



**ARE  
YOU  
OK?**

# WHAT IS SYSTEMS CHANGE?

PBHA is a “Systems Change organization,” which involves a group of people coming together to improve a complex system. For us, that complex system is our region’s mental health and substance use system of care.

This approach is different from that of organizations that provide direct services to individuals. Rather, Systems Change organizations create new behaviors within an existing ecosystem and bring about broad impact by using the levers of prevention and influence.

## How Does It Work?

The Harvard Kennedy School illustrates Systems Change using the **CLEAR** Framework:

### 1. CONVENE AND COMMIT

Key stakeholders engage in moderated dialogue to address a complex issue of mutual concern. They define shared interests and goals and commit to working together in new ways to create systemic change.

### 2. LOOK AND LEARN

Stakeholders jointly build a shared understanding of the components, actors, dynamics and influences that create the system and its current outcomes, generating new insights and ideas.

### 3. ENGAGE AND ENERGIZE

Diverse stakeholders are engaged through continuous communication to build trust, commitment, innovation and collaboration. Inspiration, incentives and milestones help drive progress and maintain momentum.

### 4. ACT WITH ACCOUNTABILITY

Shared goals and principles set the direction of the initiative, while measurement frameworks\* help track progress. Coordination and governance structures can be developed as initiatives mature.

### 5. REVIEW AND REVISE

Stakeholders review progress regularly and adapt the initiative strategy accordingly. Adopting an agile, flexible, innovative and learning-centered approach allows for evolution and experimentation.

\* In the summer of 2021, PBHA received the Texas Logic Model Intensive Technical Assistance grant from the Southwest Prevention Center (HHS Region 6) to update the Strategies and Outcomes Framework for improved progress measures and clarity of our systems change efforts.





## Letter from the Chair and Executive Director

# ARE YOU OK?

We learn in Mental Health First Aid class that if we see someone struggling, we should ask the simple question, “Are you OK?”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the answer for many people has been:

**“No, I’m not OK. I feel sad because I can’t be around my friends and extended family ... I’m afraid for the health of my loved ones ... I feel isolated, like I’m missing out on so much of what makes life worthwhile.”**



People in all age groups felt their mental health decline during the pandemic. Essential workers and young adults, ages 18 to 24, were hit the worst, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. The percentage of adults with signs of anxiety or depression grew threefold, from about 10% to 30%.

**As you will read in the following pages, our work at the Panhandle Behavioral Health Alliance has taken on even more urgency:**

- **RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS.** We are developing collaboration among people in rural parts of the Texas Panhandle and helping them establish local efforts to bring greater awareness of mental health and how to access services.
- **PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION.** We have hosted many virtual meetings and conferences and supported Mental Health First Aid training during the pandemic. The more we talk about mental well-being, the more we are able to reduce the stigma and get help to those who need it.
- **PROVIDER SHORTAGES.** We are attacking the shortage of mental health professionals by focusing on developing a local workforce pipeline while supporting the recruitment of new providers and retaining those we have.
- **JUSTICE.** We are facilitating the crucial attention being focused on mental health and continuity of care — from arrest to post-incarceration — in our regional justice system.
- **INTEGRATED CARE.** We are supporting two state efforts that bring early intervention to the region by building the capacity of rural physicians and facilitating referrals.

We express our deepest gratitude to the service providers who are working hard to meet the increasing mental health needs of Texas Panhandle residents. And thank YOU for supporting PBHA’s efforts to improve mental well-being through this pandemic and beyond.

*Dave Clark,*  
PBHA Chair

*Shree Veeramachaneni,*  
PBHA Executive Director

# PBHA SCHOLARSHIPS

## Offered to Texas Crisis Intervention Team Conference

The 7th Annual Texas Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Conference took place in Amarillo April 8-10, 2021. PBHA Founder Laura Street raised \$18,000 from generous local businesses to offer conference scholarships to participants from the Texas Panhandle.

The Texas CIT Association is comprised of law enforcement, corrections, the mental health community and advocacy groups and provides

training and support for responding to those affected by mental illness.

