



**HB 620:  
Children's Behavioral Health Council**

House Committee on Public Health  
March 10, 2009

Chairwoman Kolkhorst and members of the Committee, I am Josette Saxton of Texans Care For Children. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony today. 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 who together represent thousands of Texas children—to inform our work and help us in developing our legislative agenda. We also co-facilitate the Texas Children's Mental Health Forum. 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.

**SYSTEMS OF CARE MODEL –**

***Best Practice in Serving Children with Serious Emotional Disturbance***

The Texas Integrated Funding Initiative (TIFI) assists communities in implementing a systems of care approach to address the complex needs of children with serious emotional disturbance and their families, using a wraparound planning process that coordinates the delivery of an array of services from multiple agencies. Wraparound teams, consisting of service professionals, youth and family, and other members who the family identifies as being important in the youth's life, develop an individualized service plan that is youth-and family driven, strengths-based and culturally competent, prioritizing the youth and family perspectives and needs. This youth and family focus has been shown to both improve child and family outcomes as well as reduce the service costs to the state. The Legislative Budget Board estimates a costs savings to the state of as much as \$35.7 million by reducing psychiatric hospitalizations of children, with additional cost-savings to be realized by reducing residential treatment center stays and decreasing involvement with the juvenile justice system.<sup>iv</sup>

- Nearly 1 in 10 children has a serious emotional disturbance.<sup>i</sup>
- Only 18 percent of children who were potentially eligible for public mental health services received them from the state in 2007.<sup>ii</sup>
- Systems of care approach is associated with improved outcomes for youth and increased cost-savings to the state.<sup>iii</sup>

## Community-Based Services vs. Institutional & Residential Services

Children’s Behavioral Health Services Spending by Service Delivery Setting <sup>v</sup>  
(FY 2005)<sup>vi</sup>

	Cost Per Child/Youth	Children/Youth Served	Annualized Cost
Community Services <sup>vii</sup>	\$885	402,090	\$357 million
Institutional & Residential Services	\$8,759	20,823	\$182 million

### **LACK OF COORDINATION IN PROVIDING CHILDREN WITH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

For systems of care to work – providing optimal child outcomes and public returns on investment - coordination of services and flexible funding are necessary. Yet, there is no single lead agency or oversight body in Texas to coordinate the work of the nine state agencies and various local entities that provide mental health services and funding to children and youth in the state. This lack of coordination and accountability produces significant challenges to statewide tracking of spending on mental health services. It also leaves a vacuum in agency leadership to establish priorities, assess potential gaps and duplications in services, and coordinate policies specific to children’s mental health services.

**HB 620 helps address this lack of coordination in providing mental health services to children by creating the Children’s Behavioral Health Council, charged with providing a coordinated, interagency approach to the development and delivery of behavioral health services to children.** The Council would assume the responsibilities of the Texas Integrated Funding Initiative and expand its charge. The Council’s responsibilities would include:

- Develop and implement coordinated state policies to improve children’s behavioral health
- Develop a coordinated system for planning and budgeting that establishes priorities and strategies for coordinated service delivery
- Develop a coordinated system to track and report spending on children’s behavioral health services
- Administer state grants to develop local systems of care services
- Develop a plan to support statewide expansion of local systems of care services as well as provide technical assistance and training to local providers
- Design an integrated funding structure for providing children’s behavioral health services, including the use of blended or braided funding arrangements
- Assess the provision of behavioral health services to children to eliminate duplication of efforts and identify opportunities to consolidate those efforts.

### **TEXANS CARE FOR CHILDREN SUPPORTS HB 620**

HB 620 would help ensure all state agencies serving children’s behavioral health needs coordinate their services and increase their accountability to the public and stakeholders.

HB 620 would assist the state in expanding systems of care into more communities, enabling the state to provide more children with serious emotional disturbances access to this best practice approach and to reap the cost-savings associated with it.

***The staff-level coordination called for in HB 620 complements Texans Care For Children’s priority recommendation to have executive- level leadership of all child-serving agencies engage in strategic planning to improve the coordination of and accountability for all services provided to children and youth - including health, education, mental health, child welfare, and juvenile justice services.***

**Texans Care For Children respectfully urges the committee to report HB 620 favorably.**

Thank you again for your time and commitment. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or the staff of Texans Care For Children at 512.473.2274.

Respectfully,

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<sup>i</sup> The President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. 2003. Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America.

<sup>ii</sup> Department of State Health Services. 2007. E-mail correspondence with Amanda Broden.

<sup>iii</sup> The President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. 2003. Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America.

<sup>iv</sup> Legislative Budget Board. (LBB) 2007. *Texas State Government Effectiveness and Efficiency Report*

<sup>v</sup> Data includes HHSC, DSHS, DFPS, DARS, DADS, TDCJ, TJPC, TYC. Does not include data from TEA, which was unavailable.

<sup>vi</sup> Legislative Budget Board. (LBB) 2007. *Texas State Government Effectiveness and Efficiency Report*. Figure 5.

<sup>vii</sup> Total for community services includes Medicaid funded services provided to children placed in institutional settings by DFPS.