
This legislation would establish a grant program for enhancing the technological capabilities of behavioral health care providers with a one-time investment of $50 million for implementation.

**A Documented, Pressing Need**

Groundwork for a state investment in behavioral health technologies was laid last session and must have follow-through as patients seek treatment for increasingly acute mental health challenges. Prompted by Senate Bill 640 from 2021, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission studied the technological needs of behavioral health providers, including psychiatric hospitals, and found critical shortfalls. The study notes that:

- Most psychiatric hospitals have no electronic health records system due to the extreme costs of implementation.
- Behavioral health providers have long been excluded from federal programs that fund technology.
- Historically low reimbursement rates for services have contributed to the overall challenge.

**A Critical, One-Time State Investment**

Simply put, cost is the No. 1 barrier for behavioral health providers in advancing interoperability and technology. Through the study, HHSC recommends grant opportunities and allocations to help Texas behavioral health providers implement electronic health record platforms.

Hospitals estimate that the one-time initial costs of implementing a robust electronic health records system are over $1 million. To create meaningful strides toward interoperability for behavioral health providers and improve access to care, Texas should allocate $50 million to the grant fund.

The high cost of technology for behavioral health providers has resulted in a significant barrier for people who need services. Texas must invest in these technologies to:

- Improve timely access to care;
- Ensure secure exchange of information;
- Ease clinician burden;
- Improve patient satisfaction;
- Improve outcomes; and
- Lower costs of care.

**SB 1903 / HB 4985 would:**

Establish a state grant program to enhance technological capabilities of behavioral health providers; grants can be used to:

- Purchase electronic medical records platforms;
- Expand interoperability of health information;
- Expand patient access to digital records and services;
- Improve IT infrastructure, privacy and security; and
- Improve service delivery through mobile devices.

Visit [www.tha.org/behavioralhealth](http://www.tha.org/behavioralhealth) for additional information.