

2019

# LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. believes all Texans deserve access to quality health care, regardless of their ability to pay.

Guided by its mission of "Serving Humanity to Honor God," Methodist Healthcare Ministries' vision is to be the leader for improving wellness of the least served.

Methodist Healthcare Ministries' 2019 Legislative Agenda challenges Texas policymakers to establish a state where everyone is healthy—mind, body and spirit.

# PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES



## ACCESS TO CARE

Support the development of a bipartisan, statewide initiative that will secure health care coverage for millions of uninsured Texans, especially families below 100 percent of the federal poverty level.



## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Support increased funding for mental health services and programs that will work to meet current needs of adults and children, restore the state's mental health hospitals and explore partnerships for local program solutions.



## HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE SHORTAGE

Support funding for graduate medical education to increase the number of training residency slots and ensure Texas medical school graduates remain in Texas; continue funding for all health care providers to address the state's health care workforce shortage, including nurses, midlevel providers, dentists and mental health providers; and continue funding for state health care provider loan repayment programs that incentivize providers to practice in health care shortage areas and in facilities that care for the uninsured.



## WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Support the continuation of funding and strengthening of current programs to achieve healthy outcomes for women & children, including strong investments in women's preventive services and increased access to quality physical and mental health care for children and mothers.

## 2018 Service Map



### SERVING HUMANITY TO HONOR GOD

The Rio Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church defines Methodist Healthcare Ministries' 74-county service area in South Texas. Methodist Healthcare Ministries' service area makes up 29 percent of all counties in the state of Texas.



# PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

## Improve Access to Healthcare Services for All Texans



Texas remains one of 14 states that has not adopted the expansion of health coverage through the Medicaid program. It has left 4.8 million hard-working Texans in low wage jobs unable to access affordable health care services.<sup>1</sup> The state's high uninsured rate continues to undermine its ability to address other urgent health problems, such as the high maternal mortality rate, since individuals cannot access general prevention and treatment services.

States that expanded Medicaid found that providing health coverage improved access to care, utilization and affordability, and economically benefited both providers and the state.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the Affordable Care Act, the uninsured rate in Texas was 22 percent, decreasing to 16 percent by 2016 and rising back up to 17 percent in 2017.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, among the 4.8 million uninsured Texans, there is an estimated 700,000 low-income individuals that fall in the "coverage gap," meaning they do not have employer-sponsored coverage, do not qualify for health insurance subsidies and do not qualify for Medicaid coverage. In 2015, Texas spent 43 percent of state appropriations on health care, and between 2011 to 2015 the state budget for health care rose by 20 percent – a rate higher than inflation and population growth.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, increases in uncompensated or indigent care, increases in utilization of health services and the high cost of prescription drugs continue to contribute to the state's rising health care cost.<sup>5</sup> Recent changes to Texas' 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver have also increased uncertainty among hospitals and providers further reducing access to health care services.

Texas needs to support statewide initiatives that secure access to affordable health care coverage and support protections for individuals. It is essential the state invest in public health programs that protect and improve the health of vulnerable Texans. The state must also continue to incentivize delivery models that drive down health care costs while improving care.

<sup>1</sup> Families USA. A 50-State Look at Medicaid. (May 2018)

<sup>2</sup> Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. The Effects of Medicaid Expansion under the ACA: Updated Findings from a Literature Review. (Mar. 28, 2018)

<sup>3</sup> Lopez, Ashely. KUT 90.5 NPR Here's Why Texas' Uninsured Rate Is Climbing Again (Sep. 14, 2018)





<sup>4</sup> Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. Texas Health Spending, Fiscal 2015. (Jan. 2017)

<sup>5</sup> Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. Texas Health Spending, Fiscal 2015. (Jan. 2017)



*To improve access to healthcare services, Methodist Healthcare Ministries advocates for the following legislative and policy initiatives:*

#### **OUR COMMITMENT**

-  Improve access to affordable healthcare coverage for millions of uninsured Texans, eliminate the Medicaid coverage gap and support pre-existing condition protections.
-  Improve the state's Medicaid program by providing continuous coverage for children, extending coverage for pregnant individuals, and improving protections for consumers.
-  Continue funding public health programs that protect vulnerable families from infectious diseases, chronic diseases and oral diseases.
-  Improve access to healthcare services through the adoption of innovative delivery models that promote care coordination and improve outcomes for people with complex healthcare needs.

# PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

## Invest In And Support Behavioral Health Services



Insufficient access to behavioral health services remains one of the most pressing policy issues in Texas. Untreated mental health needs can affect all aspects of life including

economic productivity, student success, criminal justice and public health. Many Texans are unable to obtain services due to lack of access to insurance coverage and inadequate mental health services.

It is estimated that one in five Texans have mental health needs, with more than 1 million suffering from a Serious Mental Illness (SMI).<sup>1</sup> About 1.9 million youth in Texas have behavioral health needs that emerge by age 14, yet treatment does not occur until years later when interventions are less effective and costlier.<sup>2</sup> Specialty populations, including those with Substance Use Disorders (SUD) or Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), are also at a disadvantage. Only 5.8 percent of low-income Texas adults with a SUD receive community services and the rate of mental health conditions for those with IDD is two-three times higher than the general population. These disorders affect the health of individuals, families and communities and thereby the health of our state.

