

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TASK FORCE ACTION PLAN

The Williamson County Behavioral Health Task Force focuses on countywide mental health policy and systems changes for all age groups.

GOAL BHTF 1	WILLIAMSON COUNTY WILL ADVOCATE WITH REPRESENTATIVES IN THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE TO INCREASE AND SUSTAIN FUNDING FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES THAT SUPPORT A ROBUST CONTINUUM OF CARE.
OBJECTIVE BHTF 1.1	Williamson County will work with the Texas legislature to increase and sustain local funding opportunities available through public/private partnerships.
STRATEGY BHTF 1.1.1	BHTF's subcommittee will commit to continue to work with the Conference of Urban Counties, Texas Council of Community Centers, Texas Sheriff's Association and Bluebonnet Trails Community Services to discuss identified gaps and develop an action plan.
STRATEGY BHTF 1.1.2	BHTF's subcommittee will provide legislative recommendations through developing talking points and preparing standardized materials and will present to BHTF during quarterly meetings.
STRATEGY BHTF 1.1.3	BHTF's subcommittee will organize for BHTF to host legislators to discuss the future of behavioral healthcare in Williamson County with possibility of discussion about local match to address identified gaps. Invite individuals with lived experience to share stories with legislature.
ACTION STEPS:	Identify session priorities. Monitor legislation written and proposed.
	Identify necessary responses. Provide data and information to support and/or address changes needed.
GOAL BHTF 2	WILLIAMSON COUNTY THROUGH COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP WILL BEGIN A PILOT PROJECT OF A JAIL-BASED COMPETENCY RESTORATION PROGRAM REDUCING THE NUMBER OF DAYS FROM ARREST TO DISPOSITION OF COURT CASE.
OBJECTIVE BHTF 2.1	By 2025, the average number of days of incarceration for individuals with severe mental illness will decrease from established baseline, after implementation of jail-based competency restoration program in Williamson County. Source: <i>Baseline</i> : Average number of days individuals with severe mental illness remain in custody.
STRATEGY BHTF 2.1.1	A jail-based competency restoration committee will be formed to monitor success, identify any issues that may arise and ensure communication among involved agencies and departments.

STRATEGY BHTF 2.1.2	A baseline of average number of days of incarceration for individuals eligible for the jail-based competency restoration program will be identified.
STRATEGY BHTF 2.1.3	Bluebonnet Trails Community Services and the Williamson County Sheriff's Department (Corrections Division) will expand the jail-based competency restoration program.
ACTION STEPS:	Start of jail-based competency restoration program.
	Create a dashboard to track activity.

According to the CDC, suicide rates increased approximately 36% between 2000–2021. Suicide was responsible for 48,183 deaths in the US in 2021, which is about one death every 11 minutes. The number of people who think about or attempt suicide is even higher. In 2021, an estimated 12.3 million American adults seriously thought about suicide, 3.5 million planned a suicide attempt, and 1.7 million attempted suicide, according to [SAMHSA](#).

Suicide affects people of all ages. In 2021, suicide was among the top nine leading causes of death for people ages 10-64. Suicide was the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-14 and 20-34. Williamson County's age-adjusted mortality rate due to suicide of 13.5 per 100,000 population exceeds the Healthy People 2030 target of 12.8. ([CDC Wonder](#))

GOAL BHTF 3	WILLIAMSON COUNTY WILL CONTINUE TO WORK TO REDUCE THE STIGMA OF SEEKING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES BY INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS THAT MENTAL HEALTHCARE IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF OVERALL HEALTHCARE AND WELLNESS.
OBJECTIVE BHTF 3.1	By 2025, Williamson County will create a data-informed suicide fatality review committee to gather appropriate data to identify community needs.
STRATEGY BHTF 3.1.1	Improve suicide-related data collection by receiving all reported cases from all four precincts.
STRATEGY BHTF 3.1.2	Suicide fatality review committee will define mission and scope of work, within legally authorized ability to pursue Objective BH.4.1.
STRATEGY BHTF 3.1.3	BHTF will host first suicide fatality committee review meeting after reviewing ethical and legal concerns and receiving approval from leadership.
ACTION STEPS	Identify key professionals to inform a suicide fatality review committee.
	Explore obtaining suicide data from all four precincts via Juvenile/Probation meetings.
	Recruit key professionals and representatives from identified fields to join committee.

