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Mental Health in the Texas Budget: Comparing House and Senate Bills

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Mental health has received a lot of well-deserved attention this legislative session as the result of the recent violent tragedies in our nation. Still, throughout our discussions about improving mental health access in our state, we should remember that individuals with mental illness are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators. This session Texas Legislators deserve praise for recognizing that all Texans benefit from a stronger mental health system, with increased funds for prevention and better access to services.

Proposed 2014 – 2015 Mental Health Budgets

Both the Senate and House versions of the budget propose to allocate approximately \$2.6 billion in General Revenue for mental health and substance abuse services, which is just over a 14 percent increase over the 2012–2013 funding. The proposed budget includes almost \$2.4 billion for the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) base budget, which covers the current population receiving services, as well as \$228 million in proposed new funding to expand mental health services and programs.

BUDGET	SENATE			HOUSE		
	2014	2015	Total	2014	2015	Total
<i>Community MH SVCS - ADULTS</i>	\$326,606,827	\$330,828,296	\$657,435,123	\$327,823,897	\$332,045,366	\$659,869,263
<i>Community MH SVCS - CHILDREN</i>	\$98,546,522	\$113,034,527	\$211,581,049	\$97,270,972	\$111,758,977	\$209,029,949
<i>COMMUNITY MH CRISIS SVCS</i>	\$104,192,630	\$103,939,744	\$208,132,374	\$109,192,630	\$108,939,744	\$218,132,374
<i>NORTHSTAR BEHAV HLTH WAIVER</i>	\$112,332,699	\$114,291,374	\$226,624,073	\$113,364,249	\$115,244,843	\$228,609,092
<i>SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREV/INTERV/TREAT</i>	\$159,544,213	\$159,902,765	\$319,446,978	\$153,574,627	\$153,474,628	\$307,049,255
<i>MH STATE HOSPITALS</i>	\$414,776,752	\$413,109,157	\$827,885,909	\$411,068,699	\$409,501,104	\$820,569,803
<i>MH COMMUNITY HOSPITALS</i>	\$75,690,052	\$75,050,921	\$150,740,973	\$76,890,052	\$76,250,921	\$153,140,973
Total	\$1,291,689,695	\$1,310,156,784	\$2,601,846,479	\$1,289,185,126	\$1,307,215,583	\$2,596,400,709

Budget Riders

The House and Senate included 23 budget DSHS Riders that direct funds to specific programs. Twenty of the riders in each version are identical, which focus on initiatives related to data collection and reporting¹, jail-based programs², services directed through federal waivers³, 10-year state hospital plan⁴, and specialized mental health programs for Veterans⁵. Additionally, both versions of the HHSC budget include Riders for Graduate Medical Education and Medicaid substance abuse treatment services.

Three Senate Riders, not included in the House version, direct funds for home- and community-based services (Rider 87; including a 1915 (i) plan created by the Affordable Care Act⁶), prevention and early identification services for children(Rider 84)⁷, and a report related to the staffing issues within the state hospitals (e.g. turnover rates). On the other hand, three House Riders direct funds for a public/private collaborative initiative (Rider 88)⁸, to increase NorthSTAR services (Rider 84), and to add 6 inpatient beds at Harris County Psychiatric Center (Rider 81).

Additional Money in the Budget

Exceptional Items

In addition to the base budget, the agency requested supplementary funds for specific initiatives. Both budgets allocate \$57.2 million to eliminate the current wait lists for community mental health services by serving an additional 6,500 adults and children per year. The agency proposes to increase substance abuse services to an additional 948 individuals per year, and to increase the provider reimbursement rates. A new substance abuse initiative will allocate 6,000 slots for services to parents involved with DFPS, which will promote family reunification. Additionally, both the Senate and House budgets direct \$23.2 million to housing services and assistance for individuals who are homeless (or at-risk for homelessness), as well as residential treatment services for parents involved with DFPS.

Agency Requests	SENATE	HOUSE
#1. State Hospital Patient Safety & Operations	\$2,000,000	\$0
#6. Waiting Lists	\$57,200,000	\$57,200,000
#7. Substance Abuse	\$30,471,492	\$15,941,828
#8. Behavioral Health	\$23,213,668	\$23,213,668
Agency Request TOTAL	\$112,885,160	\$96,355,496

Mental Health Expansion

The prioritization of policy initiatives and funding to address mental health and substance abuse this session is unprecedented. At the beginning of session, legislators made it clear that they did not want to simply allocate more money to the existing mental health system, but instead wanted to target investments to deliver improved results. The goal of the additional money is to target the full spectrum of needs, from prevention, to outpatient services, to crisis services, and inpatient services.

