



Department of State Health Services
Legislative Appropriations Request Public Hearing
April 29, 2010

Texans Care for Children is a statewide nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated exclusively to the children of Texas. We look to our broad base of community-based experts—our partners and 220 members throughout the state who together represent thousands of Texas children—to inform our work and help us in developing our legislative agenda. We co-convene the Texas Children’s Mental Health Forum in conjunction with the Texas Health Institute and support from the Hogg Foundation, facilitate the Infant Health Alliance, and serve on the steering committee of Partnership for a Healthy Texas: Conquering Obesity. Our areas of focus are: family economic security; infant, child and maternal health; children’s mental health; child welfare; and juvenile justice and at-risk youth.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input as the Department formulates its budget request to the 82nd Texas Legislature. Knowing that the Legislature will face a deficit in the FY 2012-2013 budget, Texans Care for Children is working with other human service organizations to support a balanced budget approach with revenue measures that are balanced, adequate, and fair.

The following recommendations arise from our work in coalition with many partners from across the state. We submit them to you today in recognition that they have a fiscal impact on DSHS, sometimes in conjunction with other programs within the HHSC enterprise, and request that the Department accommodate them in its budget request to the Legislature:

Improve Children’s Mental Health Workforce Capacity Effectiveness:

- Provide funding to local mental health authorities to support training of workforce in evidence-based practices.
- Investigate the use of tele-health and telecommunication services to provide mental health services and supports to children and youth.
- Make financial incentive programs (such as training stipends, tuition assistance, and loan repayment programs) available to more mental health professionals.
- Provide funding to support child psychiatric residency training programs through state psychiatric facilities.

- Identify and evaluate promising practices in addressing children’s mental health workforce needs, and expand strategies shown to increase children’s access to quality mental health services and supports statewide.

Children’s Access to Mental Health Services:

- Maintain current funding levels for community mental health services and mental health hospital beds for children and youth.
- Include provisions to ensure children and youth receive an equitable proportion of funding, including funding for crisis and on-going services, and jail diversion efforts.
- Request funding to eliminate waitlists for children and adolescent community mental health services.

Child Obesity:

- Expand funding for comprehensive community initiatives to prevent obesity.
- Fully fund the Texas School Health Network as a critical component of the state’s school health and obesity prevention infrastructure.

Infant Health:

- Expand availability of DSHS substance abuse Pregnant Post Partum Intervention Programs
- Encourage additional hospital reporting and ensure sufficient capacity to collect data on:
 - non-medically indicated Cesarean section deliveries and pregnancy induction before 39 weeks.
 - cause of re-hospitalization of preterm infants in the first six months of life.
- Promote a continuum of care for premature infants, including discharge planning and follow up care.

We are happy to talk further with your staff in the development of budget priorities and are happy to provide additional information about any of our recommendations.

Respectfully,
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