

## Public Policy Agenda for the 85<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session

Mental Health America of Texas (MHA Texas), a 501(c)3, is the state's longest-serving mental health education and advocacy group, founded in 1935. MHA Texas is affiliated with Mental Health America national. Our mission is 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, advocacy and services.

The prevention and treatment of mental illness and substance use disorders save lives, improves families and communities, and saves money. While substantial increases for mental health funding were made in the 83<sup>rd</sup> and 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative sessions, increasing access to care for mental health and substance use disorders remains a high priority.

### PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS include promoting:

- Investment in and improvement of accessible, effective services
- Funding for recovery-oriented systems for prevention, early intervention and treatment of mental illness and substance use disorders -- including home visitation
- Expansion of health care coverage to persons with mental illness and/or substance use disorders who are not otherwise eligible for coverage
- Increasing transparency, stakeholder input, equitable funding, and local control in the delivery of mental health and substance use disorder services with the objective of improving communities, lowering costs, and serving eligible individuals effectively and efficiently
- Funding and best-practice programs for suicide prevention through the lifespan.

### IMPROVEMENT OF BOARDING HOMES:

- Criminal penalties for operation of an unlicensed assisted living facility or boarding home facility that poses an immediate threat of harm.

### PROMOTE THE TEXAS COALITION FOR HEALTHY MINDS PRIORITIES.

MHA Texas is the facilitating organization for the Texas Coalition for Healthy Minds. The Texas Coalition for Healthy Minds is a group of organizations that believe health is a personal, community, and statewide priority. Coalition members work together to promote the prevention and treatment of mental illness and substance use disorder.

- Expanding the mental health and substance use disorder workforce to reduce shortages
- Promoting prevention, treatment and recovery across the continuum of care
- Increasing access and assuring that insurance plans cover mental health and substance use disorder issues with other healthcare issues, as the law requires.

### SUICIDE PREVENTION

Support the legislative priorities of the Texas Suicide Prevention Council. The Texas Suicide Prevention Council has a State Health Plan that is updated periodically. The Council, and MHA Texas support legislative initiatives that promotes the objectives of the Plan.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Support the draft priorities of the Justice and Mental Health Coalition. MHA Texas established and now participates in the Justice and Mental Health Coalition.

## SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

Support the priorities of the Substance Use Disorder Coalition. MHA Texas established and now participates in the Substance Use Disorder Coalition.

## HOME VISITING AND CHILD PROTECTION

As a member of the Child Protection Roundtable, MHA Texas supports its legislative priorities. The Child Protection Roundtable is a collaboration of statewide research experts, advocates, and program providers that work to improve Texas' child protection decisions and support its legislative priorities. MHA Texas serves as the state office for Parents as Teachers in Texas, an evidence-based early childhood home visiting model designed to ensure that young children are healthy, safe, and ready to learn. The program strengthens families by increasing positive parenting attitudes and behaviors, decreasing child abuse and neglect, providing early detection of potential health and mental health concerns and/or developmental delays, and increasing school readiness.

## OTHER PRIORITIES:

Support key legislation and funding related to mental health and substance use disorders for children and adults such as:

- increasing access to a continuum of housing options for persons with mental health and substance use disorders;
- addressing the special needs of veterans and their families;
- increasing integrated health care;
- addressing special needs for children with serious emotional disturbance and/or substance use disorder and their families.

Oppose legislation that would be poor policy and/or practice in relation to the prevention and treatment of mental illnesses and substance use disorders in Texas.

## LINKS:

Priorities for the Texas Coalition for Healthy Minds, Texas Suicide Prevention Council, Justice and Mental Health Coalition, Substance Use Disorder Coalition and the Child Protection Roundtable can be found at [mhatexas.org/advocacy-public-policy](http://mhatexas.org/advocacy-public-policy).