

Community Action Network
Frequently Asked Questions About
Adult Mental Health

August 2005

This document provides an update to information in the *Community Action Network Prescription For Wellness -Adult Mental Health Assessment* report released in April 2001 and "Frequently Asked Questions About Adult Mental Health" released in November 2002. All data included are the most current available.



Highlights

Public Mental Health System Stretched to Capacity

The reduction in public mental health funding combined with the narrowing of eligibility criteria have led to an increase in the number of people unable to receive services within the publicly funded mental health system. For the first time in its 38-year history, Austin Travis County MHMR (ATCMHMR) has had to create a waiting list for its services. The Community Care Services Department (CCSD), which runs the primary care clinics in Austin and Travis County, also reports a 40% increase in patients with a mental health diagnosis over the past year. The Austin State Hospital reports that

it reached capacity on 57 separate occasions between September 1, 2004 and July 31, 2005, resulting in a need to redirect patients to other state hospitals.

Jails Now a Major Mental Health Facility

The Gains Center on Jail Diversion reports that nationally, 16% of individuals in jail have a diagnosable mental illness. In Travis County, on any given day, this would equal about 386 inmates. People with mental illness are also 64% more likely to be arrested than those without mental illness who have committed the same offense. In a recent comparison of inmates at the Del Valle Jail against the Department of State Health Services **CARE** database, 40% (954 people) of the Del Valle inmates had been involved with the MHMR system at some point.

Overview

It is estimated that 22.1% of American adults (about one in five) will suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. Based on U.S. Census population estimates for 2005, this translates to approximately 48 million adults affected nationally, 3.6 million in Texas and 147,774 adults (ages 18 and older) in Travis County. **The good news is that, with appropriate resources (see Does Treatment Work p.4,) most mental disorders can be effectively managed and treated. Recovery happens!** However, some individuals may feel guilt or shame about their mental illness, and for this reason many do not seek treatment for disorders that are more common than cancer, diabetes, heart disease or arthritis. The answers are complex, no doubt, but as a community we can make a significant difference in the lives of those with mental disorders. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/healthinformation/statisticsmenu.cfm>

Q. How Many Psychiatric Beds Are There In Travis County?

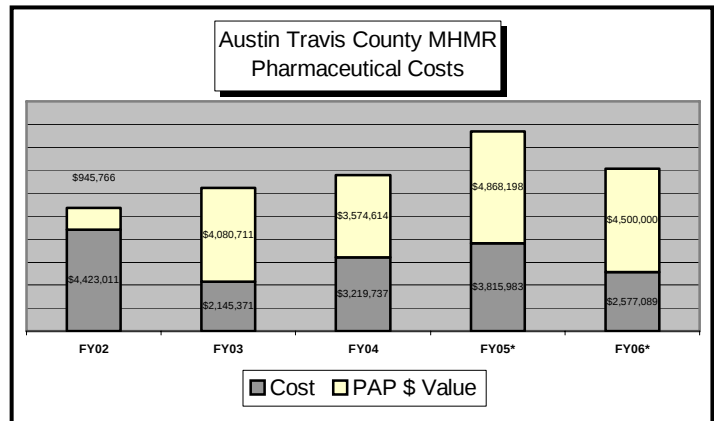
The number of psychiatric beds available in Travis County has remained static over the past three years. Currently, Travis County has 135 psychiatric beds, 56 of which are private with the remaining 78 psychiatric beds funded publicly. However, the funding for these public psychiatric beds has been reduced from \$6.8 million to \$5.9 million for Fiscal Year 2006, which will no doubt further decrease the number of available beds in Travis County.

Frequently Asked Questions about Adult Mental Health

Q. What is the Cost of Psychiatric Medications?

According to ATCMHMR, the cost of psychiatric medication increased by 4.2% for the 2005 fiscal year. ATCMHMR also reports it will overspend its 2005 pharmacy budget by \$815,000. If it were not for the Patient Assistance Program* (PAP) the budget shortfall would be even greater – totaling \$5.5 million.

* The Patient Assistance Program provides free medications to indigent people – Medications are limited to participating Pharmaceutical Companies' formularies.



