



# **Reporting of Waiting Lists for Mental Health Services**

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**As Required by  
House Bill 1, 88th Legislature,  
Regular Session, 2023 (Article  
II, Health and Human Services  
Commission, Rider 45)**

**Texas Health and Human  
Services  
November 2023**



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

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# 1. Introduction

The *Reporting of Waiting Lists for Mental Health Services* meets the requirements of the 2024-25 General Appropriations Act, House Bill (H.B.) 1, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023 (Article II, Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), Rider 45). Rider 45 requires HHSC to report on waiting lists for mental health services to the Legislative Budget Board and Governor by November 1 and May 1 of each year.

Rider 45 requires the report to include waiting list and expenditure data for community mental health services for adults and children, forensic state hospital beds, and maximum security forensic state hospital beds for each local mental health authority (LMHA), local behavioral health authority (LBHA), state facility, and contracted entity. Required data include:

- Number of people waiting for all services;
- Number of underserved<sup>1</sup> people waiting for additional services;
- Number of people removed from the waiting list;
- Funds expended to remove people on the waiting list in each fiscal quarter included in the reporting period;
- Average number of days spent on a waiting list; and
- Explanation whether waiting lists are due to operational or other short-term factors or long-term issues, such as insufficient capacity.

The reporting period for this report is fiscal year 2023, quarters three and four.

## Data Context and Limitations

The community mental health waiting lists are point-in-time calculations of the total number of people waiting for mental health services at the end of the respective quarter of the reporting period. The waiting list is subject to daily fluctuations as people are added or removed for various reasons (e.g., admitted to services, no longer interested in services, receiving services elsewhere, no longer able to be contacted).

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<sup>1</sup> Term used to designate persons who received a lower level of care than recommended based on assessment scores.

As part of the federal response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration awarded HHSC supplemental funding, part of which HHSC allocated to LMHAs and LBHAs to increase the number of people served in fiscal years 2021-2023.<sup>2</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic also affected many providers' ability to attract and retain a stable workforce, resulting in unprecedented workforce shortages statewide.

If the demand for services increases beyond the total funded capacity for community mental health services and available staff resources, a waiting list may remain despite the effective use of additional funding and an LMHA's or LBHA's success in meeting its contracted targets.

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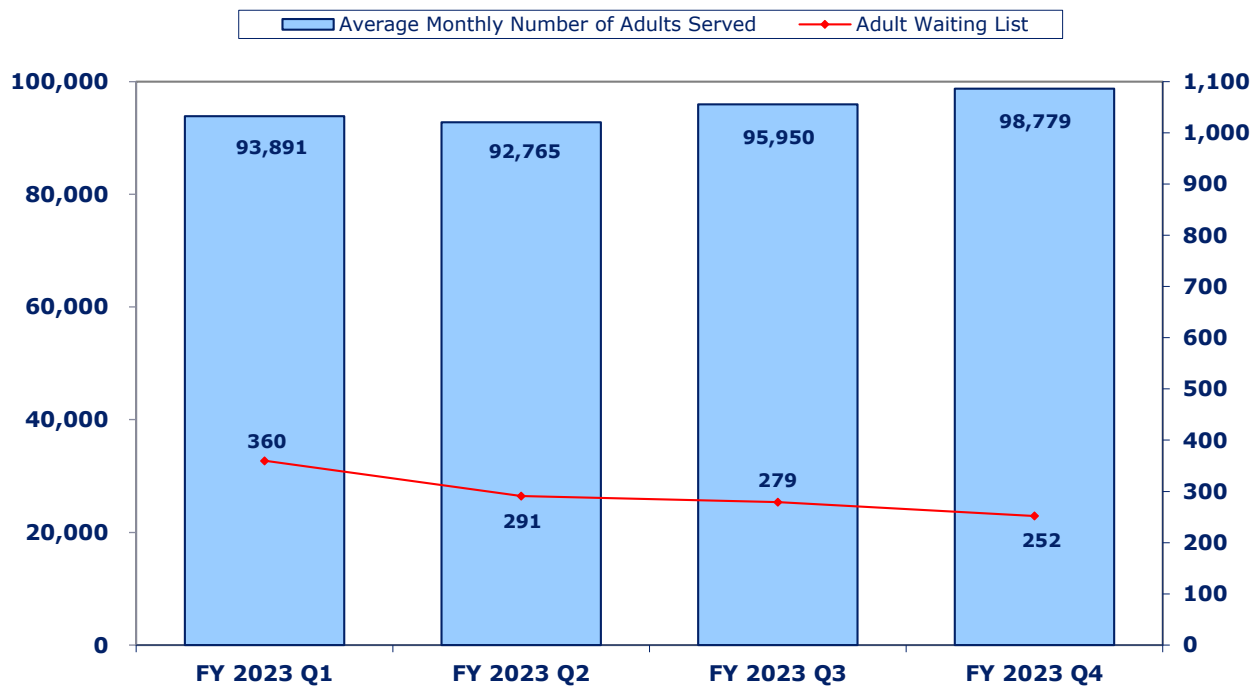
<sup>2</sup> Funds provided by the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, Pub. L. No. 116-260, 2021, which expires in 2024, and the American Rescue Plan Act, Pub. L. No. 117-2, 2021, which expires in 2025.