Mental Health Expansion	SENATE	HOUSE
<i>Public Awareness</i>	\$4,000,000	\$0
<i>Prevention & Early Intervention</i>	\$2,000,000	\$0
<i>Crisis Services</i>	\$30,000,000	\$25,000,000
<i>CBMHS - Adults and Youth</i>	\$20,000,000	\$20,000,000
<i>YES Waiver</i>	\$32,500,000	\$32,500,000
<i>Public / Private Partnerships</i>	\$10,000,000	\$25,000,000
<i>LMHA Expansion to Serve Underserved</i>	\$17,000,000	\$17,000,000
<i>NorthSTAR</i>	\$0	\$6,000,000
<i>MH for Veterans</i>	\$0	\$4,000,000
<i>Harris County Psych. Center (6 beds)</i>	\$0	\$2,400,000
MH Expansion TOTAL	\$115,500,000	\$131,900,000

Taking the Best from Senate and House Budgets

Base Budget: The Center supports the Senate's proposal for Children's Community Mental Health services, Substance Abuse services, and funds allocated for State Mental Health Hospitals. We recommend House funding proposed for Adult Community Mental Health services, Community Crisis services, NorthSTAR, and Mental Health Community Hospitals.

Riders: We support all the mental health related DSHS Riders including the Senate Riders that direct funds to home and community-based services, prevention and early identification (Rider 84), and the House Riders related to private/public partnerships (Rider 88), NorthSTAR (Rider 84) and Harris County Psychiatric Center (Rider 87).

Additional Funds: CPPP also supports the Senate version of all the DSHS MH Exceptional Items, which includes Exceptional Item #1 (2 million for resident stipends at the State Mental Health Hospitals) and a higher reimbursement rate for substance abuse treatment providers in Exceptional Item # 7. Of the funds dedicated to the Mental Health Expansion, we support the Senate's intent to fund Public Awareness campaigns and Prevention and Early Identification services, but we recommend that funding be weighted towards Prevention and Early Identification.

Conclusion

In 2010, the national average for state spending on mental health services was \$121 per capita; however, Texas spent almost \$39 – ranked 49th.⁹ What is particularly disconcerting is not that we are not among the very top spenders, but that Texas is so far below the average per capita expenditure. The \$2.6 million in the proposed budgets will likely improve our per capita spending ranking. In addition to the unprecedented funds, legislators have filed more than 300 mental health-related bills—updating the mental health code, increasing access to services, creating school-based mental health initiatives, etc. —which strengthen the budget items by providing structure and direction.

However, in order to continue the momentum of increased funding next session, thoughtful and detailed planning of services will be required. This means the state will need to establish meaningful goals and objectives that will produce noteworthy outcomes.

For more information or to request an interview, please contact Alexa Garcia-Ditta at garciaditta@cphp.org or 512.823.2871.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Data collection related bills: Community-based services – SB 126 by Nelson; Up-take in the Health Care Exchange – SB 1057 by Nelson / HB 2129 by Zerwas.
- ² Jail-based rider is contingent on the passage of HB 2349 by Zerwas or SB 1475 by Duncan.
- ³ 1115 Transformation Waiver and 1915 (c) Youth Empowerment Services Waiver expansion.
- ⁴ Hospital plan to examine the infrastructure needs, capacity needs, and plans to alternative inpatient treatment. House version amended the Rider to specify outpatient alternatives, which supports HB 205 by McClendon.
- ⁵ HB 2392 by Menéndez / SB 898 by Van de Putte
- ⁶ To learn more about the 1915 (i): [CPPP Report - The Affordable Care Act and Mental Health](#).
- ⁷ This Rider could support various bills that concentrate on recognizing mental health needs within the school system – HB 3327 by Coleman / SB 831 by Taylor; SB 1178 by Deuell; and, SB 955 by Schwartner.
- ⁸ House allocates \$25 million and is contingent on the passage of HB 2287 by John Davis. The Senate did allocate \$10 million within the base budget.
- ⁹ NASMHPD Research Institute, Inc. (2012). FY 2010 State Mental Health Revenues and Expenditures. <http://www.nri-inc.org/projects/Profiles/RevenuesExpenditures.cfm>