

## WHO WE ARE

Mental Health America of Texas (MHA Texas) envisions a state where mental health is the cornerstone of public health, its stigma is eliminated and all Texans have access to comprehensive, high quality, culturally competent care.

Mental Health America of Texas is the largest and longest-serving mental health education and advocacy organization in the state. As the only statewide mental organization that addresses the entire spectrum of mental disorders, MHA Texas serves a vital role as the state's established and recognized hub for expert mental health information and resources. Founded in 1935 as a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, Mental Health America of Texas is well established with a local, statewide, and national presence in the mental health arena.

For 80 years MHA Texas has worked to transform the systems that promote mental health, prevent mental disorders and substance abuse, and achieve recovery from mental illness and addictions through innovative education and advocacy, including decades of successful training and technical assistance initiatives through its Parents as Teachers and Suicide Prevention programs.

Through a wide range of collaborative efforts, Mental Health America of Texas works to provide children, youth and adults living with mental illness, mental health professionals, first responders and state leaders with the most comprehensive, evidence-based sources of information related to mental health, substance abuse and mental illness. MHA Texas is a member of dozens of coalitions, boards, collaborations, and advisory councils; and is recognized for its development and implementation of innovative programming and activities as well as its use of best practices.

## OUR PROGRAMS

### ADVOCACY & PUBLIC POLICY

Mental Health America of Texas strives to affect systems-level change to improve outcomes for individuals with mental illness and substance abuse, combat stigma surrounding these conditions and disorders, promote mental health, prevent mental illness and promote a recovery-based model of treatment. Policy activities support Mental Health America of Texas' mission in several important ways:

- Lead collaborative efforts of mental health advocates to create legislative changes that prevent and improve the treatment of mental illnesses and substance abuse.
- Interact with state agencies and other stakeholders to assure implementation of positive policy initiatives related to the prevention and treatment of mental illness and substance use disorder.
- Develop policy documents about important issues related to the prevention and treatment of mental illness and substance use disorders.
- Engage with other stakeholders to make Texas a healthier state.

## TEXAS PARENTS AS TEACHERS

There is a strong correlation between stressful or traumatic childhood experiences -- such as abuse, neglect, witnessing domestic violence, or growing up with substance abuse and mental illness in the home – and anxiety, depression and substance abuse in adulthood. In 1986, Mental Health America of Texas established the first certified training team outside of the Parents as Teachers National Center in St. Louis, Missouri. Today, Texas Parents as Teachers has launched the program in 43 sites and provides training across the state.

The Parents as Teachers program is an evidence-based early childhood home visiting program that builds strong communities, thriving families and children who are healthy, safe and ready to learn. Parents as Teachers certified professional parent educators who meet with families emphasize parent-child interaction, development centered parenting and family well being in their work with the families. There are four interrelated and integrated components of the program: personal visits, group connections, screening and resource network. Together, these form a dynamic package of services. Parents as Teachers serves a range of families with varying needs across the state and offers services throughout the continuum from prenatal through the kindergarten year.

The Parents as Teachers program has four primary goals:

- Increase parent knowledge of early childhood development and improve parenting practices
- Provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues
- Prevent child abuse and neglect
- Increase children’s school readiness and school success

[txpat.org](http://txpat.org)

## TEXAS SUICIDE PREVENTION

Suicide is a major health issue in Texas. Our state lost over 2,800 residents to suicide in 2010. Texas has developed a comprehensive, statewide approach to suicide prevention and Mental Health America of Texas plays a vital role in these efforts. Through its partnership with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) and the Texas Suicide Prevention Council we provide a wide array of suicide prevention information and training to assist local communities in suicide prevention initiatives and are responsible for implementing the State of Texas Suicide Prevention Plan. All of the services provided by Texas Suicide Prevention are free.