## 2. Adult and Children’s Community Mental Health Services Waiting List Data

### Adult Community Mental Health Services

The following graph shows the average monthly number of adults served and the adult waiting list during the most recent four quarters.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1. Adult Community Mental Health Number Served and Waiting List for FY 2023 (Q1-Q4)<sup>4</sup>**



Category	FY 2023 Q1	FY 2023 Q2	FY 2023 Q3	FY 2023 Q4
<b>Average Monthly Number of Adults Served</b>	93,891	92,765	95,950	98,779
<b>Adult Waiting List</b>	360	291	279	252

<sup>3</sup> Source: Client Assignment and Registration, September 2023.

<sup>4</sup> The figure includes the average monthly number of adults served per Legislative Budget Board performance measures.

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the required report elements for the community mental health services waiting list for adults for those local authorities that have had waiting lists.

**Table 1. Number of Adults Waiting for All Services or Removed from a Waiting List and Average Number of Days on a Waiting List by LMHA or LBHA**

<b>LMHA or LBHA</b>	<b>No. Waiting for All Services FY 23 Q3</b>	<b>No. Waiting for All Services FY 23 Q4</b>	<b>No. Removed from Waiting List FY 23 Q3</b>	<b>No. Removed from Waiting List FY 23 Q4</b>	<b>Average No. of Days on Waiting List FY 23 Q3</b>	<b>Average No. of Days on Waiting List FY 23 Q4</b>
Gulf Bend MHMR Center	45	48	0	0	173	241
Heart of Texas Region MHMR	141	152	14	13	149	122
MHMR Authority of Brazos Valley	1	0	2	0	367	0
Pecan Valley Centers	91	62	36	17	131	159
<b>Total</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>820</b>	<b>522</b>

**Table 2. Number of Underserved Adults<sup>5</sup> Waiting for Additional Services by LMHA or LBHA**

<b>LMHA or LBHA</b>	<b>FY 23 Q3</b>	<b>FY 23 Q4</b>
Anderson Cherokee Community Enrichment Services	1	1
Andrews Center	59	119
Austin Travis County Integral Care	245	298
Behavioral Health Center of Nueces County	63	60
Betty Hardwick Center	19	32
Border Region Behavioral Health Center	22	21
Camino Real Community Services	7	14
Center for Health Care Services	37	31
Center for Life Resources	60	54
Central Counties Center for MHMR Services	2	1
Denton County MHMR Center	15	14
Emergence Health Network	19	23

