth of issues impacting our system of care. The 89th Legislature convened on Tuesday, January 14, 2025. Educating, informing, and ultimately engaging decisionmakers remains our association's highest priority, to acknowledge both the progress made and the need to continue investing to ensure our system's ability to maintain and increase access to intellectual and developmental disability services, mental health, and substance addiction services.

We face undeniable headwinds this legislative session: headwinds that include limited identification by the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) of key funding priorities for the Local IDD Authority role, mental health caseload growth, crisis services, and other key funding priorities in the HHSC LAR. We anticipate 32 new legislators who must be educated before the start of the 89th Session and throughout the legislative process.

Considering the HHSC LAR has not prioritized mental health, substance addiction, and IDD services due to competition with many other sizeable priorities within the agency's scope, if we are successful advancing funding and other priorities, it will be solely due to legislative champions who decide to make these priorities in the next session—legislative champions you help us foster. Opportunities and threats will emerge during the 89th Legislative Session. You must strengthen and build new relationships now. These voices outside our system are key to successfully navigating the challenges ahead.

House Committee on Human Services:

- **Interim Charge III:** Support for Texans with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)
Evaluate access to Home and Community-based Services (HCS) waivers, including the interest list, effects of inflation on the cost of services, and availability of services and service providers. Consider the long-term stability of long-term services and supports in waiver programs and consider alternative delivery models. The Committee held one public hearing on August 27, 2024, to address Interim Charge III, gathering testimony from four key perspectives: the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), service providers, national organizations, and advocates with lived experiences.

Recognizing the importance of this charge as one of the best and only opportunities to provide formal feedback to the Legislature on IDD services during the interim, Texas Council organized joint written testimony with the Private Providers Association of Texas (PPAT) and the Providers Alliance of Community Services of Texas (PACSTX) for submission in advance of the hearing. Texas Council also provided invited oral testimony highlighting the impact of the Direct Support Professional workforce crisis on access to care and long-term stability of services, and describing strains felt in other parts of the community, including law enforcement, hospital emergency departments, and state psychiatric hospitals.

Despite extensive testimony supporting increased Direct Support Professional wages, the Committee did not adopt a related recommendation, noting that appropriations decisions are not within its jurisdiction. Instead, recommendations focus on potential changes to how waiver interest lists are managed. Also noteworthy is the absence of a recommendation related to considering alternative delivery models for IDD services, such as a managed care model.

Texas Council Report – January 2025

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) Updates

HHSC recently held a listening session related to T-CCBHC and discussed the status of a rule project to amend the T-CCBHC rule (26 TAC, Chapter 306, Subchapter C) in order to:

- Add the definition of outpatient mental health services;
- Add the definition of outpatient substance use services; and
- Add a requirement for non-LMHA/LBHA T-CCBHCs to enter into agreements with the LMHA/LBHA in the local service area for the provision of Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams (MCOTs).

HHSC currently plans to post a draft rule for comment in January 2025 with the expectation to finalize the rule in June 2025, after which HHSC will potentially begin accepting applications from other entities to pursue T-CCBHC certification. It is anticipated that only one entity will be accepted in FY2025. Texas Council is highly engaged in the rule process and will submit comments and continue in conversations with HHSC as it moves forward.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Update

988 has been operational since July 16, 2022, and can be accessed using any cell phone, landline, or voice-over internet device. In November 2024, the in-state answer rate was 85%, with nearly 16,000 calls answered in Texas. Average in-state speed of answering calls was 38 seconds and the average length of calls answered was just over 16 minutes.

On November 12, 2024, Senator Menendez filed [SB 188](#), which would establish the 988 Suicide and Crisis Trust fund and allow HHSC to assess a telecom service fee to support 988 operations and Texas crisis response. Texas Council is engaged in this effort and will continue working to develop additional ways to support 988 implementation.

Youth Crisis Outreach Teams (YCOTs)

Funding for eight youth crisis outreach team (YCOT) pilot sites was included in Rider 52 of the 88th Legislative Session's budget bill, HB 1. Texas Council is working with HHSC and the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) to guide YCOT implementation, which began with a best practices summit on June 3-4, 2024.

The learning community will meet at least two more times: virtually on January 28, 2025, and at the Texas Council offices on February 24-25, 2025. The January meeting will include discussions on how best to share YCOT information with the Legislature during budget discussions, as well as developing recommendations and identifying opportunities to align services and program expectations, while being deliberate about where to maintain flexibility. Through the coordinated efforts of the sites, Texas Council, MMHPI, and HHSC, we can help ensure that the rollout is successful and that YCOTs across the state are effective in helping kids and families quickly access care.

IDD Services

HHSC Proposes to Eliminate Attendant Compensation Rate Enhancement Program

Over the past year, Texas Council participated with an HHSC stakeholder group discussing the attendant compensation rate enhancement (ACRE) program as directed by Rider 30(d) of House Bill 1, 88th Legislature. HHSC informed stakeholders of its recommendation to discontinue the program, effective FY26, and recently published its recommendations in the report [Evaluation of Rate Enhancement Programs - 2024](#).

The report does not specifically recommend a hold-harmless clause to prevent a rate cut for ACRE participants. However, HHSC includes cost estimates for legislative consideration (Appendix G) based on an assumption that every eligible Medicaid provider enrolled and received the maximum level within the current ACRE program. For HCS, TxHmL, and ICF/IID, the biennial amount would be \$49.5 million in all funds (state and federal combined). Texas Council encourages Centers to continue educating legislators on the inadequacy of the Direct Service Professional (DSP) wage rates within the Medicaid Waiver programs, as addressing DSP rates will likely encompass the recommended discontinuance of ACRE as well.

Peer and Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Special Interest Groups

On November 4, 2024, the Texas Initiative, led by PermianCare's Dalia Ramirez, trained almost 1,500 individuals in MHFA. Texas now holds the national record for most first-aiders trained in one day! Texas Council established the Koalafied Outreach Worker Star Award (KOWSA) to recognize MHFA Outreach Workers who exemplify great leadership. Recent winners are:

- October 2024 – Crystal Morton, Texas Panhandle Centers
- November 2024 – Dalia Ramirez, PermianCare

The Peer and Family Partner Special Interest Group (SIG) continues to work on the first component of a toolkit for Centers, starting with job descriptions, guidelines for recruiting peers, and a webinar on the ins and outs of earning certification for Recovery Support Peer Specialists (RSPS), Family Partners, and Veteran Peer Coordinators. The next component will focus on orientation to peer roles at Centers. The Peer and Family Partner SIG will also host a webinar, "What is a Peer Specialist?" for Centers to use in explaining the process of becoming a Certified Mental Health Peer Specialist, RSPS, or Family Partner.

Annual Conference Update

Planning for the 2025 Conference, scheduled for June 25-27, 2025 at the Sheraton Downtown Dallas, is underway! Registration will open in March 2025. Conference updates will be posted to the [Texas Council Conference webpage](#) and emailed to our members. Texas Council and Host Center, Metrocare, look forward to seeing everyone at the Sheraton in Dallas, June 25 – 27, 2025!