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## We Urge the Budget Conference Committee to Say “Yes” to YES Waiver Funding!

*Empower Texas Parents with Options for Supporting their Children’s Mental Health!*

May 6, 2025

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**The Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Waiver provides home and community-based mental health services to children who are struggling with their mental health.** Parents are often stuck making a gut-wrenching decision to leave their children, who are experiencing a crisis, at the hospital for days or even weeks at a time. Instead of having dinner at home with their family and sleeping in their own bed, kids are stuck in hospitals. Recent data show that youth who participated in YES Waiver services saw a 48% decrease in crisis service use, demonstrating the program’s impact in stabilizing children in their communities.<sup>1</sup>



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**Unfortunately, the number of Texas children served in the program is falling, even as demand rises.** There's been a sharp increase in families asking for YES Waiver services, with 3,109 inquiries in FY 2023 — a 43% increase since 2021. However, during the same period, the number of children enrolled dropped by 19%, and only 2,227 children received services, which means that nearly 900 children were left waiting for services.<sup>2</sup>

**The YES Waiver lost 386 providers between 2020 and 2023, with numbers continuing to decline, partly due to financial challenges and low funding levels.**<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the program is not able to serve at capacity due to a provider shortage.<sup>4</sup>

**Governor Greg Abbott called on the Legislature in February to give Texas parents more options when they are desperately looking for help for their children with the most complex mental health challenges.** He wrote in his budget that the Legislature should “make additional investments in behavioral health services and supports for children in this state with the most complex needs.”

**The House version of CSSB 1 includes an additional \$13 million for YES Waiver funding over the biennium in Article XI.** The introduced budget bills *decreased* YES Waiver funding by \$1.6 million compared to the last biennium, not meeting HHSC’s legislative appropriation request for additional funding to serve more children. The \$13 million boost to the YES Waiver program is critical for recruiting providers to the program and serving more children with complex challenges across the state. **We urge the Legislature to include the \$13 million for YES Waiver in the final version of CSSB 1.**

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1. Texas Health and Human Services Presentation to the House Youth Health & Safety Select Committee (2024).

2. Texas Health and Human Services Commission. (2023). *YES inquiry data and number served*. [Unpublished data].

3. Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council. (2024). *Children’s Behavioral Health Strategic Plan: Fiscal Years 2025–2029*. Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

4. Ibid.