Meeting the mental health care needs of Texans requires critical policy analysis to ensure a coordinated system of supports and services that are effective and appropriate. Texas has an opportunity to increase access to behavioral health services through integrated care across the state, providing treatment options for those with co-occurring illnesses and in pediatric settings. In addition, state agencies and local communities can partner to assist Texans with a range of effective strategies that address mental health, including Mental Health Grant Programs and the Texas Education Agency. The 85th Legislature made a vital commitment to transform the state inpatient psychiatric hospitals, yet the San Antonio State Hospital will need continued funding to redesign the continuum of care for inpatient psychiatric services in its 54-county service area. Continued and expanded efforts are needed for prevention and intervention for behavioral health needs to mitigate the impact of disabling conditions for Texans.

<sup>1</sup> Texas Health and Human Services Commission. Texas Statewide Behavioral Health Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2017-2021.

<sup>2</sup> Kessler, R.C. et al. (2005). "Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication." *Archives of General Psychiatry*. 62(6):593-602

*To improve access and quality of behavioral health services, Methodist Healthcare Ministries advocates for the following:*

#### OUR COMMITMENT

- ✓ Invest in the redesign of the San Antonio State Hospital by providing the necessary funding to construct a state-of-the-art facility to serve as a critical component for a successful mental healthcare system.
- ✓ Invest in and support behavioral health services to address healthcare needs across the spectrum to better serve people with mental health conditions by increasing access to specialized services and promoting improved integration of healthcare.
- ✓ Strengthen and support services for children and youth with mental illness in an effective, timely and coordinated manner by developing integrated care in pediatric settings and expanding the use of school-based programs to connect children to services when needed.
- ✓ Prioritize mental health across the spectrum by continuing to invest in the state's Mental Health Grant Programs and addressing gaps in the continuum of care that promote prevention, treatment and recovery strategies to ensure every Texan has a hopeful path to wellness and recovery.



# PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

## Improve Texas' Healthcare Workforce



Texas is the fastest growing state in the United States and unless significant changes occur, the population increase will continue to outpace the availability of primary care and specialty services. It will place an unparalleled demand on the state's healthcare workforce and reduce access to health care services for all residents regardless of geography, income or insurance status.

Texas ranks 47th in the number of primary care providers per 100,000<sup>1</sup> and the primary care provider shortage is expected to increase by 67 percent by 2030 with the Rio Grande Valley facing the absolute greatest shortage.<sup>2</sup> Currently, over two-thirds of Texas counties do not have a psychiatrist. Making matters worse, an expected 34 percent of primary care physicians and 60 percent of psychiatrists will be past retirement age by 2025.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the physician workforce is disproportionately distributed across Texas with more than 57 percent of the state's physicians practicing in the five most populous counties, despite only representing 44 percent of the population.<sup>4</sup>

Texas must invest in comprehensive solutions to increase its healthcare workforce, such as funding graduate medical education and loan repayment programs for health care providers and faculty. Increasing the Medicaid reimbursement schedule is critical to workforce sustainability and in ensuring access to timely medical services.<sup>5</sup> The state must also incentivize the adoption of telemedicine and telehealth services shown to be effective, improve provider productivity, and expand care to individuals in rural areas with limited access. Efforts to improve access to health professionals should also build on the existing infrastructure by allowing health professionals to practice in underserved areas to the full extent of their education and training.

<sup>1</sup> Association of American Medical Colleges, 2017 State Physician Workforce Data Report. (Nov. 2017)

<sup>2</sup> TX Dept. of State Health Services. Health Professional Resource Center. TX Projections of Supply and Demand for Physicians and Psychiatrist, 2017-2030. (Jul. 2018)

<sup>3</sup> Texas Department of State Health Services. Health Professional Resource Center. 2015 Trends, Distribution and Demographics. (Jun. 2016)

<sup>4</sup> Singleton, Miller, Avila, & Garber. North Texas Regional Extension Center. The Physician Workforce in Texas. (Apr. 2015)

<sup>5</sup> Texas Medical Association. Ensure an Adequate Health Care Workforce





*To increase and improve the state's healthcare workforce, Methodist Healthcare Ministries advocates for the following:*

#### OUR COMMITMENT

- ✓ Support programming that ensures Texas medical school graduates remain in Texas and practice in healthcare shortage areas and in facilities that care for the uninsured.
- ✓ Appropriately fund all healthcare providers to address the state's healthcare workforce shortage, including nurses, midlevel providers, dentists and mental health providers.
- ✓ Incentivize the adoption of technology and innovative models of care aimed at improving access to healthcare services.
- ✓ Allow healthcare providers to fully practice within the scope of their training and expertise to lessen the impact of the healthcare workforce shortage on the community.

# PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

## Improve the Health of Women & Children



### WOMEN'S HEALTH

Access to preventive healthcare is critically important to the health and well-being of women and their babies by detecting health

problems, facilitating early treatment, helping women prepare for a healthy pregnancy, and helping them avoid unplanned pregnancies. Unfortunately, many Texas women go without preventive care and access to contraception is not easy for low-income women. The Legislature's continued commitment to Texas' women's health programs is critical for the state's fiscal health and for ensuring more Texas mothers and babies are healthy.

While progress has been made, Texas still has a large unmet need for women's preventive care. A 2015 report by the Guttmacher Institute, "Contraceptive Needs and Services," found that roughly 1.8 million Texas women need publicly funded family planning. In contrast, only 219,400 women were served in the Healthy Texas Women and the Family Planning Program. When women experience gaps in their healthcare coverage, it increases their risk for negative health outcomes and unintended pregnancies.

Fifty-four percent of the state's unplanned births are publicly funded, and the most recent research shows that unintended pregnancies in Texas cost taxpayers \$2.9 billion.<sup>1</sup>

Enabling eligible women to access and maintain continuous healthcare coverage is essential to help women identify and address health issues early on. Texas' maternal mortality rate is still troubling, despite recently corrected 2012 data analysis that now shows a lower rate of mortality than initially reported. In their 2018 Joint Biennial Report, the Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force and the Texas Department of State Health Services recommend increasing access to health services during the year after pregnancy and throughout the inter-conception period to improve the health of women, facilitate continuity of care, enable effective care transitions and promote safe birth spacing. Texas needs to address opportunities and barriers to ensure women receive effective preventive and referral services and other treatment as needed, such as auto-enrollment into the state's Healthy Texas Women (HTW) program and dual eligibility within the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and HTW programs.

<sup>1</sup> Sonfield & Kost., "Public Costs from Unintended Pregnancies and the Role of Public Insurance Programs in Paying for Pregnancy-Related Care: National and State Estimates for 2010," New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families. Nation's Progress on Children's Health Coverage Reverses Course. (Nov. 2018)

<sup>3</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2018 Kids Count Data Book. (June 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Project of the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The State of Obesity: Obesity Among WIC Participants Ages 2-4. (Nov. 2016)

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Progress on Childhood Obesity. (Aug. 2013)

## CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Despite progress toward expanding access to health coverage to children in America, more than one in five children are uninsured in Texas (one of the nation's worst states in children's uninsured rate).<sup>2</sup> Children with unmet health needs fall behind developmentally and have trouble catching up physically, socially and academically. Texas lawmakers need to promote innovative policy changes designed to improve children's health and provide quality care for children.

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Texas ranks 43rd in overall child well-being.<sup>3</sup> When children are healthy, they are more likely to maintain a healthy weight throughout their childhood, be successful in school and achieve lifelong health. About one in four children age two to five is overweight or obese.<sup>4</sup> Children who are overweight or obese as preschoolers are five times more likely to be overweight or obese as adults.<sup>5</sup> As Texas children grow into the leaders of tomorrow, the future of Texas depends on the opportunities that kids have today.

Trends in child well-being over time show how policies have impacted children and investments can improve outcomes and close gaps in disparities. Texas lawmakers need to prevent reductions in the state's Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) services and other initiatives designed to improve child health and provide quality care for children. Superior care for children starts with access to a safe and effective learning environment. Lawmakers must make child care minimum standards consistent with the federal USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to ensure children receive the nutrition needed to help their bodies grow and minds develop. In addition, the Texas Education Agency must develop and institute policies on recess and physical education that encourage constructive, age-appropriate playtime. These programs are a lifeline for many Texans – programs that deserve to be protected, adequately funded and effectively managed.

*To improve the health of women & children in Texas, Methodist Healthcare Ministries advocates for the following:*

### OUR COMMITMENT

- ✓ Ensure adequate funding for critical health programs that improve the health of women and children, including women's preventive services and increased access to quality care for children and mothers.
- ✓ Increase continuity of care for women by eliminating barriers to preventive healthcare and family planning services. Develop solutions to provide critical access to care for women before, during and after pregnancy.
- ✓ Support policies that increase access to healthy foods and physical activity among children and families. Incentivize the purchase of healthy foods for low-income families.





*"Serving Humanity to Honor God"*  
1-800-959-6673 • [www.mhm.org](http://www.mhm.org)

Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. is a private, faith-based not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating access to health care for the uninsured through direct services, community partnerships and strategic grant-making in 74 counties across South Texas.

Guided by its mission of "Serving Humanity to Honor God," Methodist Healthcare Ministries' vision is to be the leader for improving wellness of the least served.

The mission also includes Methodist Healthcare Ministries' one-half ownership of the Methodist Healthcare System, the largest healthcare system in South Texas, which creates a unique avenue to ensure that it continues to be a benefit to the community by providing quality care to all and charitable care when needed. For more information, visit [www.mhm.org](http://www.mhm.org).

 For more information about Methodist Healthcare Ministries and its advocacy initiatives, contact us at [info@mhm.org](mailto:info@mhm.org).

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