These initiatives include:

- Conduct ASK About Suicide Prevention training for gatekeepers
- Texas Suicide Prevention Toolkit
- Suicide Prevention Publications
- One-hour online training for public school educators, college faculty and college students in Texas.
- Annual Texas Suicide Prevention Symposium: Coming Together to Care
- True Stories of Hope and Help videos
- iPhone and Android apps
  - “ASK About Suicide”
  - Hope Box App
  - Suicide Safer Homes
- 2DayIAm website for youth and young adults facilitates a community experience that provides a sense of peer support
- Twitter – @StopTXSuicides
- Texas Suicide Prevention Website

[texassuicideprevention.org](http://texassuicideprevention.org) | [youtube.com/user/mhatexas](https://www.youtube.com/user/mhatexas) | [twitter.com/StopTXSuicides](https://twitter.com/StopTXSuicides)

## MHA TEXAS HIGHLIGHTS IN HISTORY

### OUR NAME

The organization was incorporated in 1935 as the Texas Society for Mental Hygiene, as an affiliate of the National Society for Mental Hygiene. In the ensuing years, the organization changed its name four times, each time to align with the national organization. In 1950 the name was changed to the Texas Society for Mental Health to align with the newly incorporated National Society for Mental Health. In 1958, the name was changed to the Texas Association for Mental Health and in 1977 changed to the Mental Health Association in Texas. In 2006, the name was changed to Mental Health America of Texas to once again align with the national organization, Mental Health America.

### HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

During the first 20 years, the major work of the Mental Health America of Texas was to educate the public on the need for preventative measures in mental health and sought to increase the use of counseling and guidance services in homes, schools, churches, and industry. The organization advocated for better appropriations for Texas mental hospitals and the visiting teachers program and made efforts to secure adoption of a constitutional amendment allowing a waiver of jury trial in the commitment of a person with mental illness. Below are selected highlights of Mental Health America of Texas' many accomplishments.

#### 1950s

Mental Health America of Texas places a major emphasis on improved care, treatment, and rehabilitation for people with mental illness.

- **1957**-Sponsored world-renowned psychiatrist Dr. William Menninger to address a joint session of the Texas Legislature. In cooperation with other social agencies, aided in developing a handbook, "Interpretation of the Mental Health Code" to use in its public information project centered on the new Mental Health Code;
- **1958**-Published and distributed for the first time a "Directory of Mental Health Services for Texas" in cooperation with the Division of Mental Health of the State Health Department.

## HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS cont.

### 1960s

Focused on establishing classes in the public school system for emotionally disturbed children.

- **1965**-Played a major role in proposing legislation and urging passage of House Bill 3, the Mental Health and Mental Retardation Act;
- **1966 & 1967**-In cooperation with The University of Texas and the Texas Education Agency, sponsored workshops for teachers and superintendents in a pilot program designed to establish classes in public schools for emotionally disturbed children.

### 1970s

Mental Health America's concern was for the mental health client and aftercare services.

- **1973** - In cooperation with the Office of Early Childhood Development, Texas Department of Community Affairs, distributed *Pierre the Pelican*, a 28-part newsletter series covering the mental and emotional development of children to all first-time parents in Texas. The series was received by 240,000 families in the first four years;
- **1974** - Prompted 200 articles about mental health issues in Texas newspapers.

### 1980s

Major themes in the 1980s included community services, guardianship, commitment procedures, rights of people with mental illness, hospital standards, research, community residential services for people with long-term mental illness, and parenthood education.

- **1980** - Launched the Family and Individual Reliance (FAIR) mutual support project establishing 17 support groups for mental health clients and separate groups for family members in Texas in its first year, which grew to 24 groups;
- **1981** - Called for a cooperative effort to revise the Texas Mental Health Code and began work with eight organizations to draft a new Mental Health Code;
- **1982** - A 45-member Mental Health Code Task Force was named, chaired by Mental Health America of Texas board member Helen Farabee. The revised Code became law in 1983;
- **1983** - Coordinated the Legislative Oversight Committee on Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MHMR) which completed three reports on mental health, community residential services, and mental retardation.

### HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS cont.

- **1984** - Worked with the Texas Department of Agriculture to develop a slide/sound show, planner's notebook, facilitator's guide, and participants' workbooks to present workshops on "Feelings in Rural Texas: Farm and Ranch Stress;"
- **1985** - Coordinated the Legislative Oversight Committee on MHMR to establish state legislation to ensure that basic core services are provided in each mental health service area;
- **1986** - Received United Nations International Year of Shelter Award for Homeless for the *Open the Door* project, developing residential services for persons with long-term mental illness;
- **1987** - Launched award-winning Parents as Teachers early childhood program. Texas Parents as Teachers has now established the program in more than 40 sites in Texas, with 350 parent educators, serving 11,000 annually;
- **1988** - Sponsored the first-ever statewide Mental Health Consumers Caucus from which the Texas Mental Health Consumers was eventually created;
- **1989** - Published *Do Kids Count? How Texas Serves Children and Adolescents with Severe Emotional Disturbance* identifying 100,000 seriously mentally ill children in Texas not receiving help from schools or agencies.

### 1990s

Mental Health America of Texas concentrates on equality in mental health insurance coverage, access to medications and services, children's mental health, patient rights and protections, parenting education, juvenile justice, public and private managed care, and culturally-appropriate services.

- **1990** - Brought together nine state agencies to develop the Texas Children's Mental Health Plan;
- **1991** - Spearheaded a cooperative effort to establish and implement the Texas Children's Mental Health Plan which provided \$22 million for the biennium, and earmarked, for the first time, funds for children's services;
- **1992** - Worked with partners to establish culturally-appropriate, family-focused mental health services in a Houston neighborhood;
- **1993** - Helped win state legislation that strengthens patient's rights and protections;
- **1994** - Sponsored AmeriCorps Children's Program with 39 community partners across Texas, serving over 17,000 children and families in six years;

### HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS cont.

- **1995** - Established five parenting education centers across Texas that provided direct services to over 8,600 families, including 1,100 parenting classes over 4 years;
- **1996** - Developed materials and provided statewide training to make sure children in the juvenile justice system receive mental health services when needed;
- **1997** - Helped win partial parity for mental health insurance coverage;
- **1998** - Partnered with mental health providers to initiate the Travis County Children's Partnership which links wrap-around services for multi-needs families;
- **1999** - Instrumental in advocating for state legislation expanding integrated funding for children's mental health services and increasing funding for newer and better medications for people living with mental illness.

### 2000s

Important issues of this decade include families in which a parent has mental illness, children's mental health, equality in mental health insurance coverage, relinquishment of child custody, access to medications and services, parenting education, suicide prevention, and insanity defense.

- **2000** - Facilitated Project Link, forums across Texas to examine and improve doctor-patient relationships in public and private managed care;
- **2001** - Launched the Children's Mental Health and Community Outreach Program providing mental health information in English and Spanish;
- **2002** - Hosted the first statewide children's mental health conference, "*State of the Art in Children's Mental Health: What Really Works*" in conjunction with over 30 co-sponsors and more than 300 participants;

Developed and distributed television PSAs on depression, bi-polar disorder, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder;

Published "*An Overview of the Mental Health System in Texas;*"

- **2003** - Launched the Invisible Children's Project addressing the needs of families in which a parent has a mental illness. Prompted the feature article "*Their Last Good Chance to Get Better*" in Texas Monthly magazine. Developed two television PSAs on the faces of mental illness;

Established the Texas Suicide Prevention Council, a group of over 50 state and local organizations and coalitions that provided state-wide leadership, training and public awareness;

**HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS cont.**

**2004** - Hosted four statewide conferences attended by over 670 individuals: Treatment in Foster Care, Jail Diversion, Suicide Prevention and co-sponsored Texas Association for Infant Mental Health Advocacy Conference;

Developed “*Coming Together to Care: A Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Texas Communities*”;

Recommended the topic for and was featured in the documentary film “*Are the Kids Alright?*” which explores mental health care for children and youth at risk in Texas;

Developed a television PSA on obsessive-compulsive disorder;