OBJECTIVE BHTF 4.1	By 2025, Williamson County will work with mental health providers, non-profits, churches, schools, first responders, and the justice system to increase knowledge of risk factors of suicide and lifesaving resources available.
STRATEGY BHTF 4.1.1	Establish subcommittee to increase knowledge of risk factors of suicide and lifesaving resources available by forming a partnership with The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).
ACTION STEPS:	Promote suicide prevention toolkits and curriculum for Williamson County to be made available on www.healthywilliamsoncounty.org .
	Develop a coordinated local public service announcement (PSA) campaign for Suicide Awareness (September) and Mental Health Awareness Month (May).
STRATEGY BHTF 4.1.2	Increase efforts to train Williamson County residents on Mental Health First Aid/Suicide Prevention Training, including local businesses, schools, churches, and parents.
ACTION STEP:	Utilize media outlets to promote the accomplishments in the community.
STRATEGY BHTF 4.1.3	Explore creating an annual BHTF mental health conference.
ACTION STEPS:	Identify and promote Suicide Prevention Social Media Toolkits.
	Conduct a public service announcement campaign.

CHILD AND YOUTH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TASK FORCE ACTION PLAN

STEP UP Texas is a project funded by the U.S. Department of Justice to bring trauma-informed and restorative practices training and implementation support to school districts, law enforcement, and the judicial system to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in engagement with the juvenile justice system (JJDP Title II, Part B, Core Requirement 4). It is a partnership between The University of Texas at Austin, Williamson County Juvenile Services, and STARRY. Initially funded in 2021, STEP UP Texas began providing training in Williamson County, Texas while also convening a Task Force of community and organizational stakeholders to better understand local challenges and possible solutions. In 2022, STEP UP Texas received additional funding to include implementation support alongside the training and to expand its reach to additional jurisdictions in Texas.

With this funding, Williamson County STEP UP Texas Task Force participants defined specific areas of activity that could be mobilized to address the challenges and opportunities identified during group discussions across the Sequential Intercept Modeling process. These opportunities were narrowed down to a list “priorities for change.” Once the full list of priorities was established participants were given three votes, with the goal of identifying five priorities for action planning. The top five priorities established through this voting process are listed below. Task Force participants then identified key objectives and developed action plans for the top five priorities for change identified through the voting process described above. These top priorities were integrated into the 2023-25 CHIP.

THEME/GOAL CYBHTF 1	IMPROVE SCHOOL-BASED DIVERSION & DISCIPLINARY ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (DAEP).
OBJECTIVE CYBHTF 1.1	By 2025, Williamson County will reduce school-based expulsions/removals and referrals/arrests, especially related to zero tolerance policies. Baseline for Juvenile Justice Alternative Educational Programs (JJAEP) 2022-23 school year is a total of 104 Expulsions and 169 total school related referrals/arrests. Source: Williamson County JJAEP.
STRATEGY CYBHTF 1.1.1	Create a decision-making tree between police departments and school districts that allows for situational response.
ACTION STEPS:	Education on Texas Education Code.

	Perform annual reviews.
	Provide transparent collaboration between districts for awareness and sharing of best practices.
STRATEGY CYBHTF 1.1.2	Educate students regarding consequences (legal and life choices).
ACTION STEPS:	Promote resources for K-12 curriculum for substance abuse, law enforcement interaction, and potential consequences.
	Promote public service announcements depicting making school threats, gun violence, vaping, etc.
	Provide effective communication to community and school staff regarding decisions.
STRATEGY CYBHTF 1.1.3	Reform disciplinary alternate education programming by using and aligning trauma informed, relational and restorative practices in Williamson County.
ACTION STEPS:	Conduct JJAEP tours.
	Increase collaboration between DAEP campuses.
	Offer trauma-informed training.
THEME/GOAL CYBHTF 2	ELIMINATE SCHOOL VAPING IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY SCHOOLS
OBJECTIVE CYBHTF 2.1	By 2025, reduce school vaping in Williamson County schools. Baseline Total 104 Expulsions, 70% Felony Drug (THC vape pens). Source: Williamson County JJAEP.
STRATEGY CYBHTF 2.1.1	Form education and prevention subcommittee.
ACTION STEPS:	Create a county-wide team to establish K-12 preventative education program for vaping and substance use.
	Recruit students, campus administration, law enforcement members teachers, prosecutors and judges.
STRATEGY CYBHTF 2.1.2	Form intervention and postvention subcommittee.

