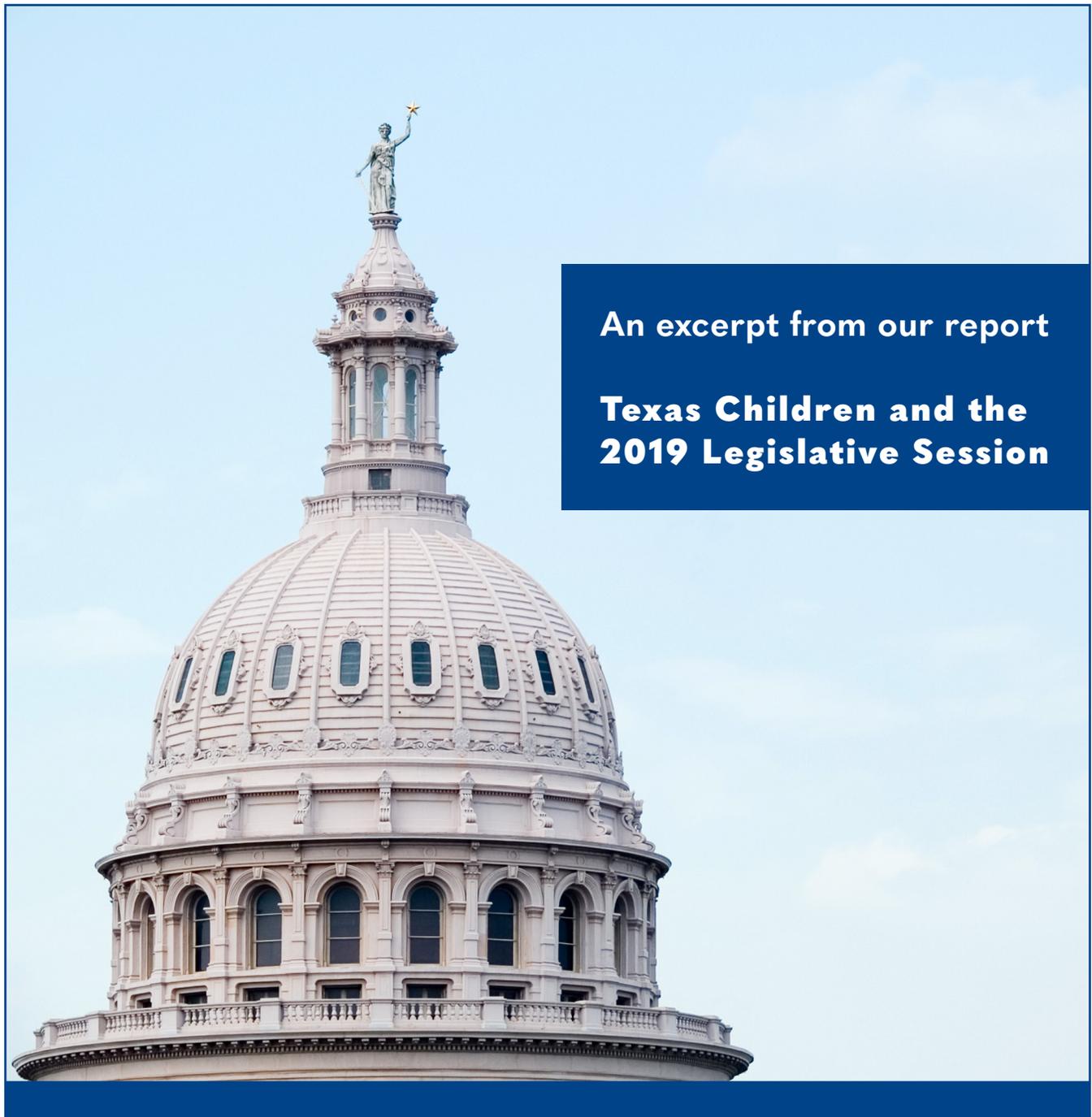


Review of

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Policy Progress During the 2019 Texas Legislative Session



