



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 2023



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction	2
2. Background	4
3. Program Overview.....	5
4. 2022 Program Implementation	8
5. Conclusion	11
List of Acronyms	12

Executive Summary

Texas Education Code (TEC), Section 8.152,¹ directs local mental health authorities (LMHAs) and local behavioral health authorities (LBHAs) to employ a non-physician mental health professional (NPMHP). The NPMHP serves 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 the LMHA or LBHA provides services.

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) contracts with 20 LMHAs and LBHAs to hire a NPMHP and establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each of the 20 local ESC to implement TEC, Section 8.152. Each LMHA and LBHA that employs and supervises an NPMHP submits monthly reports to HHSC describing the type and number of activities conducted by the NPMHP, including the total number of people trained in mental health and substance use and misuse prevention. Significant findings of the 2022 annual report² include:

- NPMHPs shared mental health and substance use prevention resources, including best practices and research-based practices, 836 times.
- NPMHPs facilitated 60,561 initiatives addressing mental health and substance use and misuse prevention.
- NPMHPs provided 656 trainings on a variety of topics, including 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 September 2021 to August 2022

1. Introduction

The overall goal of TEC Section 8.152 is to address mental health needs and provide substance use and misuse prevention for children by increasing awareness, supporting initiatives, and building skills and effective strategies among the members of the larger school communities. The TEC requires the LMHA or LBHA and their ESC to collaborate to hire and support NPMHPs. This partnership leverages the LMHA's or LBHA's expertise in mental health and substance use services and the ESC's expertise in supporting school districts thus positioning the NPMHP to serve as an effective liaison to the ESC's school community by providing resource information and training for school personnel, families, and children.

In accordance with the TEC, Section 8.156, school district participation in training provided by the NPMHP is optional. Therefore, an NPMHP works collaboratively with the regional ESC and shall act as a resource for the center and school district personnel, to the extent possible and as required by Section 8.155, 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, the applicable MOU, and related programs.
- Creating awareness of:
 - ▶ The list of recommended best-practice programs and research-based practices developed under TEC Section 38.351 as referenced under Section 8.155;
 - ▶ 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 the LMHA or 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 that the LMHA or LBHA or HHSC administers 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 pressure associated with alcohol, cigarettes, illegal drug use, or misuse of prescription medication.

The TEC, Section 8.158(a) requires the LMHA or LBHA to submit annual reports to HHSC regarding outcomes from services provided by NPMHPs. The TEC, Section 8.158(b) further requires HHSC to submit 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 is due by January 31 of each calendar year. The TEC also requires HHSC to submit the report to the Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health Services established under the TEC, Section 38.302.³

³ <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.38.htm#38.302>

2. Background

According to a 2021 report from Texans Care for Children,⁴ a statewide non-profit, non-partisan, multi-issue children's policy organization, school districts have access to resources that can help them address student mental health. One of these resources is the NPMHP program that helps districts implement effective school practices by providing guidance, training, and technical support.⁵ 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. Texans Care for Children's three key recommendations address how schools can:

- Prepare and support 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;"
- Identify students who may be struggling and need more support; and
- Request assistance.⁶

The NPMHP's activities support school personnel with the information and tools to help students get the help they need in the classroom and community. TEC, Section 8.152, concerning Mental Health and Substance Use Resources for School District Personnel, directs LMHAs and LBHAs to employ an NPMHP to serve as a mental health and substance use and misuse prevention resource through a collaboration with the 20 ESCs. TEC, Section 8.153(a) specifically requires an ESC to provide an NPMHP with a workspace to carry out professional duties increasing opportunities for joint efforts in outreach and service delivery to school communities.

While the LMHA's or LBHA's purpose is to provide resources and connect schools to community mental health services, the ESC's role is to build the capacity of the Texas public education system to enable all students to achieve their full potential. Establishing a formal collaboration ensures maximizing each entity's expertise in providing resources to support school personnel and school communities, ensuring the mental health and well-being of Texas children.

⁴ <https://txchildren.org/>

⁵ <https://txchildren.org/posts/2021/8/20/back-to-school-basics-how-tx-schools-can-support-mental-health-as-kids-return-amid-the-pandemic>

⁶ <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

Table 1 identifies the designated LMHAs and LMHAs. HHSC selected the following 20 LMHAs and LBHAs, out of 39 total, to serve as employers of an NPMHP:⁷

Table 1. LMHAs and LBHAs to serve as employers of an NPMHP

No.	LMHA/LBHA	ESC Region
1	Tropical Texas Behavioral	1
2	Nueces Center for Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities	2
3	Gulf Bend Center	3
4	The Harris Center for Mental Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	4
5	Spindletop Center	5
6	Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare	6
7	Community Healthcore	7
8	Lakes Regional Community Center	8
9	Helen Farabee Centers	9
10	North Texas Behavioral Health Authority	10
11	My Health My Resources of Tarrant County	11
12	Heart of Texas Region Mental Health Mental Retardation Center	12

⁷ This required participation by the LMHA/LBHA operating primarily in the county where the specific ESC was located.

