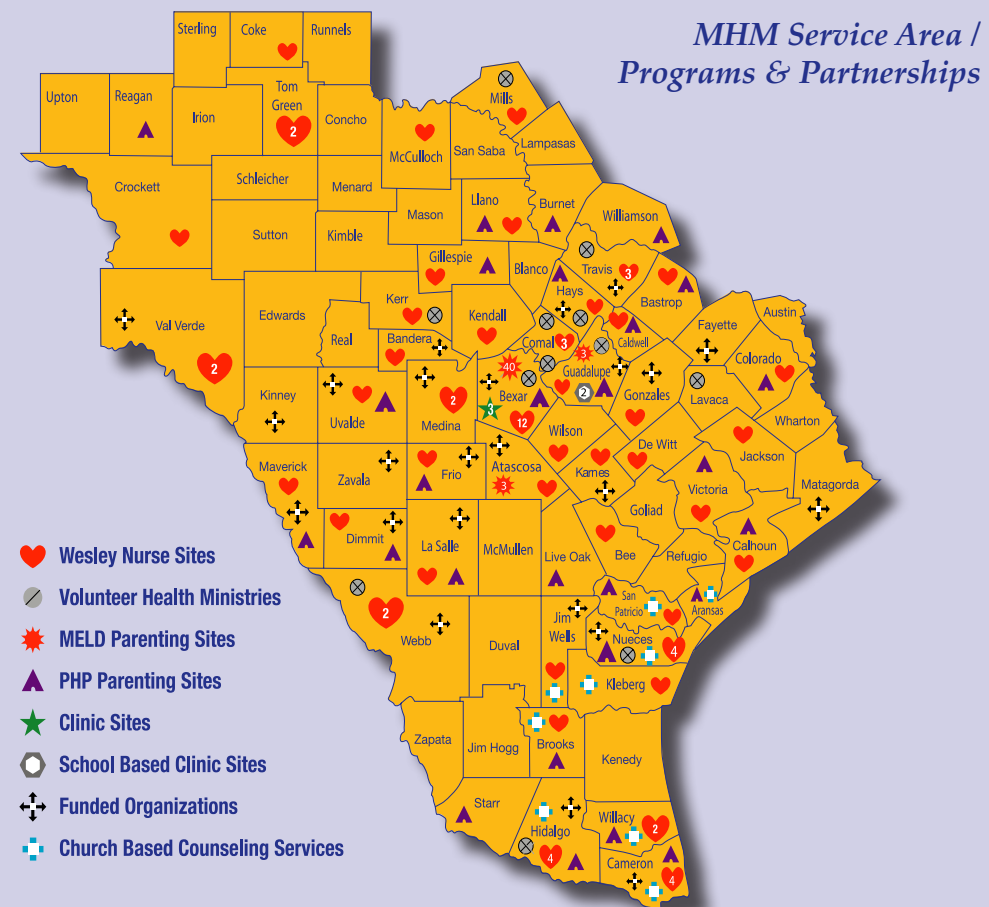




The mission of MHM is “Serving Humanity to Honor God” by improving the physical, mental and spiritual health of those least served in the Southwest Texas Conference area of The United Methodist Church.

MHM is dedicated to providing medical and health-related human services to low income families and the uninsured throughout South Texas. It is now the largest private funding source for community healthcare services in South Texas. The mission also includes MHM’s one-half ownership of the Methodist Healthcare System – the largest healthcare system in South Texas. This creates a unique avenue to ensure that the Methodist Healthcare System continues to be a benefit to the community by providing quality care to all and charitable care when needed, and it provides revenue to MHM for its programs.

MHM’s strategy of community health has grown from one program of \$200,000 for 1,200 clients in 1996 to a budgeted expenditure of over \$57 million planned for 2011 to provide over 500,000 client encounters. This is achieved through programs owned and operated by MHM and through contracts with partners who have similar missions.



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LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

2011



*“Do all the good you can,
by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can,
in all the places you can,
at all the times you can,
to all the people you can,
as long as ever you can.”*

*~John Wesley,
Founder of Methodism*



PUBLIC POLICY & ADVOCACY

MHM’s policy goals support the mission of “Serving Humanity to Honor God.”The policy agenda reflects MHM’s efforts “To serve by improving the physical, mental and spiritual health of those least served in the Southwest Texas Conference area ofThe United Methodist Church.”The organization, and thus its policy development, is guided by the Social Principles ofThe United Methodist Church.

The policy agenda is carried out by:

- Increasing the public’s understanding of how health policies impact their communities.
- Strengthening and cultivating relationships with other groups concerned with health policy.
- Advocating for policies that enhance the health and well-being of families and their communities.