The conference drew 160 attendees from across the state to hear presentations on the intersection between mental illness and the criminal justice system, with particular emphasis on empowering local communities to strengthen the safety net for Texans living with mental illness and develop strategies to keep these individuals out of the criminal justice system.

### Panhandle Behavioral Health Alliance & WTAMU Collaborate

## TECHNOLOGY USED TO FIGHT ISOLATION in Older Adults by LEAD Students

Students from West Texas A&M University's Rogers LEAD program collaborated with the Panhandle Behavioral Health Alliance in the 2020-2021 school year with the mission to help older adults who have become more isolated as a result of the pandemic.

Six students from the Rogers LEAD program, Allan Baltazar, Reilly Dhaliwal, Tell Ingersoll, Gracen Key, Jackson Perez and Lani Vanlandingham, worked together with advice from PBHA staff and volunteers to create four PowerPoint presentations that could be used, shared and

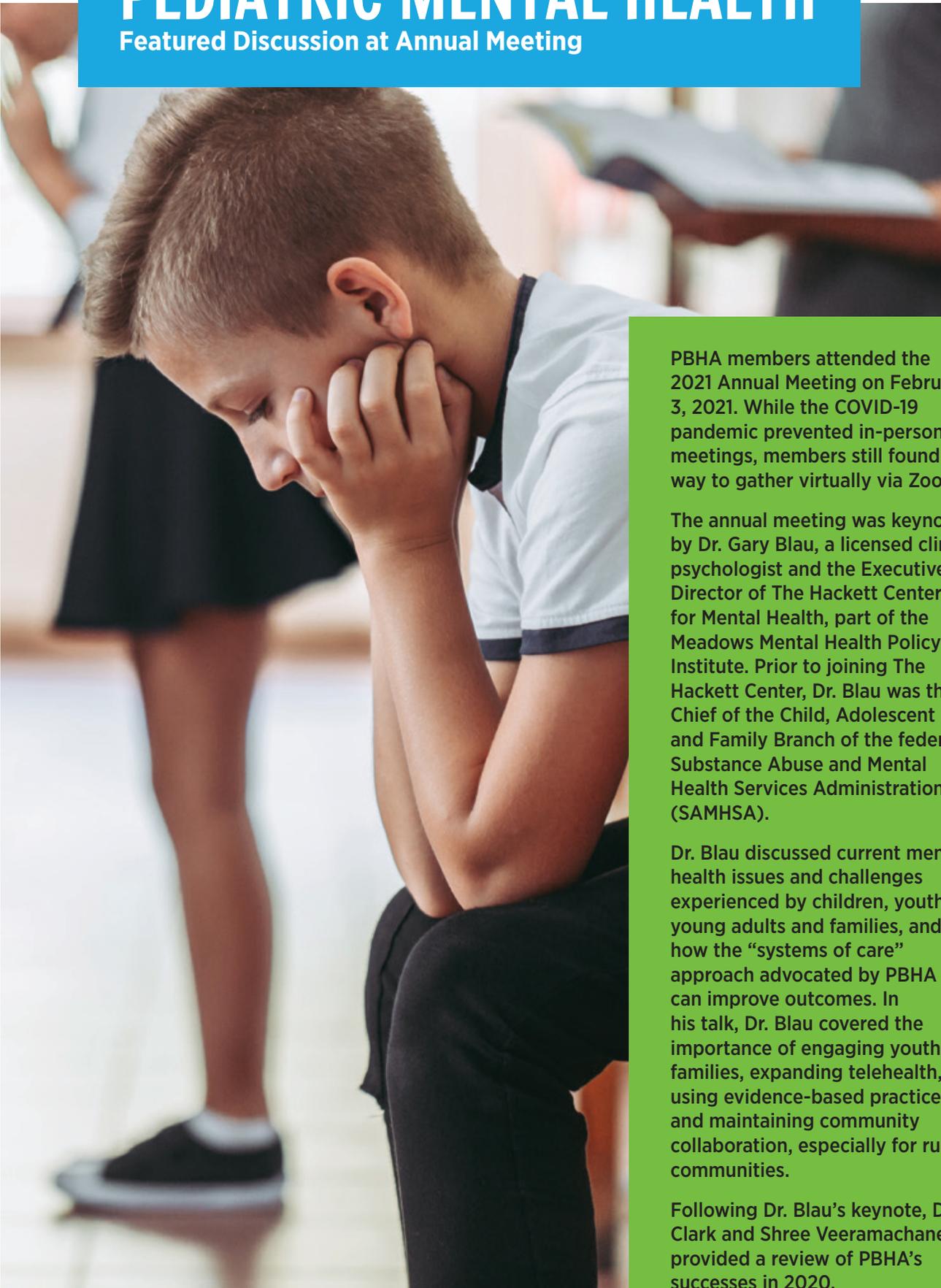
customized by organizations looking to help older adults within their community. The presentations focused on how to use resources that allow for more virtual connection, as well as how to navigate the Internet safely and avoid common scams.