No.	LMHA/LBHA	ESC Region
13	Integral Care	13
14	Betty Hardwick Center	14
15	Mental Health Mental Retardation Services for the Concho Valley	15
16	Texas Panhandle Centers	16
17	StarCare Specialty Health System	17
18	PermiaCare	18
19	Emergence Health Network	19
20	The Center for Health Care Services	20

HHSC allocated \$2.3 million from general revenue funds to these LMHAs and LBHAs to cover the cost of a full-time employee and cost recovery fee to the ESC. Successful implementation of this effort requires the NPMHP program to be responsive to the needs of the individual school communities, which differ regionally. Therefore, each employing LMHA or LBHA entered into an MOU with their respective ESC.

In fiscal year 2022, HHSC continued to provide support, technical assistance, training, and collaboration opportunities to the LMHAs, LBHAs, and ESCs. HHSC hosted monthly collaboration calls for NPMHPs and quarterly calls for the NPMHPs with participation by the employer LMHA or LBHA, ESC leadership, and TEA.

TEA also invited NPMHPs to participate in a monthly Mental and Behavioral Health Professional Learning Community with the 20 ESCs, facilitated through TEA’s Safe Schools Division and the Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education (AWARE) Texas initiative, to encourage coordination and training between partners. The NPMHPs also worked with TEA, ESCs, LMHA, LBHAs, and HHSC to identify resources for a statewide and regional mental health resource inventory database built for schools in fiscal year 2022.

These efforts are all designed to provide training and encourage collaboration across systems supporting mental health and substance use in Texas public schools.

4. 2022 Program Implementation

As of October 31, 2022, 13 of the 20 LMHAs and LBHAs were able to employ an NPMHP. The majority of those NPMHPs were employed in areas that were urban or that included a mix of rural and urban populations within the ESC region.

Table 2 provides a summary of all NPMHPs' activities from September 1, 2021, through August 31, 2022.

Table 2. NPMHP Activities During Fiscal Year 2022

Activity	Outcome
Shared mental health and substance use prevention resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 836 times
Number of initiatives facilitated to address mental health and substance use and misuse prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60,561 initiatives
Number of Mental Health First Aid training events and number of community members trained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 300 events 4,591 members trained
Number of training events and number of community members trained on the effect of grief and trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 294 events 11,595 members trained
Number of training events and number of community members trained in substance use prevention and intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 62 events 2,537 members training
Total number of school districts that were "impacted by an NPMHP (i.e. received NPMHP resources)."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 808 school districts

During fiscal year 2022, NPMHPs established strategic working relationships with the ESCs' mental health staff to provide services to the multiple school districts within their respective regions. The NPMHPs continued offering both in-person and virtual meetings and training opportunities to meet the needs of evolving online and in-person school formats due to the COVID-19 pandemic health precautions. This hybrid approach continued to increase school personnel's access to resource information and training on 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 of the NPMHPs presented to different audiences about their successful partnerships with schools and the benefits of their services.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the barriers identified in previous years continued to challenge NPMHP program implementation. These barriers included NPMHP lack of access to training and hiring, as well as retention challenges for certain LMHAs and LBHAs. Three LMHAs were unsuccessful in hiring or retaining an NPMHP in fiscal year 2022 due to significant workforce shortages.

To address training challenges, HHSC and the TEA continued to extend training opportunities via technical assistance calls and resource sharing. Trainings provided in fiscal year 2022 included: Trauma Sensitive Schools; Suicide Prevention; Best Practices; Mental Health First Aid; the Road to Recovery; and PAX Good Behavior Game (substance use prevention). HHSC also implemented quarterly joint meetings between Mental Health First Aid outreach workers and NPMHPs to ensure trainings were optimized and coordinated in service areas.

To address hiring challenges, HHSC offered individualized support to the LMHAs and LBHAs affected by extreme workforce shortages in their areas. The LMHAs and LBHAs that experienced hiring challenges tried multiple recruitment efforts, including increasing salaries, reposting the position multiple times, and intensifying and extending their recruitment efforts. They identified the lack of flexibility in the licensure requirements of the NPMHP as a key barrier. The LMHAs, LBHAs, ESCs, and HHSC continued to work together to address challenges to support program implementation.

The programmatic highlights for this fiscal year included:

- Monthly newsletters to school personnel providing information about mental health resources;
- Responsive training development;
- Coordination with TEA regarding their rubric to identify and provide mental health resources available to schools;
- Recorded podcasts;
- NPMHP peer presentations that functioned as a learning collaborative;
- NPMHP participation and presentations at in-person or hybrid counselor conferences, school safety summits, community resource symposiums (including facilitating a Trauma 101 presentation at a bus driver conference).

As an example of the program's success, the NPMHP in ESC Region 6 created a lunch and learn for parents and schools, teaching them how to self-regulate in times of stress. The local newspaper ran a story on the NPMHP's work, who also created a similar model for teachers. The NPMHP's goal was to strengthen and

empower teachers to model strength, skill-building, and resiliency in children and families in their local area.⁸

⁸ <https://www.sealynews.com/news/not-alone>

5. Conclusion

The NPMHP program creates 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. ESCs and NPMHPs continued successful program implementation by establishing working relationships and immediate implementation of trainings and outreach.

HHSC will continue to support the NPMHPs as the needs of school communities remain a priority for Texas. The continued partnerships across 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
LMHA	Local Mental Health Authority
LBHA	Local Behavioral Health Authority
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NPMHP	Non-Physician Mental Health Professional
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TEC	Texas Education Code