

House Bill 1
Health and Human Services Commission, Article II
Proposed Funding
Bexar County Mental Health Community Beds & County Psychiatric Center

Issue: The mental health crisis in Bexar County has reached a critical point due to a growing demand for services and an immediate need for community inpatient psychiatric beds.

- **Increased Demand:** Bexar County has experienced one of the largest rates of population growth in the nation, with a nearly 20 percent increase since 2010, yet the availability of inpatient psychiatric beds has been inconsistent and inadequate, resulting in the local mental health authority and behavioral health hospitals to frequently run above capacity for both children and adults. In 2020, Bexar County’s Local Mental Health Authority operated at a staggering 120% of its capacity.ⁱ
- **High Prevalence of Mental Illness:** Nearly a quarter of adults (23%) in Bexar County struggle with a mental health condition, with 18 percent experiencing severe mental health problems that affect their daily functioning.ⁱⁱ This prevalence and severity is higher than the national average, where one in five Americans are diagnosed with one or more mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders, and one in 25 experience a severe mental illness.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **High Acuity:** Of the 80,000 adults admitted between 2016-2020 to one of the six local hospitals for inpatient psychiatric care, 30% were admitted with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia, 30% with severe depression, 20% with bipolar disorder, and 11% with substance use disorders. These higher acuity patients require a heightened level of staffing and financial resources to receive essential care, treatment, and rehabilitation services.
- **Decreased Psychiatric Bed Capacity:** In 2019, the closure of the San Antonio State Hospital’s adolescent unit eliminated 40 children and adolescent staffed beds. That same year, the closing of San Antonio’s Nix Hospital System took an additional 164 beds offline.

Request 1: Provide \$31 million in general revenue funding to the Health and Human Services Commission each fiscal year of 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**
- B. Market flexibility of the bed day rate to allow the local mental health authority to pay market rate.**

The Center for Health Care Services, Bexar County’s Local Mental Health Authority, is currently allocated 31 purchased psychiatric beds (PPBs or “contract” beds) to serve Texans close to their home communities. These contract inpatient beds act as reserved beds at various hospitals to be available to patients served by the LMHA. A recent survey of the community conducted by the Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council (STRAC) determined a need for 100 additional adult PPBs. To ensure The Center can secure and retain the necessary bed capacity and provide high-quality care for the low-income and medically indigent population it serves, market flexibility must be independent of the bed day rate cap currently offered by the state to allow The Center to offer market rates. Investing in psychiatric inpatient beds will increase access to the appropriate level of patient care and alleviate the burden on hospital emergency rooms and local jails.

Request 2: Out of HHSC Strategy G.4.2, Capital Repair and Renovation at SSLCs, State Hospitals, and Other, the Health and Human Services Commission shall allocate \$300 million to support a one-time investment for the planning of, acquisition of land, and construction of a Psychiatric Center in Bexar County.

As part of the state hospital redesign effort, the Texas Legislature has funded the construction of a new 300-bed hospital and the renovation of 40 adult beds at the San Antonio State Hospital. The majority of these beds will be used to alleviate the current statewide backlog for adult forensic placements.

In the meantime, the growing demand for mental health services and decreasing access to adult and adolescent psychiatric beds in the region served by Bexar County has led mental health providers and stakeholders to look for solutions that can integrate care through enhanced mental health crisis response services and community-based treatment alternatives.

An investment of \$16 million for planning and \$284 million for land acquisition and construction of a 227 bed Psychiatric Center in Bexar County will provide comprehensive and accessible care for individuals in need of inpatient care. The Psychiatric Center will offer a full range of services, including inpatient care, outpatient treatment, medical services, as well as on-site support programs for families. Data from the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute supports the need for 227 inpatient beds to address the shortage of mental health resources in the area and meet the anticipated needs of the region.

Supporting Organizations



ⁱ Bexar County Task Force on Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health (2022). Interim Report on Funding Allocation. <https://www.bexar.org/DocumentCenter/View/33055/Criminal-Justice--Behavioral-Health-Task-Force-Interim-Report>

ⁱⁱ Holzer, C., Nguyen, H., & Holzer, J. (2019). Texas County-Level Estimates of the Prevalence of Severe Mental Health Need in 2019. Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute.

ⁱⁱⁱ National Alliance for Mental Illness. Mental Health Facts in America. <https://www.nami.org/nami/media/nami-media/infographics/generalmhfacts.pdf>