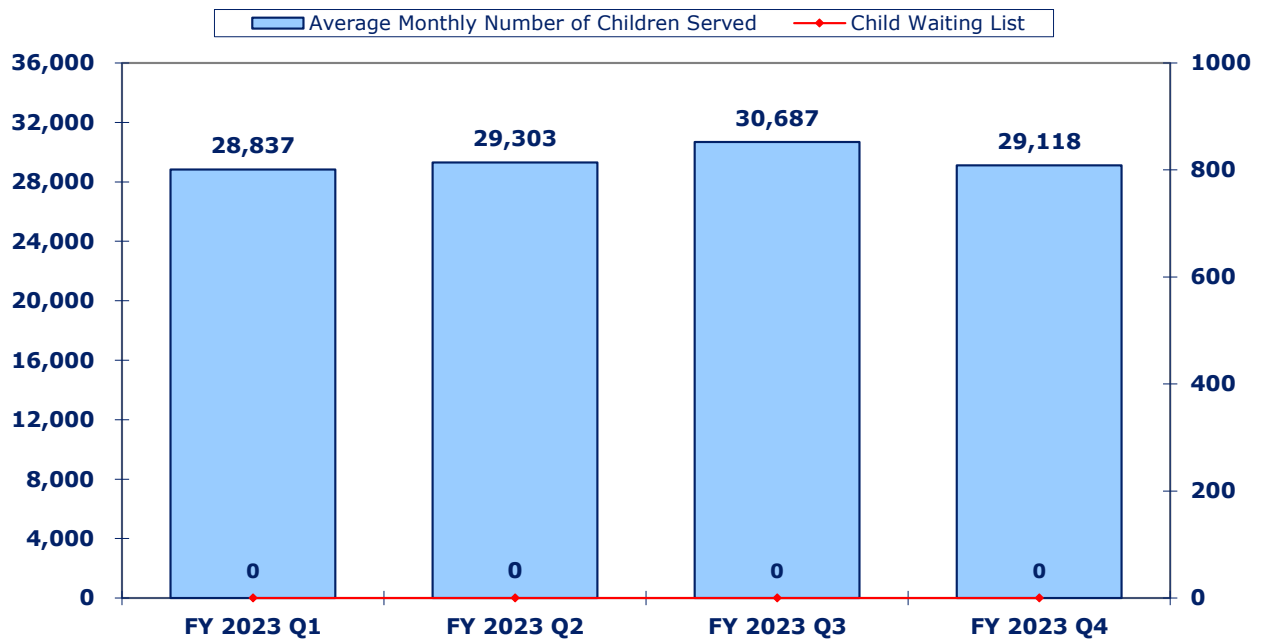
<sup>5</sup> Data does not include adults in a lower level of care due to "consumer refused" as reported by LMHA/LBHAs in Client Assignment and Registration.

<b>LMHA or LBHA</b>	<b>FY 23 Q3</b>	<b>FY 23 Q4</b>
Gulf Bend Center	1	1
Gulf Coast Center	0	4
Hill Country Community MHMR	1	0
MHMR Authority of Brazos Valley	67	82
MHMR Services for the Concho Valley	0	1
Pecan Valley Centers	77	80
Spindletop Center	28	41
StarCare Specialty Health System	165	200
Texas Panhandle MHMR	1	3
Texoma Community Center	2	9
Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare	35	33
Tropical Texas Behavioral Health	284	296
West Texas Centers for MHMR	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,213</b>	<b>1,421</b>

# Children’s Community Mental Health Services

The following figure shows the average monthly number of children served and the children’s waiting list during the most recent four quarters.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 2. Children’s Community Mental Health Number Served and Waiting List<sup>7</sup>**



Category	FY 2022 Q3	FY 2022 Q4	FY 2023 Q1	FY 2023 Q2
Average Monthly No. of Children Served	28,837	29,303	30,687	29,118
Child Waiting List	0	0	0	0

Tables 3 and 4 summarize the required report elements for the community mental health services waiting list for children. There were no children on a waiting list in quarters three or four of fiscal year 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Client Assignment and Registration, September 2023.

