



Rural Mental Health: Libraries as Well-Being Hubs

Seventy percent of Texas counties are rural and the people there face greater challenges accessing mental health care. Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is working with rural communities to assist rural Texans in getting the help they need when they need it. One of those ways is encouraging communities to establish well-being hubs.

Community well-being hubs are gathering places where community members can connect to local services. The University of Texas IC² Institute has developed a “well-being hub”^{*} model to help communities develop local answers to meet community needs. Libraries are ideally suited to serve as well-being hubs because they provide:

- Safe and accessible community gathering places for everyone
- Information on health, employment and housing
- Staff who are knowledgeable about community resources and supports
- Computer and internet access
- Opportunities for navigating and networking community resources
- Confidential spaces for accessing telehealth

Since 2019, HHSC has learned much about challenges in accessing care in rural communities and recognizes that: accessing mental health, substance use, and wellness services are a priority; telehealth may be a solution, but many rural communities lack broadband; stigma is a barrier to accessing treatment; and, there are three places that rural communities trust: faith communities, schools, and libraries.

This community-based model allows rural communities to implement local solutions for community wellness. For more information about libraries as well-being hubs, visit: <https://ic2.utexas.edu/libraries-as-well-being-hubs/>.

* Pogue, Greg. Libraries as Well-Being Hubs.