

Texas Behavioral Health Workforce Shortage Snapshot

439

254 counties in Texas with 439 federally designated Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas (MHPSAs).^{2,3}

- HPSA Facilities: 168
- HPSA Geographic Areas: 211
- HPSA Population Groups: 60
- Total Count of HPSAs: 439



Whole county is in shortage area
Part of county is in shortage area
None of county is in shortage area



15,770,751
Texans living
in MHPSAs.⁴

Major state shortages of all **6** major mental health professionals.

1:10,000

MHPSA designations can include other core mental health providers, but most MHPSA designations use a 1:10,000 psychiatrists to population ratio.³

Figure 1. Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas, 2021¹

2021 Mental Health Professional Shortages:

- 168 of the 254 counties did not have any licensed psychiatrists,⁵
- 147 counties did not have any licensed psychologists,⁵
- 91 counties did not have any licensed clinical social workers,⁵
- 78 counties did not have any licensed chemical dependency counselors,⁵
- 41 counties did not have any licensed professional counselors,⁵
- 211 counties did not have any Psychiatric-Mental Health Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (PMHAPRNs) as of 2019,⁶ and
- 148 school districts did not have any school counselors.⁷

Actively licensed/certified Behavioral Health Professionals in Texas: 2020 and 2021^{8,9}

**Denotes available 2021 counts*

Behavioral Health Professional Type	Current Number	Eligible for Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Loan Repayment Program for Mental Health Professional ¹⁰
Community health workers or promotores	4,139	
Licensed baccalaureate social workers (LBSWs)	4,339	
Licensed chemical dependency counselors (LCDCs)	5,991*	✓
Licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs)	9,180*	✓
Licensed master social workers (LMSWs)	11,416	
Licensed professional counselors (LPCs)	23,093*	✓
Licensed psychological associates	803	
Licensed psychologists	4,887	✓
Licensed specialists in school psychology (LSSPs)	3,594	
Licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFTs)	2,935*	✓
Psychiatrists	2,432*	✓
Psychiatric-mental health advanced practice nurses (PMHAPRNs)	2,486*	✓
Recovery support peer specialists (RSPS) ¹¹	488	
RSPS - Intern	68	
Mental health peer specialist	476	
Peer specialist supervisor	203	
Certified family partner	142	
School Counselors ¹²	13,864	
Communities In Schools (CIS) licensed site staff ⁷	311	

Licensed behavioral health professionals also work in schools to positively impact students' mental health needs in Texas.

- In 2020-2021, there were 5,371,586 students enrolled in Texas schools.¹³ These students were served by 13,864 certified school counselors and 3,594 licensed specialists in school psychology (LSSPs).¹²
- Schools also partnered with community providers to support students' behavioral health needs on campus. For example, 311 of the Communities in Schools (CIS) professional site staff serving Texas schools in 2020-2021 were licensed behavioral health professionals.⁷

Behavioral Health Workforce Demand

Nationally:

Since 2020, more children and adults have sought out behavioral health services compared to rates prior to the pandemic. 4 in 10 adults have reported symptoms of anxiety or depression in 2020 as compared to 1 in 10 in 2019.¹⁴ In June 2020, the CDC reported that 40% of U.S. adults were struggling with mental health or substance use.¹⁵ Some demographic groups, such as youth, communities of color, and essential workers, have reported higher rates of mental/behavioral health issues related to the pandemic.¹⁵ The number of psychologists who reported receiving more referrals in 2021 almost doubled from the previous year (from 37% in 2020 to 62% in 2022).¹⁶ In addition, the statistics on student mental health during this time are concerning: emergency department visits related to mental health increased 24% for 5 to 11 year olds and 31% for 12 to 17 year olds between January and October 2020.¹⁷ Further, the Institute for Educational Services stated that 70% of public schools reported that the percentage of students who have sought mental health services increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁸

Texas:

The increased demand for behavioral health services has impacted Texas providers considerably. Particularly, behavioral health care professionals have had to carry the compounded trauma that people have experienced during the pandemic. In 2020, more than ¾ of surveyed psychiatrists reported burnout.¹⁹ Before the pandemic, healthcare workers were already reporting “alarming levels of burnout.”²⁰ After the pandemic, the demand for mental health professionals worsened by reports of behavioral health providers leaving the field entirely. According to TX DSHS “the shortage of psychiatrists is projected to grow from 1,067 FTEs in 2017 to 1,208 FTEs by 2030, an increase of 13 percent.”²¹ Some initial surveys of behavioral health professionals report that many have stopped practicing or have some change to their employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic.²²

Summary

By addressing the behavioral health workforce challenge in Texas, **state agencies, community partners,** and **behavioral health providers** can actively respond to the ongoing mental health crisis and come up with **creative solutions** on how to **incentivize, recruit,** and **retain** the full spectrum of behavioral health providers.

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2. Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designations are used to identify areas and populations groups in the United States that are experiencing a healthcare provider shortage. In order to be designated as a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area (MHPSA), areas must have a ratio of 30,000 citizens to 1 mental health provider, or 20,000 to 1 if there are “unusually high needs in the community.” HRSA defines mental health provider in a HPSA as a psychiatrist only, core mental health professional only, or both psychiatrist and core mental health professional.
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