<sup>7</sup> The figure includes the average monthly number of children served per Legislative Budget Board performance measures.



**Table 3. Number of Children Waiting for All Services or Removed from a Waiting List and Average Number of Days on a Waiting List by LMHA or LBHA**

LMHA or LBHA	No. Waiting for All Services FY 23 Q3	No. Waiting for All Services FY 23 Q4	No. Removed from Waiting List FY 23 Q3	No. Removed from Waiting List FY 23 Q4	Average No. of Days on Waiting List FY 23 Q3	Average No. of Days on Waiting List FY 23 Q4
<b>Total</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 4. Number of Underserved Children<sup>8</sup> Waiting for Additional Services by LMHA or LBHA**

LMHA or LBHA	FY 23 Q3	FY 23 Q4
Andrews Center	2	2
Austin Travis County Integral Care	1	2
Border Region Behavioral Health Center	1	0
Burke Center	1	0
Central Plains Center	1	0
Community Healthcare	135	99
Denton County MHMR Center	0	1
Emergence Health Network	139	121
Gulf Bend Center	1	0
Gulf Coast Center	4	9
MHMR Authority of Brazos Valley	0	2
MHMR Services for the Concho Valley	8	1
Texas Panhandle MHMR	1	2
Pecan Valley Centers	14	14
Spindletop Center	111	114
Texana Center	0	1
Texoma Community Center	1	0
Tropical Texas Behavioral Health	276	222
West Texas Centers for MHMR	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>591</b>

<sup>8</sup> Data does not include children in a lower level of care due to "consumer refused" as reported by LMHA/LBHAs in Client Assignment and Registration.

## **Funds Expended to Remove People on the Waiting List**

The 2024-25 General Appropriations Act, H.B. 1, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, appropriated \$482,060,773 per fiscal year for adult community mental health services (D.2.1 Strategy) and \$122,472,998 per fiscal year for children's community mental health services (D.2.2 Strategy). HHSC's Utilization Management Program Manual requires LMHAs and LBHAs to prioritize the reduction of the waiting list as soon as service capacity allows.

In accordance with the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021, and the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration awarded Texas a combined total of \$203.4 million in Community Mental Health Services Block Grant supplemental funds, of which HHSC allocated \$78.2 million toward the Mental Health Outpatient Capacity Expansion project.<sup>9</sup> LMHAs and LBHAs continue expending the funds to address workforce shortages and serve additional people.

## **Factors Impacting Community Mental Health Waiting Lists for Adults and Children**

The LMHAs and LBHAs with waiting lists reported continued workforce shortage challenges, including recruitment and retention of behavioral health providers, particularly of Licensed Practitioners of the Healing Arts and Qualified Mental Health Professionals. These challenges are largely due to broader industry difficulties with competition of available employment opportunities, while maintaining limited funding to incentivize existing staff for retention or increase targeted recruiting efforts.

LMHAs and LBHAs across the state faced professional mental health workforce shortages, with the impact on community mental health waiting lists for rural LMHAs being greatest. The four LMHAs with reported waiting lists (not including people waiting for additional services) are rural providers in designated health

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<sup>9</sup> Source: Texas Health and Human Services. (2022). COVID-19 Supplemental Funding Primer. Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19-federal-supplemental-funding-primer-jan-2022.pdf>.

professional shortage areas, yet they continue to exceed their contracted monthly service targets, serving more people than required by their contracts with HHSC.

