

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
SENATE BILL 1: General Appropriations Bill
February 21, 2023

WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY:

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Chair Huffman and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input today on Senate Bill 1, the General Appropriations Bill for FY 2024-2025. Our testimony today focuses on HHSC Strategy G.2.2 – Mental Health Community Hospitals. As mental health and safety net providers, we also serve as members of the San Antonio State Hospital Executive Committee that advocated to secure state funding for a new regional state mental health facility in Bexar County.

Background

In 2017, the Texas Legislature approved preplanning and planning funding for a new 300-bed San Antonio State Hospital (SASH), as well as funds for the renovation of 40 adult civil beds on the SASH campus. The SASH Executive Committee developed a plan for the new facility, based on extensive community and regional feedback, which would provide both inpatient forensic and civil beds for SASH's 54-county catchment area. Over the next two legislative sessions, construction funds were appropriated to complete the hospital, which is set to open in April 2024.

Over the span of six years, the state's demand for forensic beds has increased. Despite the extensive feedback shared by local and regional officials, mental health providers and families documenting the need for civil inpatient capacity, nearly all 300 beds at SASH, in addition to the newly renovated adult beds, are dedicated forensic beds used to alleviate the state's current backlog for adult forensic placements. Currently, 45 inpatient civil beds (15 percent of the total bed capacity) are serving SASH's 54-county catchment area, which encompasses a population of 3.7 million Texans.

In 2017, SASH had 40 staffed beds allocated for children and adolescents. In 2019, those beds were eliminated, and the adolescent unit was shut down. Access to civil beds for adults and children was further exacerbated with the closing of San Antonio's Nix Hospital System in 2019, which took an additional 164 beds offline.

There is an immediate need for community inpatient psychiatric beds and specialty services in Bexar County given the recent growth in population and impact of mass-trauma violence events on families.

- San Antonio is one of the poorest among the largest 25 cities in the nation. An estimated 470,000 Bexar County adults have income levels less than 200% of the federal poverty level, with 70% of those being of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity.ⁱ
- Almost one quarter of adult residents in Bexar County have a mental health condition, and 18% of those are living with a serious mental illness (SMI). Over half of these 65,000 adults with a SMI are living under 200% of the federal poverty level.
- The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the mental health of residents in Bexar County, increasing mental health visits by 20%, while also negatively impacting available staffing for mental health facilities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data estimates that 225 adult Bexar County residents committed suicide in 2020.
- The impact of mass-trauma violence events, such as the May 2022 tragic school shooting in neighboring Uvalde County, exacerbates the need for mental health services. The lack of providers and specialized resources in surrounding rural areas forces families to seek care in large urban counties, such as Bexar, requiring health systems to reassess immediate capacity demands, as well as future needs.
- In 2022, the Bexar County Hospital District, d/b/a University Health, contracted with the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) to evaluate civil bed capacity in the community. The MMHPI report found that the current psychiatric bed capacity in Bexar County is insufficient to accommodate patient demand for inpatient mental health services.

Table 1. Projected Need for Civil Beds - Bexar Countyⁱⁱ

	BED COUNT 2020	IMMEDIATE NEED BY 2025	ADDITIONAL NEED BY 2030	ADDITIONAL NEED BY 2040	ADDITIONAL NEED BY 2050
ADULT	546	635 (+89)	695 (+149)	821 (+275)	954 (+408)
CHILD/ADOLESCENT	188	247 (+59)	266 (+78)	292 (+104)	327 (+139)
TOTAL NUMBER OF BEDS	734	882	961	1,113	1,281
TOTAL ADDITIONAL BEDS	N/A	+148	+227	+379	+547

