



# **Report on Outcomes of the Non-Physician Mental Health Professionals**

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**As Required by  
House Bill 19, 86th Legislature,  
Regular Session, 2019**

**Health and Human Services**

**Commission**

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**TEXAS**  
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## Executive Summary

House Bill (H.B.) 19, 86th Legislature, Regular Session, 2019, amended the Texas Education Code to add Chapter 8, Subchapter E which directs Local Mental Health Authorities/Local Behavioral Health Authorities (LMHAs/LBHAs) to employ a non-physician mental health professional (NPMHP). 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 the LMHA/LBHA 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 H.B. 19. 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 2020<sup>1</sup> annual report include:

- The number of times mental health and substance use prevention resources, including best practices and research-based practices were shared. This occurred 350 times.
- The number of initiatives facilitated addressing mental health and substance use and misuse prevention. This occurred 104 times.
- The number of trainings provided including Mental Health First Aid, grief and trauma and substance use and misuse prevention and intervention. There were 61 trainings provided.

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<sup>1</sup>The data provided for this report is from January 1, 2020 – October 31, 2020.

# 1. Introduction

The overall goal of H.B. 19 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 communities. H.B. 19 requires LMHAs/LBHAs and ESCs to collaborate to hire and support NPHMPs to deliver certain training and education requirements for school personnel, families, and children.

Pursuant to Education Code Section 8.155, an NPMHP employed under Section 8.152, to the greatest extent possible, work collaboratively with the regional ESC and shall act as a resource for the center and school district personnel by:

- Helping personnel gain awareness and a better understanding of mental health and co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders;
- Assisting personnel to implement initiatives related to mental health or substance use under state law or agency rules, interagency MOUs, and related programs;
- Ensuring personnel are aware of:
  - ▶ The list of recommended best practice-based programs and research-based practices developed under Section 161.325, Health and Safety 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 a LMHA 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 or HHSC to support school districts, students, and families;
- Facilitating monthly mental health first aid trainings;
- Facilitating monthly trainings regarding the effects of grief and trauma and providing support to children with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) who suffer from grief or trauma; and
- Facilitating monthly trainings on prevention and intervention programs that have been shown to be effective in helping students cope with pressures to:
  - ▶ Use alcohol, cigarettes, or illegal drugs; or
  - ▶ Misuse prescription drugs.

H.B. 19 also enacted Education Code, Section 8.158(a), which requires LMHAs to submit annual reports to HHSC regarding outcomes from services provided by NPMHPs. Education Code, 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 trainings and community outreach provided by the NPMHP.

Challenges impacting program implementation in 2020 include workforce shortages, training and transportation for the NPMHPs, and logistical constraints associated with health and safety precautions related to COVID-19. The LMHA/LBHAs, ESCs and HHSC are working together to address these challenges to support program implementation and have identified recommendations to further enhance implementation.

## 2. Background

Nationally, more than two-thirds of children have experienced at least one traumatic event by age 16.<sup>2</sup> In Texas, nearly 60 percent of secondary students reported having tried alcohol, and approximately 20 percent reported having tried tobacco, marijuana, or another illicit drug.<sup>3</sup>

Schools play an important role in providing early intervention to address the impact of trauma and substance use and misuse. Equipping school personnel with the information and tools they need can help ensure students get the help they need to address these challenges.

H.B. 19 enacted Education Code, Chapter 8, Subchapter E, regarding Mental Health and Substance Use Resources for School District Personnel, which 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. Section 8.153(a) specifically requires an ESC to provide an NPMHP with a work space to carry out professional duties. This increases opportunities for joint efforts in outreach and service delivery to school communities.

The ESCs' role is to build capacity of the Texas public education system to enable all students to achieve their full potential, while the LMHAs/LBHAs provide community mental health services. The purpose 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.

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<sup>2</sup> Copeland, W.E., Keeler G., Angold, A., & Costello, E.J. (2007). Traumatic Events and Posttraumatic Stress in Childhood. *Archives of General Psychiatry*. 64(5), 577-584.

