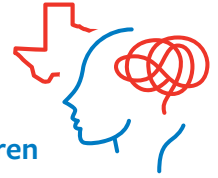


Texas is facing a mental health crisis, and despite significant investments in behavioral health care, access to services remains a challenge for Texas' growing population. A February 2023 analysis showed nearly **37% of Texas adults reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorder**, higher than the national average.¹ Other data show **17% of Texas children report having an emotional, mental, developmental or behavioral health problem.**²



Meanwhile, the Lone Star State has multiple factors working against its effort to improve these numbers, including the nation's highest uninsured rate and a shortage of behavioral health professionals. The Texas Hospital Association is committed to highlighting and improving behavioral health across Texas, and keeping it on lawmakers' radar both in Austin and in Washington, D.C.

Here are THA's top behavioral health priorities for the 89th Texas legislative session:

Support: Closing Gaps in Medicaid and Commercial Insurance

- **Adult inpatient care:** Pursue a state waiver from the federal prohibition on coverage for most inpatient adult behavioral health stays longer than 15 days – a prohibition known as the “institutions for mental disease” (IMD) exclusion – to make coverage for mental health the same as for physical coverage.
- **“Step-down” services:** Add partial hospitalization programs and intensive outpatient therapy services to the list of required Medicaid benefits to improve the continuum of care and reduce readmissions. Promote coverage of “social emotional disturbances” in commercial insurance to ensure necessary behavioral health services for children.
- **Mental health parity:** Continue working toward insurers covering and paying for behavioral health conditions as robustly as they do physical illnesses.



Support: Policies That Strengthen the Behavioral Health Continuum of Care

- **Medicaid provider payment rates:** Increase rates to hew closer to the cost of care.
- **Adult and pediatric inpatient psychiatric beds:** Increase both the number of state contract beds across the state and contracted bed rates.
- **Technology enhancements:** Support state funding for electronic medical record systems and other needed technological improvements.
- **Streamline processes** for emergency detention orders, orders of protective custody and emergency medication hearings.
- **Rural telepsychiatry:** Continue support for the rural telepsychiatry program to improve access to psychiatric care in remote areas.



1. **Kaiser Family Foundation, Mental Health in Texas**
<https://www.kff.org/statedata/mental-health-and-substance-use-state-fact-sheets/texas/#:~:text=As%20shown%20in%20the%20figure,of%20adults%20in%20the%20U.S.>
2. **Every Texan, The State of Mental Health & Behavioral Health in Young Texans**
<https://www.tha.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Youth-Mental-Health-Data-Brief-2023.pdf>