Q. What is the Mayor's Mental Health Task Force?

In January 2005, Austin Mayor Will Wynn released the *Mayor's Mental Health Task Force Final Report* that defined the criteria to make Austin a mentally fit community by addressing gaps in services and building upon current strengths. The Task Force, created by Mayor Wynn in 2004, was the culmination of years of expressed community concern over the emerging challenges faced by residents with severe mental illnesses and the need to develop strategies to improve services and achieve community goals. More than 80 individuals representing more than 40 organizations participated over a five-month period to develop recommendations defining 39 criteria that, when achieved, would define Austin as a mentally healthy community. http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/council/downloads/mh_final.pdf

Q: What is Adult Mental Health?

Mental health is a broad term used to characterize an adult's ability to function in daily life. *Mental health* is how people look at themselves, their lives, and the other people in their lives; evaluate their challenges and problems; and explore choices. This includes handling stress, relating to other people, and making decisions. It is important to the health of the individuals living in Travis County to understand how good mental health and resiliency can be promoted.

<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/resources/dictionary.aspx#M>

Q: What is the prevalence of mental disorders in Travis County?

There are many different kinds of mental disorders experienced by adults. However, the majority of mental health disorders can be categorized into three major groups: Anxiety, Mood Disorders (Depression) and Schizophrenia.

Prevalence of Mental Disorders in Travis County			
Disorders	Prevalence	Travis County	
		2000	2005
Anxiety Disorders	13.3%	68,652 ⁺	72,035 ⁺
Mood Disorders (Depression)	7.1%	36,649	63,523
Schizophrenia*	1.1%	5,678	7,355
All Disorders	21%	108,398	147,774

Based on Census figures for adults (18-54).

*Because Schizophrenia comprises the highest percentage of all psychotic disorders it is often the only disorder where prevalence data is reported.

Travis County does not fare much better than the national average in prevalence rates for any of these three categories of disorders. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/numbers.cfm>
http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/census/downloads/austin_forecast05_annual_pub.xls

Frequently Asked Questions about Adult Mental Health

Q: What is the cost of mental disorders in Travis County?

The total economic cost of mental illness in Texas for 2003 was \$16.6 billion, a figure that includes \$13.3 billion in lost income due to reduced workforce participation, \$2.6 billion for mortality costs and more than \$700 million for lost income due to family care giving. **In Travis County the estimated economic impact of mental illness in 2003 totaled \$700 million.**

<http://www.mhatexas.org/TurningtheCorner.pdf>

Q: How many mental health professionals practice in Travis County?

The total number of mental health professionals (M.D.s, LPCs, LCSWs, LMFTs, Ph.Ds) currently registered in Travis County is estimated to be about 2,041. This is a 20% to 30% decrease from the number of mental health professionals registered in 2002. Conversely during the same time period the population within Travis County has increased by 30%. From 2002 to 2005 the number of psychiatrist registered in Travis County has increased a modest 1.9%. The ratio of Travis County residents to psychiatrists is 4000 to 1.

Mental Health Professional	Registered in Travis County	Professional to Resident Ratio
Psychiatrist*	160	1 to 4000
Licensed Professional Counselor*	656	1 to 1000
Licensed Clinical Social Worker*	648	1 to 1000
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist	162	1 to 4000
Licensed Psychologists	415	1 to 1600

* Ratios Based on 2005 Census Estimate for Travis County

Q: What key indicators are being tracked in Travis County?

I. Travis County Suicide Rate

Travis County has had the highest suicide rate (12.0 per 100,000 population) of any major Texas county for the past five years. By comparison, Harris County has a rate of 10.5; Bexar County, 10.4; Dallas, 10.1; and Tarrant, 9.5. For Travis County, the highest suicide rates are among men (33.7 suicides per 100,000 population) and the highest suicide rates in adults (of both sexes) are the 45 to 54 age bracket with 20 suicides per 100,000 population. Men aged 55-64 have a suicide death rate of 23.6 in Travis County while men aged 65-74 have a suicide death rate of 62.9. Austin / Travis County Plan for Suicide Prevention: *GUIDELINES FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION*

http://www.atcmhmr.com/about_us/Suicide_Prevention_Plan_200507.pdf

II. Proportion of Homeless Adults Who Have a Mental Disorder

From July 31, 2004 –August 1, 2005, social service providers documented **8,324 homeless persons** within Travis County. Of those, an estimated 39% (3,227) report some form of mental illness, 20% to 25% (807) of these individuals meet the criteria for serious mental illness, and 50% (1,613) have a co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorder.

