As you know, over the weekend President Trump declared a national state of emergency and Governor Abbott declared a statewide state of emergency due to COVID-19. Make sure to put the health and safety of you and our community first, especially those in our community who might be at greater risk of complications from the Coronavirus. We’re all in this together! For more information, please check out at the CDC’s website.

We are seeing many state policy meetings either be postponed to an undetermined future date or be moved online. We will try to share information on virtual meetings, events, and webinars, as we find them.

NAMI Texas sent out a guidance letter last week to NAMI members. NAMI has also provided guidance on their website on navigating this situation while living with mental health issues, including a NAMI HelpLine Coronavirus Information and Resources Guide.

Coalition of Texans with Disabilities has also posted resources on navigating the pandemic if you or a loved one has a disability.

Texas State Legislature and Agency Meetings Canceled

The state legislature has canceled all legislative meetings for March and April, and state agencies are starting to cancel meetings for the next couple of months. These hearings should be rescheduled later in the year.

For now, you can watch recaps of the recent mental health-related hearings and meetings.

Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs & Border Security - Veteran Mental Health/Suicide Prevention Charge - February 24, 2020 in Harlingen.


Senate Select Committee on Mass Violence & Community Safety hearing - December 4, 2019.


Texas School Health Advisory Council - February 24, 2020
#SickofItTX Needs Mental Health Voices

Improving access to health care is more important now than ever before. NAMI Texas is partnering with #SickofItTX, a non-partisan grassroots network of engaged activists committed to making healthcare the key issue for Texas policy makers in the 2020 elections and 2021 legislative session.

Access to quality healthcare is a core part of recovery. We need NAMI members to not only help with this movement, but also represent NAMI locally and highlight the need for strong mental health services as part of this healthcare movement. This is advocacy that can be done online as well.

Learn about this critical movement here and how to get involved here: https://sickofittx.org/join.

Mental Health Counts in the 2020 Census

If you haven’t received the census yet, you should receive it soon! The information that comes from the census determines funding for key social and health services, and individuals living with mental illness have been historically under-counted in the census. Therefore, it is critical that you and your loved ones fill it out to represent our rapidly growing state.

Learn more about mental health and the census at https://nami.org/census.

Media on Mental Health Advocacy

Abbott says the homeless need mental health care. Advocates say Medicaid expansion would help.

Abbott has long opposed extending state-funded health coverage to 1.5 million Texans under the Affordable Care Act. But a spokesman for the governor did not rule out a possible coverage expansion under a new Trump administration block grant policy.

PBS is releasing a documentary on April 13th, 2020, Bedlam.

Shot over the course of five years, Bedlam takes viewers inside Los Angeles County’s overwhelmed and vastly under-resourced psych ER, a nearby jail warehousing thousands of psychiatric patients, and the homes — and homeless encampments — of people affected by severe mental illness, where silence and shame often worsen the suffering.

Texas Mental Health Experts Talk Racial Healing and Counseling People of Color

Vicky Coffee, the director of programs for the Hogg Foundation for mental health and Dr. Calvin Kelly, a certified clinical trauma professional spoke with In Focus Texas host, Dr. Nicole Cross about the effects of discrimination on mental health.

If you have anything you would like to share with NAMI Texas advocates in these emails, please send the information to policy.fellow@namitexas.org.

- Alissa Sughrue and the NAMI Texas Public Policy Team

Comments on Proposed Rules Due 3/23 on Texas Brain Injury Advisory Council

Texas Health and Human Services is accepting comments from stakeholders on the following proposed rules, which are now posted in the Texas Register. The comment period ends March 23, 2020.

Texas Health and Human Services Commission 1 TAC, Part 15, Chapter 351 Coordinated Planning and Delivery of Health and Human Services, concerning Texas Brain Injury Advisory Council (TBIAC). Comments can be emailed to HHS Rules Coordination Office.
Questions can be emailed to HHS Rules Coordination Office. Visit the HHS Rulemaking website for more information.

Maternal Mental Health Survey - Please Fill out Before March 31st

The goal of this survey is to identify opportunities for improving access to maternal mental health screenings, referrals, treatment, and support services in Texas. If you are a professional that works with pregnant or postpartum women, if you work with kids and their families, or if you or a family member have experience with maternal mental health challenges, we hope you will complete this survey.

Please access the survey HERE. The survey will take about 15 minutes and will close on Monday, March 31st. This survey was developed by Texans Care for Children in partnership with St. David’s Foundation to gather information from stakeholders across Texas about maternal mental health. If you have questions please contact Adriana Kohler at akohler@txchildren.org.

The survey is intended for:

- Professionals working with moms and/or kids, such as: medical providers, OB/GYNs, pediatricians, mental health professionals, community health workers, doulas, professionals at community organization serving moms or kids.
- Individuals who have experience with a maternal mental health challenge

Mark your calendars! The South Southwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center is excited to share the details for our region’s First Episode Psychosis Conference.
Participants from across the country will have the opportunity to hear from some of the nation’s top leaders working in coordinated specialty care, on FEP teams, and in the behavioral health community at large.

**Dates:**
Pre-Conference, August 3rd  
Conference, August 4th — 5th

**Location:**
Omni Austin Hotel at Southpark  
4140 Governor’s Row  
Austin, TX 78744

Stay updated on all conference news — including registration information and sponsorship opportunities — on the website.

Questions? Email Jennifer Baran-Prall, senior project coordinator, at jennifer.baranprall@austin.utexas.edu

NAMI Texas is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of all individuals living with mental illness and their families. Please visit our website at NAMITexas.org for more information. Help support our advocacy efforts by donating to NAMI Texas at https://namitexas.networkforgood.com/.

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