



Report on Outcomes of the Behavioral Health Partnership Program

**As Required by
Texas Education Code,
Section 8.158(b)**

Texas Health and Human Services

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TEXAS

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Executive Summary

The Texas Education Code (TEC), Section 8.152¹ 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 districts² located in the region served by a regional education service center (ESC) and in which the LMHA or LBHA provides services.

Senate Bill (S.B.) 26, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023 amended TEC, Section 8.152(c) to allow LMHAs and LBHAs, unable to employ an NPMHP, to request a waiver from the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to employ a licensed master social worker or a licensed professional counselor associate to fulfill the duties of an NPMHP. Since additional types of professionals can be employed to fulfill the NPMHP role, HHSC has functionally retitled the program to the Behavioral Health Partnership Program (BHPP) and the NPMHP title to BHPP liaison. This title includes both NPMHPs and the other professionals hired to fulfill this role under the waiver process discussed below.

HHSC contracts with 20 LMHAs and LBHAs to hire a BHPP liaison and requires each to establish a Memorandum of Understanding with their respective ESCs. Pursuant to Section 8.158(a), LMHAs must report the outcomes for school districts and students resulting from services provided by the BHPP liaison to HHSC. HHSC also requires LBHAs to report the same outcomes. This report includes the type and number of activities conducted by the BHPP liaison, including the total number of people trained in mental health and substance use and misuse prevention.

Significant findings of the 2024 HHSC annual report³ include:

- 1,830: Number of mental health and substance use prevention resources shared by BHPPs, including best practices and research-based practices.
- 52,165: Number of initiatives facilitated by BHPPs addressing mental health and substance use and misuse prevention.
- 1,886: Number of trainings provided by BHPPs on a variety of topics, including Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), grief and trauma, trauma and grief

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

² For purposes of this report, the term "school districts" includes charter schools.

³ Data compiled from September 2023 through August 2024

for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and substance use and misuse prevention and intervention.

1. Introduction

The goal of the BHPP is to support children’s mental health by providing education and training for ESC and school district personnel on resources and information available for addressing issues relating to mental health, trauma and grief, and substance use and misuse prevention. The BHPP achieves outcomes for districts and students by identifying and sharing resources, increasing awareness, supporting related initiatives, and building skills and effective strategies across members of the larger school community. The LMHA, LBHA, and ESCs build partnerships to support BHPP activities that leverage the LMHA’s or LBHA’s expertise in mental health and substance use disorder services, and the ESC’s expertise in supporting school districts, thereby positioning the BHPP liaison to serve as an effective resource to the ESC’s school community by providing resource information and training for school personnel, families, and children.

In fiscal year 2024, BHPP liaisons worked collaboratively with their regional ESC and served as a resource for the ESCs and school district personnel by:

- Building awareness and knowledge of mental health and co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders; and
- Assisting personnel with implementing initiatives related to mental health and/or substance use under state law or agency rules, the applicable Memorandum of Understanding, and related programs.

BHPP liaisons work collaboratively with their regional ESC and serve as a resource for the ESCs and school district personnel by 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, LBHA, or HHSC administers to support school districts, students, and families.

BHPP liaisons also work collaboratively to facilitate monthly training opportunities on:

- MHFA;
- 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, and misuse of prescription medication.

HHSC requires LMHAs and LBHAs to submit annual reports documenting the resources, training, community outreach provided by the BHPP liaison, and outcomes from services provided by BHPP liaisons.

HHSC compiles the information provided by LMHAs and LBHAs to produce a comprehensive report for submission to the Texas Legislature by January 31 of each calendar year. Per TEC, Section 8.158, HHSC also submits its annual report to the Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health Services established under the TEC, Section 38.302⁴.

⁴<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.38.htm#38.302>

2. Background

The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to an increased need in the state for student-focused, mental health care strategies. The particular needs of school communities, which differ regionally, are in part met by the BHPP.

Establishing a formal collaboration among local community partners maximizes each entity's expertise in providing resources to support school personnel and school communities, supporting the continued mental health and well-being of Texas children.

Examples of collaborative efforts during fiscal year 2024 include:

- HHSC allocated and distributed \$2.3 million dollars of general revenue across the participating LMHAs and LBHAs that employ the new full-time employee, to cover that cost and the recovery fee to the ESC.
- The ESCs provided BHPP liaisons with a dedicated workspace to carry out their professional duties and increase their opportunities for joint efforts in outreach and service delivery to school communities.

3. Program Overview

The BHPP creates opportunities to raise school districts’ and school communities’ awareness and knowledge and develop and increase their skills related to mental health and substance use and misuse prevention and intervention. These training opportunities are provided through effective collaborations among LMHAs, LBHAs, and ESCs.

During fiscal year 2024, HHSC supported LMHAs, LBHAs, ESCs, and BHPP liaisons by providing technical assistance and training and creating collaboration opportunities across systems. For example, HHSC hosted regular calls for the BHPP liaisons and invited participation by the employing LMHA or LBHA, ESC leadership, and the Texas Education Agency (TEA). HHSC, in collaboration with TEA, also adopted rules in [Texas Administrative Code, Title 26, Chapter 307, Subchapter F](#) effective June 2024 to implement the BHPP as required by S.B. 26.