An excerpt from our report

**Texas Children and the
2019 Legislative Session**

Review of Children’s Mental Health Policy Progress During the 2019 Texas Legislative Session

After the Governor named school safety and children’s mental health a priority issue following the tragic 2018 shooting at Santa Fe High School, the Legislature took significant action during the 2019 session to ensure schools, doctors, and mental health providers are better equipped to prevent and address social, emotional, and mental health challenges among Texas children. Working closely with Texans Care for Children, lawmakers passed multiple measures to ensure schools have better guidance on implementing student mental health strategies. The Legislature also passed portions of a high-profile bill to expand children’s access to psychiatric services in our communities and legislation that our staff proposed to address the rising youth suicide rate in Texas. Unfortunately, the final state budget excluded student mental health funding for the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and suicide prevention funding that was included in the House version of the budget bill.

After years of Texans Care for Children and other advocates laying the groundwork to improve the availability of **school-based supports for student mental health**, the Legislature passed HB 18 and HB 19, two bills that ensure schools are better equipped to address a range of social, emotional, and behavior challenges that interfere with students’ health and education on a daily basis. HB 18 establishes training, policy, and planning requirements for school districts related to student mental health, the use of trauma-informed practices, and helping

students develop social and emotional skills and learn about mental health. Thanks to HB 19, non-physician mental health professionals will be available as a dedicated resource to help schools meet these new requirements. Employed by local mental health authorities but working at each of the 20 education service centers (ESCs) in the state, they will provide school personnel with training and consultation services on using effective practices related to student mental health, trauma-informed practice, and substance use.

Additionally, the omnibus school safety bill passed by the Legislature, SB 11, requires districts to establish safe and supportive school programs that use multilevel systems of supports to address school climate, social and emotional development, and behavioral and mental health among students — a recommendation in our 2017 report on student mental health. SB 11 also requires school districts to adopt policies to implement trauma-informed practices and staff training, aligning with recommendations from our 2019 policy brief on trauma-informed schools. SB 11 also includes provisions from HB 4414, legislation that Texans Care for Children helped develop and champion. Those provisions require TEA to develop inventories of resources that districts can use to develop safe and supportive school programs and a statewide plan to ensure schools are safe and supportive and address student mental health.



The Legislature failed to provide dedicated funding to TEA or school districts to support student mental health. However, SB 11 directs TEA to provide school districts a per-student allotment (estimated to be approximately \$10 per student) to support school safety activities, which can be used for some mental health strategies as well as “hardening” strategies such as the hiring of school police officers. The Legislature appropriated \$100 million in a supplemental budget bill dedicated strictly to fund school “hardening” strategies.

Texans Care for Children and our partners also worked to craft and successfully pass two measures to address **suicide prevention strategies in schools and beyond** through SB 11 and other legislation. Provisions of SB 1390 included in SB 11 will promote schools’ use of comprehensive suicide prevention strategies, including responding to suicide attempts or deaths in ways that help prevent further suicidal behaviors. Additionally, HB 1390 requires state agencies to focus attention and planning on reducing suicide rates among all Texans. While the Texas House passed a budget amendment to fund suicide prevention efforts, budget writers unfortunately stripped

the amendment out of the final version of the budget.

A high profile bill on **psychiatric treatment and research**, SB 10, was blocked late in session by a House member, but legislators then attached the children-specific parts of the bill to SB 11. These provisions establish a consortium charged with leveraging health science and medical schools to provide pediatricians, primary care providers, and community mental health providers with psychiatric consultation services, training opportunities, and telehealth programs to increase children’s access to mental health treatment. Meanwhile, HB 10, which would have established the Texas Mental and Behavioral Health Research Institute, did not pass.

State leaders deserve credit for the progress they made on children’s mental health this session. While there is much more work for the state to do, it is also time for local communities to ensure that school districts maximize new funding provided by school finance reforms to implement effective student mental health strategies on their campuses.

