



Report on Outcomes of the Non-Physician Mental Health Professionals

**As Required by
Texas Education Code,
Subchapter E, Section 8.158**

**Health and Human Services
Commission**

January 2022



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

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Executive Summary

The Texas Education Code, Chapter 8, Subchapter E¹, Section 8.152 directs local mental health authorities and local behavioral health authorities (LMHAs/LBHAs) to employ a non-physician mental health professional (NPMHP). Pursuant to this legal requirement, the NPMHP will serve as a mental health and substance use resource for school districts located in the region served by a regional Education Service Center (ESC) and in which a LMHA/LBHA also provides services.

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) contracts with 20 LMHAs/LBHAs to hire a NPMHP and establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the local ESC to implement Subchapter E. The 20 LMHAs/LBHAs provide monthly reports describing the type and number of activities conducted by the NPMHP. Additionally, the NPMHPs report the total number of people trained in mental health and substance use and misuse prevention.

Significant findings of the 2021 annual report² include:

- 916 instances of sharing mental health and substance use prevention resources, including best practices and research-based practices;
- 462 initiatives facilitated addressing mental health and substance use and misuse prevention; and
- 582 trainings provided on topics, such as Mental Health First Aid, grief and trauma, and substance use and misuse prevention and intervention.

¹ <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.8.htm>

² Data compiled from January 2021 to October 2021

1. Introduction

The overall goal of Texas Education Code, Chapter 8, Subchapter E is to address mental health needs and provide substance use and misuse prevention for children and adolescents by increasing awareness, supporting initiatives, and building skills and effective strategies among the members of the larger school community.

Section 8.153 requires LMHAs/LBHAs and ESCs to collaborate to hire and support NPMHPs. This partnership leverages the LMHA/LBHA expertise in mental health services and the ESC's expertise in supporting school districts, positioning the NPMHP to serve as an effective liaison to the school communities by providing resource information and training for school personnel, families, and children.

Pursuant to Section 8.155, an NPMHP employed under Subchapter E shall, to the greatest extent possible, work collaboratively with the regional ESC and shall act as a resource for the ESC and school district personnel by:

- Building awareness and knowledge of mental health and co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders;
- Assisting personnel with implementing initiatives related to mental health or substance use under state law or agency rules, interagency MOUs, and related programs;
- Ensuring awareness of:
 - ▶ The list of recommended best-practice programs and research-based practices developed under Section 38.351, Education Code;
 - ▶ Other public and private mental health and substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery programs available in the school district, including evidenced-based programs provided by an LMHA/LBHA and other public and private mental health providers; and
 - ▶ Other available public and private mental health and substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery program resources administered by the LMHA/LBHA or HHSC to support school districts, students, and families.
- Facilitating monthly training opportunities on:
 - ▶ Mental Health First Aid;
 - ▶ The effects of grief and trauma and providing support to children with intellectual or developmental disabilities who suffer from grief or trauma; and

- ▶ Prevention and intervention programs that are effective in helping students cope with the pressures of alcohol, cigarettes, illegal drug use, or misuse of prescription drugs.

Pursuant to Section 8.158, LMHAs/LBHAs are required to submit annual reports to HHSC regarding outcomes from services provided by NPMHPs. HHSC compiles the reports and submits an annual report to the legislature on the outcomes for school districts and students resulting from the training and community outreach provided by the NPMHP. The report to the legislature and the Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health Services is due by January 31 of each calendar year.

2. Background

The impact of COVID-19 has exacerbated existing challenges faced by students and families as well as created additional stressors to students, families and the school communities that serve them. According to Texans Care for Children, a statewide non-profit, non-partisan, multi-issue children's policy organization, the balance of returning to school, recovering lost academic instruction and maintaining the health of the students and staff is crucial for a successful year. Among the three key recommendations to schools, Texans Care for Children lists 1) preparing and supporting teachers and school staff by increasing awareness of how students of different ages are likely to respond to uncertainty, fear, and stress and how trauma-informed practices can help students be better learners; 2) how to identify students who may be struggling and need more support; and 3) how to request assistance.³ Through the activities of the NPMHP, school personnel are equipped with the information and tools to help ensure students get the help they need in the classroom and in their community.

Education Code, Subchapter E, Section 8.152 directs LMHAs/LBHAs to employ a NPMHP to serve as a mental health and substance use and misuse prevention resource through a collaboration with the 20 ESCs and specifically requires an ESC to provide an NPMHP with a workspace to carry out professional duties to increase opportunities for joint efforts in outreach and service delivery to school communities.

The ESCs' role is to build the capacity of the Texas public education system to enable all students to achieve their full potential, while the LMHAs/LBHAs' purpose is to provide and connect to community mental health services. The goal of establishing a formal collaboration is to maximize each entity's expertise in providing resources to support school personnel and school communities, ensuring the health and well-being of Texas children.

³ <https://txchildren.org/posts/2021/8/20/back-to-school-basics-how-tx-schools-can-support-mental-health-as-kids-return-amid-the-pandemic>

3. Program Overview

HHSC selected the following 20 LMHAs/LBHAs to serve as employers of a NPMHP, requiring participation by the LMHA/LBHA operating primarily in the county where the ESC is located:

- ESC Region 1: Tropical Texas Behavioral Health
- ESC Region 2: Nueces Center for Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities
- ESC Region 3: Gulf Bend Center
- ESC Region 4: The Harris Center for Mental Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- ESC Region 5: Spindletop Center
- ESC Region 6: Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare
- ESC Region 7: Community Healthcore
- ESC Region 8: Lakes Regional Community Center
- ESC Region 9: Helen Farabee Centers
- ESC Region 10: North Texas Behavioral Health Authority
- ESC Region 11: My Health My Resources of Tarrant County
- ESC Region 12: Heart of Texas Region MHMR Center
- ESC Region 13: Integral Care
- ESC Region 14: Betty Hardwick Center
- ESC Region 15: My Health My Resources Services for the Concho Valley
- ESC Region 16: Texas Panhandle Centers
- ESC Region 17: StarCare Specialty Health System
- ESC Region 18: PermianCare
- ESC Region 19: Emergence Health Network
- ESC Region 20: The Center for Health Care Services

HHSC allocated \$2.3 million from general revenue funds to the 20 LMHAs/LBHAs to cover the cost of a full-time employee and the cost recovery fee to the ESC.