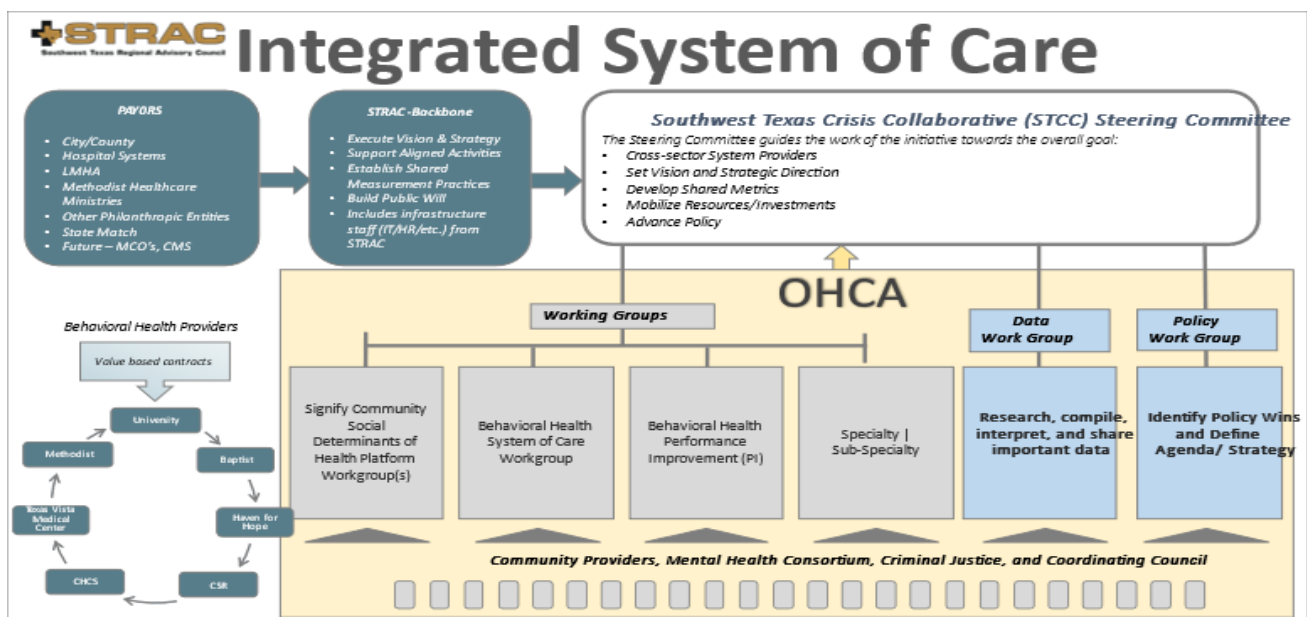
Note: The number in parentheses indicates the cumulative number of new beds needed above the 2020 bed count. The civil bed need calculation does not take into account any growth in community programs.

To meet the capacity for private psychiatric beds, Local Mental Health Authorities need additional funding and flexibility to negotiate the rates for contract beds.

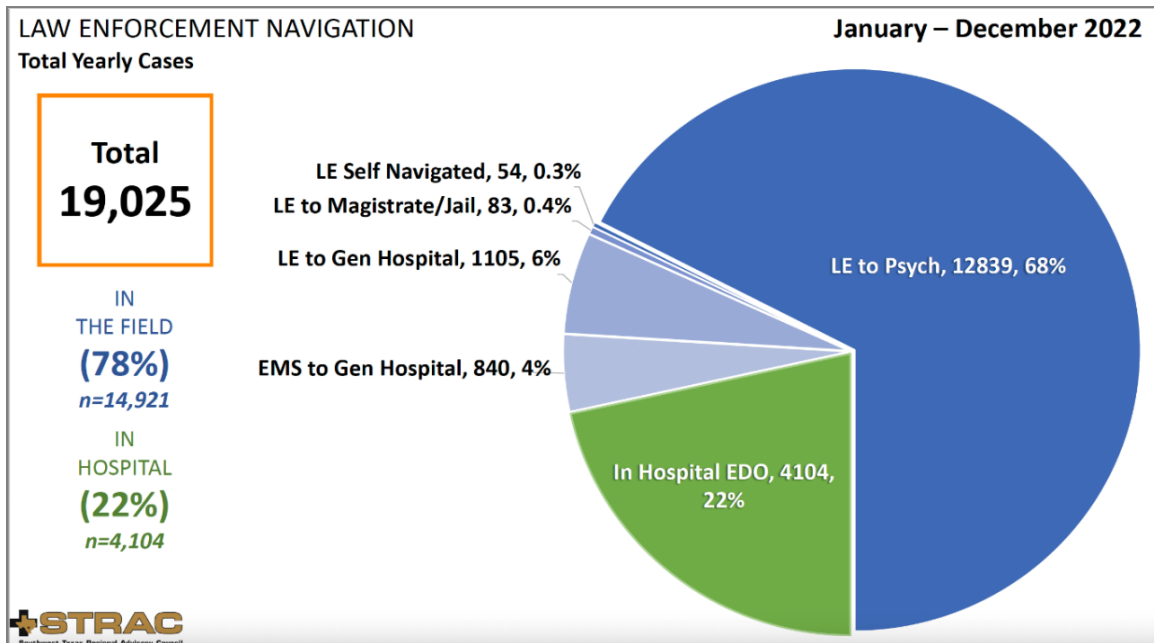
- The Center for Health Care Services (CHCS), the Local Mental Health Authority for San Antonio/Bexar County, contracts with HHSC for the purchase of psychiatric inpatient services, or Private Psychiatric Beds (PPBs).
- Funded by LMHAs, PPBs are reserved beds located at various hospitals in the community, available upon demand to patients served by the LMHA. CHCS currently has a supply of 31 contract beds in the Bexar County area.
- PPBs are staffed by medical and nursing professionals who administer intensive interventions designed to relieve acute symptoms and restore a patient's ability to function in a less restrictive setting. Patients receive 24-hour monitoring in a safe and secure environment throughout the acute behavioral health crisis.
- The utilization rate goal for these beds is 95%; however, CHCS reports it has difficulty executing contracts with local hospitals due to an insufficient per diem rate.
- A higher per diem rate and greater flexibility to negotiate with local hospitals would enable CHCS to better meet the needs of the community.