Outcomes for Key Children's Mental Health Legislation

PASSED

Support Children's Mental Health in the Community

HB 3980 by Rep. Hunter

Similar bill: SB 1176 by Sen. Menéndez

This bill requires a report on suicide rates across the lifespan, state agencies' activities related to suicide, and policy recommendations to reduce suicide rates among all Texans.

SB 10 by Sen. Nelson

Passed as an amendment to SB 11

This bill establishes the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium to increase children's access to mental health care. The bill leverages health science and medical schools within the state to provide psychiatric consultation services and training opportunities to pediatricians and primary care providers; expand the use of telehealth and telemedicine programs to provide children with mental health care services; and expand the child psychiatry workforce in the state.

SB 1177 by Sen. Menéndez

This bill provides Medicaid managed care organizations (MCOs) with the flexibility to cover home- or community-based services "in lieu of" more restrictive mental health services when they are medically appropriate, evidence-based, and with patient consent.

Support Children's Mental Health in School

HB 18 by Rep. Price

This omnibus student mental health bill includes multiple strategies aimed at increasing the capacity of school districts and school personnel to support the mental health and development of students, including training, policy, and planning requirements related to student mental health, the use of trauma-informed practices, social and emotional skill development, and comprehensive suicide prevention.

Support Children's Mental Health in School (continued)

HB 19 by Rep. Price

This bill directs local mental health authorities (LMHAs) to provide a mental health professional at each regional education service center (ESC) to serve as a resource to school districts and school personnel, offering training and consultation services on using effective practices to address student mental health within the school environment.

HB 4414 by Rep. Allison

Passed as an amendment to SB 11
Similar bill: SB 1563 by Sen. Lucio

This bill requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and regional ESCs to develop statewide and regional inventories of resources schools can consider using to support student mental health and create safe and supporting learning environments. The bill also requires TEA to develop a statewide plan for student mental health, including legislative recommendations, to ensure all students have access to mental health resources.

SB 11 by Sen. Taylor

This omnibus school safety bill includes several provisions that address safe and supportive school climates, including the use of trauma-informed practices, multi-tiered systems of student support, and suicide prevention. The bill also provides school districts with an annual "school safety" funding allotment to support a range of approved safety and security activities, which schools can use to support student mental health and suicide prevention strategies.

SB 1390 by Sen. Menéndez

Passed as an amendment to SB 11 and HB 18

This bill promotes comprehensive suicide prevention strategies in school, including requiring school districts to have plans in place on how they will respond to suicide attempts or deaths within a school community that will help prevent further suicidal behaviors.

Impact Children

HB 906 by Rep. S. Thompson

This bill establishes a task force to study and evaluate state-funded mental health services and trainings provided at school districts.

DID NOT PASS

Support Children's Mental Health in the Community

HB 10 by Rep. S. Thompson	This bill would have established the Texas Mental and Behavioral Health Research Institute focusing on child and adolescent behavioral health needs and funds research on behavioral health issues.
HB 501 by Rep. S. Thompson	This bill would have required group health benefit plans to provide coverage for serious emotional disturbance in children and ensure children receive the same mental health coverage and parity protections as adults.
HB 2080 by Rep. Coleman	This bill would have created a Medicaid benefit for children with serious emotional disturbance for family partner peer support services provided by certified family partners.

Support Children's Mental Health in School

HB 1335 by Rep. Price Similar bill: SB 2003 by Sen. Whitmire	This bill would have created a grant program for public school districts seeking to establish school-based behavioral health centers.
HB 2511 by Rep. Allen	This bill would have required campus improvement plans to include strategies to promote nurturing classroom environments, positive relationships between teachers and students, and building resilience in students.
HB 4454 by Rep. Rodriguez	This bill would have required the State Board of Education to adopt developmentally appropriate, evidence-based standards for social and emotional learning and required each public school district to provide these standards in each grade level.
SB 426 by Sen. Lucio Similar bill: HB 727 by Rep. M. González	This bill would have required districts to adopt policies regarding the percentage of work time for school counselors to spend on duties relating to counseling programs.