Table 1 below lists the 20 LMHAs and LBHAs that employed a BHPP liaison in fiscal year 2024.⁵

Table 1. LMHA and LBHA Employers of a BHPP Liaison

No.	LMHA or LBHA	ESC Region
1	Tropical Texas Behavioral Health	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

⁵ S.B. 26 requires participation by the LMHA or LBHA operating primarily in the county where the specific ESC is located.

No.	LMHA or LBHA	ESC Region
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 Behavioral Health Network	12
13	Integral Care	13
14	Betty Hardwick Center	14
15	My Health My Resources Concho Valley	15
16	Texas Panhandle Centers	16
17	StarCare Specialty Health System	17
18	PermianCare	18
19	Emergence Health Network	19
20	Center for Health Care Services	20

4. Fiscal Year 2024 Program Implementation

During fiscal year 2024, 17 of the 20 contracted LMHAs and LBHAs employed a BHPP liaison. Most of the 17 BHPP liaisons worked in urban areas or communities consisting of a mix of rural and urban populations within the ESC region.

Table 2 below summarizes the BHPP liaisons' activities and outcomes reported for September 1, 2023, through August 31, 2024.

Table 2. BHPP Liaison Activities Reported for Fiscal Year 2024

Activity	Outcome
Shared mental health and substance use prevention resources	1,830 initiatives
Number of times mental health and substance use, and misuse resources were shared with school districts	52,165 times
Number of MHFA training events and number of community members trained	464 events 7,716 members trained
Number of training events and number of community members trained on the effect of grief and trauma	907 events 34,345 members trained
Number of training events and number of community members trained in substance use prevention and intervention	495 events 14,884 members trained
Number of school districts "impacted" by a BHPP (i.e., received BHPP resources)	1,202 school districts

During fiscal year 2024, BHPP liaisons:

- Collaborated with ESC Region 12 to develop and present on topics related to trauma and grief including topics that covered child abuse, family and dating violence, and sex trafficking;
- Facilitated a session at the “Empowering Perceptions Conference” hosted by the Special Education Department at ESC Region 19;
- Disseminated monthly newsletters to school personnel to provide information about mental health resources;
- Distributed resource information to communities affected by disaster or traumatic events;
- Presented at the Association for Compensatory Educators of Texas Conference, providing information about evidence-based resources and the role of the BHPP liaison to educators from across the state; and
- Presented at counselor conferences, school safety summits, stakeholder conferences, and community resource symposiums.

BHPP liaisons continued to establish relationships and provided services to their assigned school districts. Some successes of note for BHPP liaisons in fiscal year 2024 include:

- Region 14: in collaboration with the ESC, the BHPP liaison delivered four presentations to Stamford ISD faculty and students.
- Region 12: the BHPP liaison distributed over 75,000 Red Ribbon Week wristbands to districts for substance use awareness.
- Region 6: the New Waverly ISD chose the BHPP liaison’s presentation for students on fentanyl education and suicide prevention over two other curriculums.
- Region 19: the BHPP liaison collaborated with the University of Texas at El Paso’s Early Childhood Educators Learning Academy and the Early Childhood Educators Professional Development Conference to provide different certifications (including MHFA, Educator Wellness, and Trauma Informed Classrooms and Campuses) throughout the fiscal year.

The BHPP faced barriers during program implementation, including retention challenges for certain LMHAs and LBHAs. Three LMHAs were unsuccessful in hiring or retaining a BHPP in fiscal year 2023 due to significant workforce shortages.

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, such as

increasing salaries, reposting the position multiple times, and intensifying and expanding their recruitment efforts.

Beginning in fiscal year 2024, HHSC established a waiver process enabling LMHAs and LBHAs to request HHSC approval to hire a licensed master social worker or a licensed professional counselor associate to serve as a BHPP liaison. Two LMHAs historically unable to hire the needed staff requested and received approval of the waiver.

5. Conclusion

The BHPP creates opportunities to raise awareness, increase knowledge, and build skills related to mental health, substance use and misuse prevention, and intervention for school districts and school communities through effective collaborations among LMHAs, LBHAs, and ESCs.

The BHPP liaisons work with their local school districts to build relationships by sharing information, supporting initiatives, and providing necessary trainings to address the local community's needs. In fiscal year 2024, LMHAs, LBHAs, ESCs, and BHPP liaisons continued their efforts to establish collaborative relationships and to provide timely and responsive trainings and outreach.

HHSC will continue supporting BHPP liaisons as they provide services to improve the safety, mental health, and substance use and misuse needs of school communities, which remain a priority for Texas. The continued partnerships among LMHAs, LBHAs, ESCs, local school districts, TEA, and HHSC will provide ongoing support to continue building the knowledge and skills to maintain strong, supportive schools and local communities across Texas.

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
BHPP	Behavioral Health Partnership Program
ESC	Education Service Center
HHSC	Health and Human Services Commission
LBHA	Local Behavioral Health Authority
LMHA	Local Mental Health Authority
MHFA	Mental Health First Aid
NPMHP	Non-Physician Mental Health Professional
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TEC	Texas Education Code