Local collaborative partnerships have been successful, incentivizing best practices and efficient delivery systems that benefit patient care and outcomes.

- Through our partnerships with the Southwest Texas Crisis Collaborative, we've developed many best-practice community services to mitigate the need for inpatient bed use, including complex care specialty programs, services for the homeless population, substance use treatment, forensic and jail diversion programs, co-responder models and crisis services.



- In 2022, our Law Enforcement Navigation program was able to divert 12,839 (68%) of Emergency Detentions performed away from an Emergency Room and straight from the field with law enforcement to a psychiatric facility. This program allows for patients under an Emergency Detention order to be assessed and treated in a more appropriate, less chaotic environment than a traditional Emergency Room, which results in less waiting time and enhanced patient experiences.



- In another Bexar County program called the Program for Intensive Care Coordination (PICC), individuals that have been Emergency Detained six or more times in the previous twelve months receive intense case management and wrap around services to reduce their reliance on the crisis mental health system. The PICC program includes case managers from the local mental health authority, law enforcement mental health unit officers from San Antonio Police Department and mobile integrated healthcare paramedics from San Antonio Fire Department.
- In an independent consultant review of the PICC program, the individuals receiving services from the team reduced their Emergency Detentions from an average of 8.85 to 1.21 per year. Overall, due to the reduction in overall reliance on the crisis mental health system, the PICC team allowed for a net efficiency of \$3,385,000 on the individuals that were studied before and after receiving PICC services.

Calculating Cost Efficiencies for PICC (Preliminary)

	Pre-PICC Average	Post-PICC Average	Reduction in Encounters	Efficiencies (Preliminary)
ER Visits	7.98	2.06	5.92	\$781,000
EDOs	8.85	1.21	7.64	\$2,237,000
PES Encounters	0.60	0.02	0.58	\$149,000
IP Admissions	4.02	2.90	1.12	\$1,718,000
Total Efficiencies (Preliminary)				\$4,885,000
Net Efficiencies (Preliminary)*				\$3,385,000

**Net Efficiencies = Total Efficiencies less the cost of PICC program (\$1.5M)*

We respectfully request your consideration of the following recommendations:

Request 1: Support the appropriation of \$62 million for the 2024-2025 biennium for Strategy G.2.2, Mental Health Community Hospitals to fund:

- A. An additional 100 purchased psychiatric beds (PPBs) in Bexar County to increase community inpatient bed capacity, and allow for
- B. Market flexibility of the bed day rate to allow local mental health authorities to pay market rate.

Request 2: Support the funding of a one-time investment of \$300 million for the planning and construction of a Psychiatric Center in Bexar County that will provide comprehensive inpatient care and outpatient services to patients and their families.

- A. An investment of \$16 million for planning and \$284 million for the construction of a 227-bed, state-of-the-art Psychiatric Center will provide comprehensive and accessible care for individuals in need of civil bed placements, outpatient treatment, medical services, as well as on-site support programs for families.



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Supporting Organizations



ⁱ ALICE in Texas: A Financial Hardship Study; 2020

ⁱⁱ Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute: University Health Consultation Assessment: Detention and Civil Behavioral Health, Sept. 2022