To minimize the adult and child waiting lists, HHSC monitors the community mental health waiting list data monthly and contacts LMHAs and LBHAs reporting waiting lists to obtain details for the cause of their waiting lists and efforts taken to reduce them. HHSC met with LMHAs who reported waiting lists and provided technical assistance addressing workforce needs and support for expanding service capacity. HHSC provided technical support by notifying LMHAs about the opportunity to utilize additional COVID-19 funding for workforce recruitment and retention, hosting a training webinar on recruitment and retention, facilitating collaboration between LMHAs and health-related institutions of higher education to establish talent pipelines, and assisted LMHAs in the application process for federal assistance in recruiting, hiring, and retaining licensed clinicians.

### 3. Forensic State Hospital Bed Waiting List Data

Tables 5 and 6 show required data elements for the forensic state hospital bed waiting lists. HHSC’s state hospital system maintains two distinct lists of pending admissions for people on forensic commitments: one for people pending admission to a non-maximum security unit and one for people pending admission to a maximum security unit.

**Table 5. Non-Maximum Security Forensic State Hospital Bed Waiting List**

Data Element	Q3	Q4
People Added to the Waiting List	637	562
People Removed from the Waiting List	709	621
People on the Waiting List	1,345	1,200
Average Number of Days People Remained on the Waiting List	288	233

**Table 6. Maximum Security Forensic State Hospital Bed Waiting List**

Data Element	Q3	Q4
People Added to the Waiting List	227	195
People Removed from the Waiting List	184	154
People on the Waiting List	1,053	968
Average Number of Days People Remained on the Waiting List	690	659

## Factors Impacting Forensic State Hospital Bed Waiting Lists

The following table shows the long and short-term factors that impact the forensic waiting list.

**Table 7. Factors Impacting Forensic State Hospital Bed Waiting Lists**

Issue	Long- or Short-term	Description
<p><b>Staffing Shortages</b></p>	<p>Long-term</p>	<p>Employee turnover in key positions significantly outpaced recruitment efforts in recent years, creating critical shortages in those positions. State hospitals have been largely impacted by the nationwide worker shortage, especially in healthcare and healthcare support. This is exacerbated by the aging workforce, many of whom retired during the pandemic, the rural placement of many facilities, and competition with the private sector, not only in healthcare, but also in entry level positions that may provide higher wages, flexibility in hours and worksite, and easier job duties.</p> <p>To combat these challenges, HHSC’s Health and Specialty Care System (HSCS) continues to prioritize recruitment and retention efforts in an ongoing effort to develop a workforce capable of serving state hospital patients and increasing capacity and number of persons served through the following key strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay raises for almost all state hospital employees,</li> <li>• Enhanced marketing efforts,</li> <li>• Applicant engagement,</li> <li>• Merit bonuses, and</li> <li>• Employee engagement</li> </ul> <p>The initial salary increase in March 2022, which impacted critical shortage staff, stabilized the state hospital filled positions. The second salary increase in February 2023, impacting almost all state hospital staff, has led to a continued increase in state hospital filled positions.</p>

<p><b>Life Safety Code/ Deferred Maintenance</b></p>	<p>Long-term</p>	<p>State hospitals are required to comply with life safety code and regulatory requirements such as ensuring the mitigation of ligature risks. State hospital beds are taken offline when mitigation and remediation efforts or maintenance is required.</p> <p>For fiscal years 2024 and 2025, HSCS was appropriated \$50,000,000 for deferred maintenance and \$14,000,000 (Senate Bill 30, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023) for emergency repairs to be used for state hospitals and state supported living centers. Currently the cost of anti-ligature remediation and other necessary repairs for the state hospitals exceeds what has been appropriated and the state hospitals experience challenges maintaining buildings with aging infrastructure and building systems, which further impacts the number of patients who can be served. HSCS has a deferred maintenance need of over \$1,000,000,000 and requests appropriations each legislative session to maintain a consistent cycle of projects to meet this need.</p>
<p><b>Planning, Coordination, and Education regarding admissions and discharges</b></p>	<p>Long-term</p>	<p>Planning, coordination, and education among local stakeholders can impact the demand for and availability of inpatient competency restoration services. Some examples include people becoming competent prior to admission to a state hospital or contracted facility, people decompensating after competency is restored but prior to their hearing, and whether there are possible alternative dispositions to inpatient hospitalization that allow the people to be served in the community.</p> <p>To address these issues, the Texas State Hospitals Office of Forensic Medicine and the Behavioral Health Services Office of Forensic Coordination (OFC) engage counties through the Jail In-Reach Learning Collaborative which aims to educate and collaborate with external stakeholders and community-based teams to support active forensic waitlist monitoring and services through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical consultation services that may assist with psychiatric stabilization;</li> <li>• Trial competency re-evaluations in the event of immediate restoration while awaiting state hospital transfer;</li> <li>• Legal education on options for alternative case dispositions; and</li> <li>• Enhanced follow-ups on patients restored to competency and returned to jail to prevent clinical decompensation and unnecessary rehospitalization.</li> </ul> <p>The OFC promotes statewide initiatives that support local communities in</p>