<sup>3</sup> <https://texasschoolsurvey.org/>

### 3. Program Overview

To implement H.B. 19, HHSC selected the following 20 LMHAs/LBHAs to serve as employers of an 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: Behavioral Health Center of Nueces County
- ESC Region 3: Gulf Bend Center
- ESC Region 4: The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD
- ESC Region 5: Spindletop Center
- ESC Region 6: Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare
- ESC Region 7: Community Healthcore
- ESC Region 8: Lakes Regional MHMR Center
- ESC Region 9: Helen Farabee Centers
- ESC Region 10: North Texas Behavioral Health Authority
- ESC Region 11: My Health My Resources (MHMR) of Tarrant County
- ESC Region 12: Heart of Texas Region MHMR Center
- ESC Region 13: Austin Travis County Integral Care
- ESC Region 14: Betty Hardwick Center
- ESC Region 15: MHMR 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 in 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 stipulated in the bill.

Each employing LMHA/LBHA entered into an MOU with the 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 area differs slightly in the structure of program implementation, enabling the program to be responsive to the needs of the individual school communities. HHSC hosts a monthly technical assistance call for NPMHPs focusing on specific issues

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



## 4. 2020 Implementation

As of October 31, 2020, LMHAs/LBHAs have employed 11 NPMHPs (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. NPMHPs are based at the ESC to increase opportunities for joint efforts in outreach and service delivery to school communities.

NPMHPs provided the following outcomes for January 1, 2020 through October 31, 2020:

- The number of times mental health and substance use prevention resources, including best practices and research-based practices, were shared which occurred 350 times;
- The number of initiatives facilitated addressing mental health and substance use and misuse prevention which totaled 104;
- The number of community members trained in Mental Health First Aid which totaled 211 in 16 trainings;
- The number of community members trained on the effect grief and trauma which totaled 1,587 in 39 trainings; and
- The number of community members trained in substance use prevention and intervention which totaled 149 in 6 trainings.

Program implementation of H.B. 19 during the COVID-19 pandemic caused additional challenges that affected the outcomes including workforce shortages and adaptation to virtual platforms. NPMHPs focused efforts on outreach to school personnel using virtual platforms to identify areas of need related to school staff well-being. NPMHPs collaborated with the ESCs to provide virtual training, which delayed the implementation of the timeline until later in the year.

A second delay to H.B. 19 implementation was the licensure requirement associated with an NPMHP. According to Health and Safety Code, Section 571.003, , a NPMHP must be a psychologist licensed to practice; a registered nurse with a master's or doctoral degree in psychiatric nursing; a licensed clinical social worker; a licensed professional counselor licensed to practice in this state; or a licensed marriage and family therapist licensed to practice. In various areas across Texas with a reported workforce shortage, the applicant pool for an NPMHP was minimal.

An additional challenge to H.B. 19 program implementation includes providing training and community outreach to address both mental health and substance use issues within the ESC regions. ESC catchment areas can cover large areas ranging from 10,700 square miles to 37,500 square miles<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/other-services/education-service-centers/education-service-centers-map>

## 5. Conclusion

H.B. 19 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 work 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 is exemplified by NPMHPs and ESCs establishing working relationships, and immediate implementation of trainings and outreach. The NPMHPs provided training to school personnel during the COVID-19 crisis.

HHSC will provide ongoing support to the NPMHPs as the needs of school communities remain a priority for Texas. To mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, HHSC will explore potential remedies with input from LMHAs/LBHAs and ESCs. 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 school and local communities across Texas.

## **List of Acronyms**

Acronym	Full Name
ESC	Education Service Center
H. B.	House Bill
HHSC	Health and Human Services Commission
IDD	Intellectual and Developmental Disability
LBHA	Local Behavioral Health Authority
LMHA	Local Mental Health Authority
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NPMHP	Non-Physician Mental Health Professional

## **Appendix A.**

List of LMHA/LBHAs that have hired as of October 31, 2020:

- ESC Region 1 - Tropical Texas Behavioral Health
- ESC Region 3 - Gulf Bend Center
- ESC Region 4 - The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD
- ESC Region 6 - Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare
- ESC Region 9 - Helen Farabee Centers
- ESC Region 10 - North Texas Behavioral Health Authority
- ESC Region 11 - My Health My Resources (MHMR) of Tarrant County
- ESC Region 12 - Heart of Texas Region MHMR Center
- ESC Region 13 - Austin Travis County Integral Care
- ESC Region 14 - Betty Hardwick Center
- ESC Region 18 - PermianCare