Objectives

MHM’s public policy and advocacy efforts at the state level encompass the following objectives:

- Increase access to primary care and mental health services in both the public and private sectors.
- Increase state efforts at addressing the prevention of chronic illnesses—particularly obesity and diabetes—through healthcare education initiatives.
- Promote state policies that increase the healthcare workforce for the least served.
- Promote policies that strengthen the social, educational, and economic opportunities that improve health outcomes for families.

MHM also supports policies that improve the accessibility and affordability of health care at the county level. This document highlights MHM’s top priorities for the 82ndTexas Legislature. Other issues MHM supports and monitors include:

- Improving access to oral health treatment to low-income populations and the uninsured.
- Improve access to health care for immigrants.
- Improving Texas’ immunization rate of children, and reducing the incidence of asthma in children.
- Helping low-income women access breast and cervical cancer treatment.
- Reducing barriers that impact the care of children in custody of relatives.
- Improving Health Information Technology (HIT) for organizations that serve low-income populations.

Access to Primary Care • Access to Primary Care • Access to Primary Care

Uninsured

Approximately 80% of uninsured adults are in working households.Texas has the highest rate of uninsured children (21%) and adults (26%) in the nation. As a last resort, the uninsured will often seek health services in emergency rooms causing Texas families to spend an extra \$1,800 in health insurance premiums.

In order to address the high rate of uninsured, Texas must strengthen the safety net and increase access to the private sector.

Policy Recommendations:

- Improve indigent health care delivery models and the Medically Needy program.
- Increase access to, and affordability of health insurance through implementation of insurance reforms that address barriers to coverage.

Small Business

Texas is known for its entrepreneurial spirit. The majority (80%) of small businesses in the state are micro-enterprises—meaning they have five or less employees.

Under the health care reform law, small businesses are exempt from providing insurance to employees. However, tax credits are available for businesses that offer health insurance.

Policy Recommendations:

- Ensure sufficient oversight of health plans (pertaining to insurance market regulations, consumer protections, rate-reviews, solvency, reserve fund requirements, premium taxes, and defining rating areas).
- Ensure health insurance providers improve access for small employers by providing high-value plan options, affordable premiums, clear information, quality customer service, and fewer barriers to coverage.

Uninsured Children

Of the 1.5 million uninsured children, over half are eligible for the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) or Medicaid, but are not enrolled due to lack of funding, limited outreach and barriers to access.

For each dollar Texas invests in CHIP and Medicaid, the federal dollar ‘return’ is \$2.52 and \$1.54 respectively. Texas has forfeited close to \$1 billion in federal funding for CHIP since the program’s inception.

Policy Recommendations:

- Maintain reimbursement rates for CHIP and Medicaid health providers.
- Improve access to CHIP and Medicaid through simplification of enrollment procedures.

Mental Health

Texas currently ranks 50th in overall mental health spending per capita, despite the fact that more than 20 percent of adults and children in the state have a diagnosed mental health condition.

At present, Texas only serves 25 percent of children who have a diagnosable form of mental illness. Data shows that half of all children with emotional disturbances will drop out of school. Lack of access to mental health services leads to multiple complications affecting education, employment, and could lead to substance abuse and suicide.

Policy Recommendations:

- Preserve access to adult and youth mental health services.
- Support initiatives that raise public awareness of mental health issues and preventive measures.
- Require private insurance coverage of serious childhood emotional disturbances.

Health Care Workforce

There are over 5.7 million Texans currently living in Health Professional ShortageAreas (HPSAs); approximately 6 million live in mental health HPSAs. In the ratio of physicians and RNs to residents,Texas ranks 43rd and 45th respectively.

As the number of residents who acquire health insurance increases due to federal health care reform, so too will the demand for services from providers accepting Medicaid. At present less than one-third of practicing physicians accept Medicaid in Texas.

Policy Recommendations:

- Increase healthcare workforce development programs in locales designated as HPSAs.
- Pursue public and private funding collaboration for the expansion of medical professional training programs.

Prevention of Chronic Illnesses

Obesity, Diabetes & Chronic Illnesses

Preventable illness accounts for approximately 80% of the burden of all illnesses and 90% of all healthcare costs in the United States. Future projections suggest an increase in the number of obese adult Texans from slightly more than 5.3 million in 2010 to nearly 15 million (43% of Texas’ adult population) by 2040. With the increase of chronic illness and lack of prevention-focused interventions, Texas will continue to suffer monetary consequences.

Policy Recommendations:

- Implement a comprehensive approach to stimulate behavioral change in nutrition, physical activity, smoking cessation, and preventive screenings.
- Invest in proven community-based programs to increase prevention, education, information, and activities.
- Stregnthen policies that support healthy nutrition, physical education and health education in public schools.