		<p>behavioral health and justice planning to reduce and prevent justice-involvement for people with behavioral health needs, with the downstream impact of reducing the number of people in the competency restoration process. OFC conducts local strategic planning with counties through Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) Mapping Workshops. SIM Workshops support counties in developing strategic plans that increase the use of diversion and reduce reliance on inpatient competency restoration services.</p> <p>OFC, in collaboration with the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health launched the Eliminate the Wait Campaign to reduce the wait for inpatient competency restoration. This campaign provides municipal and county behavioral health and justice stakeholders with training and technical assistance on strategies that reduce reliance on inpatient competency restoration services.</p> <p>The Texas Behavioral Health and Justice Technical Assistance Center, supported by OFC, provides statewide training and technical assistance on competency restoration processes, diversion, and other issues that impact forensics and justice.</p>
<p><b>Current Construction</b></p>	<p>Long-term</p>	<p>HSCS is ensuring current and future state hospital capacity through the following projects:</p> <p>Austin State Hospital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A replacement hospital building for Austin State Hospital is under construction. This project will not increase capacity but will provide a lasting therapeutic environment. The project is 75% complete and the estimated move in date is June 2024.</li> </ul> <p>San Antonio State Hospital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patients moved into a renovated 40-bed Alamo Hall in April 2022.</li> <li>• A replacement hospital building for the San Antonio State Hospital is under construction. This project will not increase capacity but will provide a lasting therapeutic environment. The project is 74% complete the estimated move in date is March 2024.</li> </ul> <p>Texas Behavioral Health Center at the University of Texas Southwestern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Texas Behavioral Health Center at the University of Texas Southwestern will be a new 296-bed inpatient psychiatric hospital with 200</li> </ul>

		<p>adult beds and 96 pediatric beds. The adult unit is under construction with move in estimated for July 2025, and the pediatric unit is in the planning phase with move in estimated for January 2026.</p> <p>The legislature also made appropriations under the General Appropriations Act and Senate Bill 30 for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 to construct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 200 bed replacement hospital for North Texas State Hospital Wichita Falls Campus</li><li>• 250 bed replacement hospital for Terrell State Hospital</li><li>• 75 bed hospital in Amarillo</li><li>• 50 bed maximum security hospital in Lubbock</li><li>• 50 bed expansion of El Paso Psychiatric Center</li><li>• 50 bed maximum security expansion of Rio Grande State Center</li></ul> <p>In addition, the legislature appropriated funds to contract for 150 additional competency restoration beds and grants for private construction of inpatient beds to include forensic beds in the Rio Grande Valley, Victoria County, Montgomery County and Beaumont.</p>
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## List of Acronyms

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Full Name</b>
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
FY	Fiscal Year
H.B.	House Bill
HHSC	Health and Human Services Commission
HSCS	Health and Specialty Care System
LBHA	Local Behavioral Health Authority
LMHA	Local Mental Health Authority
OFC	Office of Forensic Coordination