- **2005** - Published the landmark mental health report “*Turning the Corner: Toward Balance and Reform in Texas Mental Health Services.*” The 150-page report detailed mental health services in Texas and made recommendations for change;

- **2006** - Launched Texas Youth Suicide Prevention Project and trained 43 suicide prevention instructors;

Developed Child and Adolescent Mental Health Toolkit;

- **2007** - Mental Health America of Texas and partners win legislation for \$82 million in support for crisis services through Department of State Health Services;

MHA Texas designs, develops and coordinates the statewide Texas Suicide Prevention Symposium: Coming Together to Care that currently attracts 800 participants annually;

- **2008** – MHA Texas launches a branch in Rio Grande Valley;

Suicide Prevention Council develops Texas Suicide Factsheet on Hispanic Americans;

- **2009** - Launched the Via Hope program that provides mental health training and technical assistance for youth and adults with mental illness, family members and other stakeholders;

Mental Health America of Texas and partner mental health advocates secure \$55 million in state funding to help individuals avoid crises that could land them in jails or emergency rooms;

Texas Parents as Teachers program provides expanded training for in-home educators, teaching families about the dangers of neurotoxins to children;

Mental Health America of Texas prompted a state law that allows timely sharing of suicide death data among agencies in order to prevent suicide clusters.

## 2010s

The focus during the first half of this decade has been on promoting standards for boarding homes, youth suicide prevention and expanding home visitations through the Texas Parents as Teachers program.

- **2010** - Worked with partners to promote boarding home standards in local communities;

Provided leadership to State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care and national Parents as Teachers program;

Developed new training curriculum and launched online training for high school educators;

- **2011** - Through advocacy efforts by Mental Health America of Texas and its coalition partnerships, legislation is now in place that requires suicide prevention to be included in school district plans and suicide training for k-12 educators. A resolution is passed establishing a permanent Suicide Prevention Week for Texas;

Via Hope program trained and certified peer specialists and provided training through the Recovery Institute;

Through the Youth Suicide Prevention project, trained suicide prevention gatekeepers in schools in communities across the state, produced suicide prevention videos;

Launched the first smart phone app for suicide prevention in the world: ASK About Suicide to Save a Life. The app which lists warning signs that a person might be thinking of suicide, as well as practical advice on how to intervene;

Expanded programs through the Texas Home Visiting in Early Childhood Program;

- **2012**- Developed Hope Box Smartphone app for suicide prevention;

Developed and implemented national Mental Health America affiliate peer-to-peer initiative, creating a network for leaders of state and local MHA executives nationwide;

- **2013** - Mental Health America of Texas and partners advocated for \$283 million in state funding for increased mental health services which the state appropriated to Department of State Health Services;

Developed and continues to train mental health advocates through the “ASK about Suicide to Save a Life” program. This designated best practices program has been deployed throughout the state. Through this and other initiatives, over 31,000 people have had access to leading suicide prevention training.

Texas Parents as Teachers Program expanded at the state level and in seven Texas high-risk communities;

## 2010s cont.

**2013** - Worked collaboratively to prompt home visitation legislation and expanded funding to Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) for home visitation programs in Texas;

- **2014** - Created 11 suicide prevention videos available on YouTube, VIMEO and other distribution points;

Formalized and facilitates the Texas Coalition for Healthy Minds made up of statewide organizations advocating for improvements in mental health and /or substance use disorder policies and practices

Created the 2DayIAM microsite for youth and young adults to facilitate a community experience and peer support.

- **2015** – Mental Health America of Texas worked closely with other advocates to increase state funding for mental health and substance use disorders by \$150.7 million;

Led the Texas Coalition for Healthy Minds, a group of more than 25 state level mental health and health organizations, in support of legislation addressing the mental healthcare workforce shortage in Texas, including legislation that creates a loan forgiveness repayment program for mental health professionals;

MHA Texas worked to pass legislation requiring that information on mental health and suicide prevention is given to incoming full-time students at Texas colleges and universities.

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