

2021-2022 Policy Platform: Quick Reference

NAMI Texas is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization founded by volunteers in 1984. We are part of the nation's largest grassroots mental health organizations and we exist to help improve the quality of life for individuals with mental illness and their families. Around the state, we have 27 local NAMI affiliate organizations and approximately 2,000 members.

Early Intervention—On average, individuals wait 8-10 years to receive the mental health services and support they need. With early intervention, individuals can avoid long-term disabilities and other negative consequences. To improve the mental health of children and youth and improve academic achievement, Texas should:

- Expand Mental Health Education for Students and Families
- Guarantee Coverage of Mental Health Conditions for Children
- Protect Special Education/504 Accommodations for Eligible Students
- Improve Mental Health Services and Supports across the Foster Care System
- Guarantee Mental Health Services for Students in Higher Education
- Facilitate Access to Coordinated Specialty Care for First Episode Psychosis
- Prevent and Treat Trauma and Interpersonal Violence

Criminal Justice—Approximately 40% of prisoners and jail inmates have experienced mental illness. The physical and psychological consequences of imprisonment often worsen mental health, prolong sentences, and increase rates of homelessness, emergency service utilization, substance use, and recidivism. To improve engagement in mental health services, Texas should:

- Expand Availability of Peer Re-entry Support Services
- Limit Use of Solitary Confinement
- Improve Medication Continuity for Jail Inmates
- Expand Competency Restoration Options and Improve Competency Restoration Processes
- Improve Mental Health Services in Juvenile Justice System
- Implement A Statewide Good Samaritan Policy
- Exempt Individuals with Severe Mental Illness from Capital Punishment
- Maintain Funding for Post-Booking Jail Diversion Programs
- Establish an Office of Forensic Services to Oversee Forensic Mental Health Care

Insurance Coverage, Parity, & Medication—Approximately one in five adults experience a mental health concern each year. Access to insurance coverage ensures that Texans are able to receive the appropriate mental healthcare when needed. To improve access to mental health care and enhance insurance coverage to Texans living with mental illness, Texas should:

- Enhance Medicaid and CHIP Coverage for Low-Income Adults and Families
- Support Mental Health Programs and Community Partnerships
- Improve Coverage of Short-Term Health Plans
- Promote Medication Access and Continuity by Limiting Non-Medical Switching
- Implement Policies that Provide Insurance Equity
- Integrate Mental Health and Primary Care

Housing & Other Support—Mental illness can contribute to the onset and chronicity of housing instability and homelessness. Difficulty in maintaining employment and social support systems may create additional obstacles in the journey to recovery. To promote the mental health and wellbeing of all Texans, Texas should:

- Increase Rental and Utility Assistance Funding for People with Mental Illness
- Boost the Continuum of Care with Step-Down and Congregate Housing
- Improve the Home and Community Based Services—Adult Mental Health Program
- Increase Access to Permanent Supportive and Rapid Re-Housing
- Provide Additional Funding for Clubhouses and Employment Support

Mental Health System Capacity—The mental health care system does not have the capacity to meet the full range of consumer needs. Waitlists, workforce shortages, and gaps in the care continuum continue to jeopardize the health and wellbeing of Texans. To improve the quality of care delivered to Texans, Texas should:

- Increase Funding for Community-Based Outpatient Programs
- Sustain Investment in State Hospital Redesign and Reconstruction
- Invest in Support Groups and Education Classes for Families, Peers, and Providers
- Increase Medicaid Reimbursement Opportunities and Rates for Peer Support Services
- Maintain Improvements in Access and Capacity to Telehealth Services
- Grant APRNs Full Practice Authority

Targeted Populations—Barriers in access to and receipt of mental health care disproportionately impact vulnerable individuals and communities. Targeted interventions that reduce barriers can improve the physical, emotional, and mental health of those most in need. To promote equity in access and delivery of care, Texas should:

- Improve Maternal Mental Health
- Eliminate Ethnic and Racial Disparities in Mental Health
- Mitigate the Impact of Poverty & Economic Instability on Mental Health and Well-being
- Enhance Mental Health Coverage for Veterans
- Eliminate Mental Health Disparities for LGBTQ+ Individuals
- Improve Mental Health Treatment Access for Co-occurring IDD

Crisis Services & Suicide Prevention—A strong response to a mental health crisis is the most important step in starting a person down the path to recovery. To ensure that individuals who are at risk of harm to self or others receive the appropriate response for their needs, Texas should:

- Require Health Professionals and Educators Receive Suicide Prevention Training
- Support Public-Private Partnerships to Expand Reach of Suicide Prevention Programs
- Reduce Access to Lethal Means
- Promote Use of Integrated Crisis Response Teams
- Increase the Availability of Crisis Respite Services
- Facilitate Access to Mental Health Services for First Responders
- Grant Physicians the Ability to Exercise Emergency Holds
- Expand Provider Authorization in Requesting Emergency Detention
- Extend Emergency Detention Warrant Period from 48 to 72 Hours
- Address Mental health Information Disclosures
- Expand State Capacity for Crisis Hotlines/Support Lines