



# Texas' Teaching Hospitals are Partners in Improving Behavioral Health Care

## Increasing inpatient psychiatric treatment capacity

### Challenge:

Texas has an insufficient number of inpatient psychiatric beds. The state's nine mental hospitals are often full, and the private psychiatric beds that are available are inaccessible to many because of cost. The result is that those needing inpatient psychiatric treatment are held in hospital emergency departments or county jails until a bed becomes available or forego essential treatment altogether.

The lack of inpatient psychiatric treatment capacity and associated increased wait times for treatment contribute to:



Worse patient outcomes.



Increased costs to the criminal justice system.



Reduced access to timely care for all Texans needing hospital-level care.

As of August 2021, 1,037 individuals were waiting for a non-maximum security forensic hospital bed, and 611 were waiting for a maximum-security bed. The average number of days on the waiting lists were 174 and 314, respectively.

### Solution:

After a 2016 community assessment revealed glaring gaps in access to timely, community-based behavioral health care in the Permian Basin region, the area's two hospital districts and state lawmakers partnered to lead an effort to build a new psychiatric hospital, the 100-bed Permian Basin Behavioral Health Center, to serve the



17-county Permian Basin region. Hospital and community leadership worked with state legislators to earmark \$40 million of \$16 billion in American Rescue Plan Act funding to provide initial

funding for construction of the hospital, which will provide a full continuum of psychiatric services, including crisis stabilization and outpatient

treatment. Building on a history of friendship and collaboration, Midland Health worked with neighboring Medical Center Health System in Odessa to ensure the new center will serve the entire region. A partnership of both hospitals will have responsibility for operating the facility.

The funds were allocated in Senate Bill 8, 87th Legislature, Third Special Session. The Texas Facilities Commission will handle details related to building the facility. Community philanthropy will be sought to fully finance the project. Construction is expected to be completed by 2024.

With legislative appropriations, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission has partnered with institutions of higher education and THOT member hospitals on new construction and expansion of state hospitals, including a new inpatient facility in Harris County; replacement of the Austin State Hospital; additional beds at the San Antonio State Hospital; and a new hospital in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

## Next Steps:

Even with investments in expanding inpatient psychiatric bed capacity, there is a serious shortage of psychiatrists across the state.

Other clinician and operational staffing challenges due to COVID and other factors also exist. Four hundred and sixty inpatient beds in the state's psychiatric hospitals are not currently staffed, meaning they are not available for a patient in need. In addition, 30 percent of total forensic beds (beds dedicated to the treatment of patients adjudicated to be incompetent to stand trial), and 40 percent of maximum-security forensic beds specifically are not staffed or available for patient care due to staffing challenges.

Texas needs additional community and forensic inpatient psychiatric beds as well as a significant investment in health workforce, including behavioral health providers.



## About THOT

THOT is the principal voice and advocate for health systems that teach the next generation of health professionals and who are united in their commitment to support policies and funding that will ensure healthcare access to all Texans.

THOT members' shared commitments include:

- Supporting access to care for all in our communities, with a special focus on vulnerable populations.
- Providing and coordinating essential community health services, such as trauma and disaster management.
- Preparing for the future by training tomorrow's healthcare providers and supporting health research and health care transformation.

## Contact Us

1210 San Antonio St Suite 204  
Austin, TX 78701

Phone: (512) 476-1497  
Email: [THOT@THOTonline.org](mailto:THOT@THOTonline.org)