ACTION STEPS:	Establish a peer support group, by recruiting students, school counselors, community partners and restorative practice practitioners.
	Provide restorative practices training for campus employees and students.
	Create a toolkit of resources for campuses to use for additional support.
STRATEGY CYBHTF 2.1.3	Form enforcement subcommittee.
ACTION STEPS:	Create a structure with options for alternative/graduated consequences.
	Provide training for campuses on balanced disciplinary approach.
	Utilize Juvenile Probation: First Offender Program, law enforcement and school resource officers, campus administration and Chambers Taskforce.
THEME/GOAL CYBHTF 3	INCREASE COMMUNITY AND STUDENT VOICE IN SHAPING SCHOOL SUPPORTS, RESOURCES, SEQUENTIAL INTERCEPT MODEL MAPPING WITH A FOCUS ON CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS, REDUCING RACIAL DISPARITIES AND THE CENTRAL ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN ALL SOLUTIONS.
OBJECTIVE CYBHTF 3.1	By 2025, form a committee representing community and student voices from each city in Williamson County.
STRATEGY CYBHTF 3.1.1	Increase community trust (students and their families).
ACTION STEPS:	Identify key pillars of community (partners, students, and their families). Intentionally focus on those not currently participating in CYBHTF or HWC Coalition activities.
	Hold listening session in those communities.
	Create a survey for those not comfortable participating verbally and/or publicly.
	Determine which questions to ask in listening sessions and surveys.
	Partner with appropriate organizations to survey entire community (Kindergarten-higher education).
	Create a title and recognition program and structure for this large group and the community groups.

	Partner with The Georgetown Project to build on their Youth Council and Youth Summit concept.
	Involve partners in leadership and decision-making process of CHBHTF and HWC Coalition activities.
THEME/GOAL CYBHTF 4	IMPROVE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT & DISCIPLINE REFORM.
OBJECTIVE CYBHTF 4.1	By 2025, decrease the number of referrals to JJAEP that could be handled by prevention programming.
STRATEGY CYBHTF 4.1.1	Expand focus of identifying and addressing root cause related to behavior linked to school discipline.
ACTION STEPS:	Support school districts in revising Code of Conduct, discipline policies, and discipline practices based on findings from SIM mapping exercise.
	Measure recidivism rates, district wide.
	Measure levels of care accessed; district wide.
	Measure the number of students going to JJAEP.
	Measure the number of students needing hospitalization, district wide.
	Identify champions for change in leadership, district wide.
STRATEGY CYBHTF 4.1.2	Connect students with multi-tiered systems of support through a blend of school and community resources.
ACTION STEPS:	Identify champions for change.
	Promote an automatic referral to mental health/behavioral services at beginning and end of disciplinary referrals in all Williamson County schools.
	Connect students with proactive, universal prevention services (Tier 1) and prosocial activities (SPARKS), especially those who lose access to those supports due to exclusionary discipline on their own campuses.

	Provide school districts with a layered continuum of evidence-based practices that ensures that every student receives equitable academic and behavioral support that is culturally responsive, matched to need, and developmentally appropriate.
THEME/GOAL CYBHTF 5	Lack of accessible residential treatment options (outside of juvenile justice placement) is a significant gap in the county. Behavioral health hospitals are not able to serve some of the youth in greatest need (homicidal ideation, physical aggression, intellectual difficulties, substance use, and youth who are “too acute” and require a high level of staffing)
OBJECTIVE CYBHTF 5.1	By 2025, increase residential treatment placement options in Williamson County.
STRATEGY CYBHTF 5.1.1	Use subcommittee to explore options for increasing, expanding, and creating hybrid funding stream options for more residential facilities and beds.
ACTION STEPS:	Collect multi-agency county-wide data related to youth unable to admit to behavioral health hospitals and residential treatment centers.
	Explore partnerships with Medicaid.
	Prioritize Tricare.
	Advocate for vulnerable populations.
	Explore privatization options.
STRATEGY CYBHTF 5.1.2	Continue advocating for increased options with expanded accessibility and work downstream to identify need for behavioral health intervention sooner, especially options for those vulnerable populations that are typically excluded from placement.
ACTION STEPS:	Collaborate with county commissioners, law enforcement, HHSC, Medicaid, comptrollers, legislation, churches, grass root groups coalition/ task forces, BTCS, funders, and foundations.
	Collect data from partner organizations.
STRATEGY CYBHTF 5.1.3	Increase and improve training for assessment and placement staff.
ACTION STEPS:	Research models in other states.
	Explore innovative ways to improve retention and recruitment of staff.
	Explore academic partnerships to develop a certification and/or career development pathway to encourage promotion and retention.