

**Williamson County  
Behavioral Health Task Force (BHTF) Meetings  
Williamson County Juvenile Justice Center  
200 Wilco Way  
Georgetown, TX 78626  
Large Training Room  
2:00 – 3:30 PM**

**Last Meeting Date for 2023:  
Tuesday, November 28th**

**BHTF Meeting Minutes 9.26.23**

Here are the slides and some takeaways from the last Behavioral Health Taskforce Meeting you attended on 9.26.23.

**2023-25 BHTF CHIP Objectives**

Valerie Zapien, Healthy Williamson County (HWC) Coordinator for Williamson County and Cities Health District (WCCHD) presented the 2023-25 BHTF Action Plan and the Mental Health and Well-being Action Plan and the 2023-25 CHIP Objectives.

HWC suggested 4 subcommittees be formed to work on the 4 2023-35 CHIP Objectives identified by the BHTF leadership team under the BHTF Action Plan.

**1). Legislation**

**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.

#### **9.26.23 Report:**

Andrea Richardson reported that BTCS has applied for 5 grants and that she has 7 coming up for which she plans to apply. She mentioned that private psychiatric hospitalization beds have increased from 6 to 14 per day and that makes a total of 25 per day for youth and adults combined. She indicated that this was possible through BTCS reserve funds.

## **2). Restoration Competency Program**

### **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: Baseline: 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.

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#### **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.

**9.26.23 Report:**

Andrea Richardson reported the restoration competency program is up and running and now people are only having to wait in jail for 2 weeks instead of a year to get a court date. They have currently served 8 people in the psychiatric unit of the jail with case management, medication, and counseling. This is the first of its kind in Texas.

\*During this meeting, BHTF (the group) established that there was no need to establish subcommittees for Legislation or Competency Restoration because they were actively being handled by Bluebonnet Trails Community Services (BTCS) (Andrea Richardson), the Mental Health Justice Round Table, the Crisis Response Meeting Teams (law enforcement and hospitals), and Williamson County (Kathy Pierce).

**3. Suicide Fatality Review Committee**

**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.

**9.25.23 Report:**

It was reported that there has been an improvement in data collection and more accurate numbers from most of the Justice of the Peaces in the County, but the process is not seamless yet.

It was also reported that it difficult to distinguish between fentanyl fatalities and suicide and we need to explore more preventative approaches. This led the group to discuss the possibility of the Suicide Fatality Review Subcommittee Objective being integrated into the Mental Health Education and Awareness Subcommittee Objective.

**4. Mental Health Education and Awareness**

**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](http://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.

### **9.26.23 Report**

Mental Health Education and Awareness Discussion involved the idea of integrating mental health into normalized youth related services and activities to reduce stigma. Examples included having an outreach presence at youth sporting events, camps, YMCAs, and libraries. People are more likely to come to “shoot hoops” rather than “go to therapy.” The group discussed paring up with food pantries, community resource centers and schools to increase awareness of resources and health literacy.

The group also discussed solutions for the increase in child abuse rates in the county and uplifted the idea of training teachers, parents, therapists, pediatricians, and other doctors on mental health first aid to work from an upstream approach. WCCAC’s Community Education Program goes into schools already but there is no state funding for these services, and they are limited by the number of staff they can pay. Basically, our County needs more funding for this.

Linda Meigs suggested was to work on a digital strategy to move our services to the top listed on Google searches.

Amanda Coleman, BTCS reported on how they are contracted to operate 988 and how it will be more widely marketed in the future, when they have the capacity to handle more calls.

### **Call to Action**

Self-nominations for leaders for Suicide Fatality Review Subcommittee and the Mental Health Education and Awareness Subcommittee. Email [Kathy.Pierce@wilco.org](mailto:Kathy.Pierce@wilco.org).

### **Suggested Future Standing BHTF Agenda Items**

Updates from CHIP Subcommittees:

Legislation-Andrea Richardson or assigned representative.

Competency Restoration-Andrea Richardson or assigned representative.

Suicide Fatality Review-to be determined.

Mental Health Education and Awareness-to be determined.

Housing-Andrea Richardson or assigned representative.

Meeting minutes taken by Valerie Zapien, WCCHD-HWC 10.16.23

### **In attendance:**

|                  |            |  |
|------------------|------------|--|
| Felipe Rocha     | WCCHD-PESS | <a href="mailto:felipe.rocha@wilco.org">felipe.rocha@wilco.org</a>         |
| Precious Ohemeng | WCCHD-EPR  | <a href="mailto:precious.ohemeng@wilco.org">precious.ohemeng@wilco.org</a> |
| Kelsey Murray    | WCCHD-EPR  | <a href="mailto:kelsey.murray@wilco.org">kelsey.murray@wilco.org</a>       |
| Tara Jempty      | WCCHD-PESS | <a href="mailto:tara.jempty@wilco.org">tara.jempty@wilco.org</a>           |
| Caroline Hilbert | WCCHD-ELT  | <a href="mailto:caroline.hilbert@wilco.org">caroline.hilbert@wilco.org</a> |

|                   |                             |  |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Giomara Cintron   | Maximus                     | <a href="mailto:giomaracintron@maximus.com">giomaracintron@maximus.com</a>         |
| Sam Cunningham    | Ascension Seton Shoal Creek | <a href="mailto:cunningham1@ascension.org">cunningham1@ascension.org</a>           |
| Mike Maples       | Bluebonnet Trails           | <a href="mailto:Mike.Maples@bbtrails.org">Mike.Maples@bbtrails.org</a>             |
| Linda Meigs       | Community                   | <a href="mailto:lindameigs@aol.com">lindameigs@aol.com</a>                         |
| Kathryn Austin    | Any Baby Can                | <a href="mailto:kathryn.austin@anybabycan.org">kathryn.austin@anybabycan.org</a>   |
| Ray Langlois      | Everyone Thrives Consulting | <a href="mailto:ray@everyonethrives.com">ray@everyonethrives.com</a>               |
| Jorian Guinn      | WCSO CIT                    | <a href="mailto:jguinn@wilco.org">jguinn@wilco.org</a>                             |
| Amy Boyd          | WCSO CIT                    | <a href="mailto:amy.boyd@wilco.org">amy.boyd@wilco.org</a>                         |
| Andrea Richardson | Bluebonnet Trails           | <a href="mailto:andrea.richardson@bbtrails.org">andrea.richardson@bbtrails.org</a> |
| Andrea Hoppock    | Bluebonnet Trails           | <a href="mailto:andrea.hoppock@bbtrails.org">andrea.hoppock@bbtrails.org</a>       |
| Andrew Perez      | WCSO CIT                    | <a href="mailto:aperez@wilco.org">aperez@wilco.org</a>                             |
| Kathy Pierce      | Wilco                       | <a href="mailto:kpierce@wilco.org">kpierce@wilco.org</a>                           |
| Amanda Coleman    | Bluebonnet Trails           | <a href="mailto:amanda.coleman@bbtrails.org">amanda.coleman@bbtrails.org</a>       |
| Lesa Droste       | WCCHD Student               | <a href="mailto:lesa.e.droste@uth.tmc.edu">lesa.e.droste@uth.tmc.edu</a>           |
| Jeffrey Wherry    | WCCAC                       | <a href="mailto:jwherry@wilcocactx.org">jwherry@wilcocactx.org</a>                 |
| Valerie Zapien    | WCCHD-HWC                   | <a href="mailto:Valerie.zapien@wilco.org">Valerie.zapien@wilco.org</a>             |