(Homelessness Management Information System and ATCMHMR)

III: College Students and Mental Illness

Within the Travis County area there are an estimated 83,203 students attending a variety of universities, colleges, trade schools and religious programs. An estimated 27% of young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 (22,465 students) have a diagnosable mental illness. One in three students (27,457) report having experienced prolonged periods of depression; one in four (20,801) report having suicidal thoughts or feelings; one in seven (11,898) report difficulty functioning in school due to mental illness; and 50% of students (41,602) rate their mental health as below average or poor. National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, "NAMI on Campus" and Press Release: "Mental Illness Profile Among College Students" (August 25, 2004) and <http://austintx.areaconnect.com/city-colleges.htm>

Frequently Asked Questions about Adult Mental Health

Q: Does treatment work?

Mental health disorders are not character flaws. Treatment success for serious mental illnesses ranges from 60 to 80 percent, whereas the treatment success rate for heart diseases ranges from only 41 to 52 percent. Often the recommended treatment for mental illnesses includes a combination of medication and psychotherapy (i.e. cognitive behavioral therapy). It can be said that most mental illnesses are not curable but can be effectively treated to reduce and/or eliminate the symptoms of the disorder. People with serious and persistent mental illnesses (i.e., Schizophrenia, Bipolar, Major Depression) will engage in several treatment modalities simultaneously, which provide the best overall reduction in symptoms. Other key steps to successful treatment for a severe mental illness include assertive community treatment teams, supported employment, integrated treatment for mental illness and substance abuse disorders, symptom self-management (teaching patients to manage symptoms medication cannot address) and family education and support. When patients with a severe mental illness combine medicine and these other treatment options, rates of recovery greatly increase.

However, most troubling is the fact that 60% of those with a mental disorder get no treatment at all. <http://www.wimentalhealth.org/Learn/facts/Treatable.htm>; <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/press/mentalhealthstats.cfm>; <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/features/surgeongeneralreport/home.asp>; Texas Atypical Antipsychotic Medication Outcome Study, Southeastern Consulting Inc. 2002

Q: What can friends and family do?

- Friends and family members can help by knowing which symptoms and signs to look for, such as in suicide.
- Consider attending and/or joining a support group for family members of individuals with mental illness, e.g., National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI).

Q: What can I do to help?

- Become a volunteer for a mental health organization or contact the United Way Capital Area's Volunteer Center for opportunities to volunteer within organizations serving individuals with mental health problems. Call 211 or refer to <http://www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org> for more information.
- Let your local political leaders know your position on mental health issues.
- Distribute this FAQ to educate community residents.
- Request that community and employee health fairs include mental health awareness & treatment resources.

Additional Information

To access the 2001 CAN Prescription For Wellness refer to: www.caction.org. To obtain a copy of this document, *The CAN Community Overview*, or any other CAN report, please visit the CAN website, email Brenda Ahrns at bahrns@austinisd.org call 512-414-8203, or write to The Community Action Network, 1111 W. 6th Street, Suite B220, Austin, Texas 78703

This FAQ was created and reviewed by members of the CAN Adult Mental Health Issue Area Group. For information about this document, please contact: Marietta Noel at Austin Travis County MHMR Center, 512-445-7739 or marietta.noel@atcmhmr.com



CAN Partners: Austin Area Research Organization ~ Austin Independent School District ~ Austin Area Human Services Association
Austin Area Interreligious Ministries ~ Austin Travis County MHMR Center ~ Capital Metro ~ City of Austin
Community Justice Council ~ Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce ~ Health Partnerships 2010 ~ Higher Education Coalition
Travis County ~ United Way Capital Area ~ WorkSource- Greater Austin Area Workforce Board