Each employing LMHA/LBHA entered into a MOU with the applicable ESC. HHSC provides ongoing technical assistance to the LMHAs/LBHAs and ESCs. For example, HHSC hosts monthly calls with LMHA/LBHA and ESC leadership that focus on support for overall program implementation and reporting.

Each region differs slightly in the structure of program implementation, enabling the program to be responsive to the needs of the individual school communities. HHSC also hosts a monthly technical assistance call for NPMHPs, focusing on specific

issues related to program implementation, resources, and idea-sharing amongst the NPMHPs.

4. 2021 Program Implementation

As of October 31, 2021, 18 of the LMHAs/LBHAs have employed an NPMHP (Appendix A). The majority of the NPMHPs hired were in urban areas or areas with a mix of rural and urban populations within the ESC region.

Table 1 below identifies activities that the NPMHPs provided from January 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021.

Table 1. Activities provided by NPMHPs from January 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021.

Activity	Amount
The number of times mental and substance use prevention resources were shared	916 times for approximately 858 public school districts
The number of initiatives facilitated to address mental health and substance use and misuse prevention	462 initiatives for approximately 858 public school districts
The number of community members trained in Mental Health First Aid	5,756 in 246 trainings
The number of community members trained on the effect of grief and trauma	16,498 in 287 trainings
The number of community members trained in substance use prevention and interventions	2,783 in 49 trainings

In 2021, the NPMHPs were able to establish strategic working relationships with the ESC mental health staff to provide services to the multiple school districts within their region. The NPMHPs transitioned to providing both in-person and virtual meetings and training opportunities to meet the needs of evolving online and in-person school formats due to COVID-19 health precautions. This hybrid approach increased access for school personnel to receive resource information and training

related to Mental Health First Aid, grief and trauma, and substance use prevention, intervention, and recovery.

In addition to the outreach and trainings provided to school communities, many NPMHPs presented to different audiences about the successful partnerships they have established with schools and the benefits of their services.

In 2021, there were two key barriers impacting program implementation: 1) NPMHPs' access to training and 2) hiring challenges for certain LMHA/LBHAs. Because program funds were not specifically allocated for training, HHSC and the Texas Education Agency extended training resources to the NPMHPs at no cost. Some of the trainings include Trauma Sensitive Schools, the Road to Recovery, and PAX Good Behavior Game (substance use prevention). The LMHAs/LBHAs also provided funding to secure train-the-trainer opportunities for their NPMHP in Mental Health First Aid, Youth Mental Health First Aid, and Teen Mental Health First Aid.

To address hiring challenges, HHSC offered individualized support to the LMHAs/LBHAs that had not been able to hire a NPMHP due to workforce shortages in their areas. The key barrier identified was the lack of flexibility in licensure requirements of the NPMHP. The LMHAs/LBHAs, ESCs, and HHSC continued to work together to address challenges to support program implementation.

5. Conclusion

NPMHPs create opportunities to raise awareness, increase knowledge, and build skills related to mental health and substance use and misuse prevention and intervention for school districts and school communities through effective collaborations between the LMHAs/LBHAs and ESCs. The NPMHPs worked with their local school districts to build relationships by sharing information, supporting initiatives, and providing necessary trainings that address the local community's needs. Successful implementation was exemplified by NPMHPs and ESCs establishing working relationships, and immediate implementation of trainings and outreach.

HHSC will provide ongoing support to the NPMHPs as the needs of school communities remain a priority for Texas. The continued partnerships between LMHAs/LBHAs, ESCs, local school districts, and HHSC will provide ongoing support to build the knowledge and skills to maintain strong, supportive schools and local communities across Texas.

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
ESC	Education Service Center
HHSC	Health and Human Services Commission
LBHA	Local Behavioral Health Authority
LMHA	Local Mental Health Authority
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NPMHP	Non-Physician Mental Health Professional

Appendix A. LMHA/LBHAs with NPMHPs

List of LMHAs/LBHAs that have hired as of October 31, 2021:

ESC Region 1: Tropical Texas Behavioral Health

ESC Region 2: Nueces Center for Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities

ESC Region 3: Gulf Bend Center

ESC Region 4: The Harris Center for Mental Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

ESC Region 5: Spindletop Center

ESC Region 6: Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare

ESC Region 7: Community Healthcore*

ESC Region 9: Helen Farabee Centers

ESC Region 10: North Texas Behavioral Health Authority

ESC Region 11: My Health My Resources of Tarrant County*

ESC Region 12: Heart of Texas Region MHMR Center

ESC Region 13: Integral Care

ESC Region 14: Betty Hardwick Center

ESC Region 15: My Health My Resources Services for the Concho Valley*

ESC Region 17: StarCare Specialty Health System

ESC Region 18: PermianCare

ESC Region 19: Emergence Health Network

ESC Region 20: The Center for Health Care Services

* Denotes an LMHA/LBHA that had an NPMHP hired during 2021, but currently has a position vacancy.