

# Recommendations to the Legislature to Close Gaps in Children's Mental Health

## Excerpts from the Policy Brief

### "Leaders Must Help Parents Seeking Mental Health Support for Their Children"<sup>1</sup>

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#### *School-Based Support: Steps the Texas Legislature Can Take in 2023 to Close Gaps*

1. Provide school districts with dedicated, consistent funding to support school-based mental health prevention and early intervention practices. Schools need dedicated investments to implement campus-based safe and supportive school programs envisioned under SB 11 (2019) and to continue prevention practices that support student wellbeing as envisioned under HB 18. One first step is to increase appropriations for the School Safety Allotment and direct a portion of SSA funds to be used to support mental health, substance abuse prevention, and suicide prevention strategies identified by TEA and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.
2. Continue to expand families' access to school-based tele-mental health options for their children by increasing funding for the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium's TCHATT project. Lt. Governor Patrick and House Speaker Phelan have each called for additional funds to be redirected within the current state budget for TCHATT to expand statewide. Since the federal funding allocated to TCHATT during the 2021 legislative sessions will lapse in 2023, the Legislature should explore sustainable funding strategies that will enable TCHATT to reach more schools and students in areas where children's mental health services are limited.

#### *Intensive Community-Based Services: Steps the Texas Legislature Can Take in 2023 to Close Gaps*

1. Increase HHSC funding to shore up capacity within LMHAs to deliver intensive children's mental health services identified in children's treatment plans. This includes funding and strategies to: eliminate the number of children waiting to receive the higher level of care they need; increase the number of children served in YES Waiver Programs; and hire additional Certified Family Partners to provide family peer support services to parents and caregivers as part of their child's treatment.

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<sup>1</sup> Policy brief is available at <https://txchildren.org/posts/2022/6/22/texas-leaders-must-help-parents-seeking-mental-health-support-for-their-children>

2. Direct HHSC to examine the adequacy of YES Medicaid Waiver reimbursement rates in supporting program costs.
3. Pass legislation to make the Medicaid peer support services benefit available to youth and young adults ages 14-20 (similar to HB 1413 filed in the 2021 regular session) and include family peer support services as a Medicaid benefit for children with serious emotional disturbance when included in a child's treatment plan (similar to HB 4265 filed in 2021 regular session).
4. Look to recommendations that are forthcoming from the SB 1575 (2021) workgroup related to the quality and use of residential treatment centers within the foster care systems as a guide for improving the quality of residential treatment centers HHSC contracts with for the Parental Relinquishment Diversion project.
5. Direct HHSC to implement SB 1177 (2019) quickly and efficiently so that families of children with Medicaid have more mental health treatment options – proven, cost-effective options such as Multisystemic Therapy, pediatric crisis stabilization, and coordinated specialty care for youth experiencing a mental health crisis. Reimbursement rates that HHSC establishes should also adequately cover the cost of delivering services approved under SB 1177. These steps complement the Legislature's proposed response to the school massacre in Uvalde, which includes funding for MST teams and coordinated specialty care teams – with the ultimate goal to help youth with significant needs and keep children out of inpatient hospitals and foster care.