The students identified two pilot locations — the Canyon Library and the Hereford Senior Center — and presented the resources to both organizations. With feedback from the pilot locations and PBHA stakeholders, the team updated the presentations, and PBHA has made this Train the Trainer course format available to organizations (such as libraries, senior centers and others) throughout the Panhandle to encourage virtual connections, benefit mental health and prevent isolation.



# PEDIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH

Featured Discussion at Annual Meeting



PBHA members attended the 2021 Annual Meeting on February 3, 2021. While the COVID-19 pandemic prevented in-person meetings, members still found a way to gather virtually via Zoom.

The annual meeting was keynoted by Dr. Gary Blau, a licensed clinical psychologist and the Executive Director of The Hackett Center for Mental Health, part of the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute. Prior to joining The Hackett Center, Dr. Blau was the Chief of the Child, Adolescent and Family Branch of the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Dr. Blau discussed current mental health issues and challenges experienced by children, youth, young adults and families, and how the “systems of care” approach advocated by PBHA can improve outcomes. In his talk, Dr. Blau covered the importance of engaging youth and families, expanding telehealth, using evidence-based practices and maintaining community collaboration, especially for rural communities.

Following Dr. Blau’s keynote, Dave Clark and Shree Veeramachaneni provided a review of PBHA’s successes in 2020.

# CONTINUING EDUCATION

## Trauma-Informed Care and Compassion Fatigue

PBHA hosted a virtual event about Trauma-Informed Care and Compassion Fatigue on March 31, 2021. The event attracted 172 attendees, including law enforcement professionals, primary care clinicians, case managers, behavioral health clinicians and social service professionals.

The event started with a session by Rick Smithson, MA, and Chellsea Rea, BA, discussing Trauma-Informed Care in the Justice Setting. Smithson and Rea shared guidance for using trauma-informed care to serve justice-involved individuals. Attendees received a trauma screener tool and the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) questionnaire, along with a field version of the questionnaire for use in their jobs.

Alyson Morgan, LCSW-S, and Kristy Bartlett, LMSW, presented a section on compassion fatigue, discussing components for enhancing clinician experience and reducing trauma. Many of

the event's attendees work in professions with the highest risk of compassion fatigue.

Dr. Colin Ross, a psychiatrist, presented the final section in the event, discussing trauma-informed care in the primary care setting. His presentation further defined trauma-informed care and discussed the benefits of the approach in primary care. Attendees walked away with strategies for implementing a trauma-informed care approach in their practices.

Thanks to a partnership with the Panhandle Area Health Education Center (AHEC), 3.5 Continuing Education Units were offered for this event.

### ATTENDEES AT A GLANCE: 172

- Law Enforcement Professionals
- Primary Care Clinicians
- Case Managers
- Behavioral Health Clinicians
- Social Service Professionals

## How to Access Mental Health Services During a Crisis

PBHA collaborated with the West Texas A&M University Social Work Department to host an event on May 18, 2021, to help the community better understand how to access mental health services during a crisis. The event was open to the community and hosted via Zoom, with special outreach to caregivers and those with lived experience.

Speakers from Northwest Texas Healthcare System Behavioral Health, Family Support Services, Texas Panhandle Centers and the Amarillo Police Department shared information about their services and guidance for accessing these services in an emergency situation.

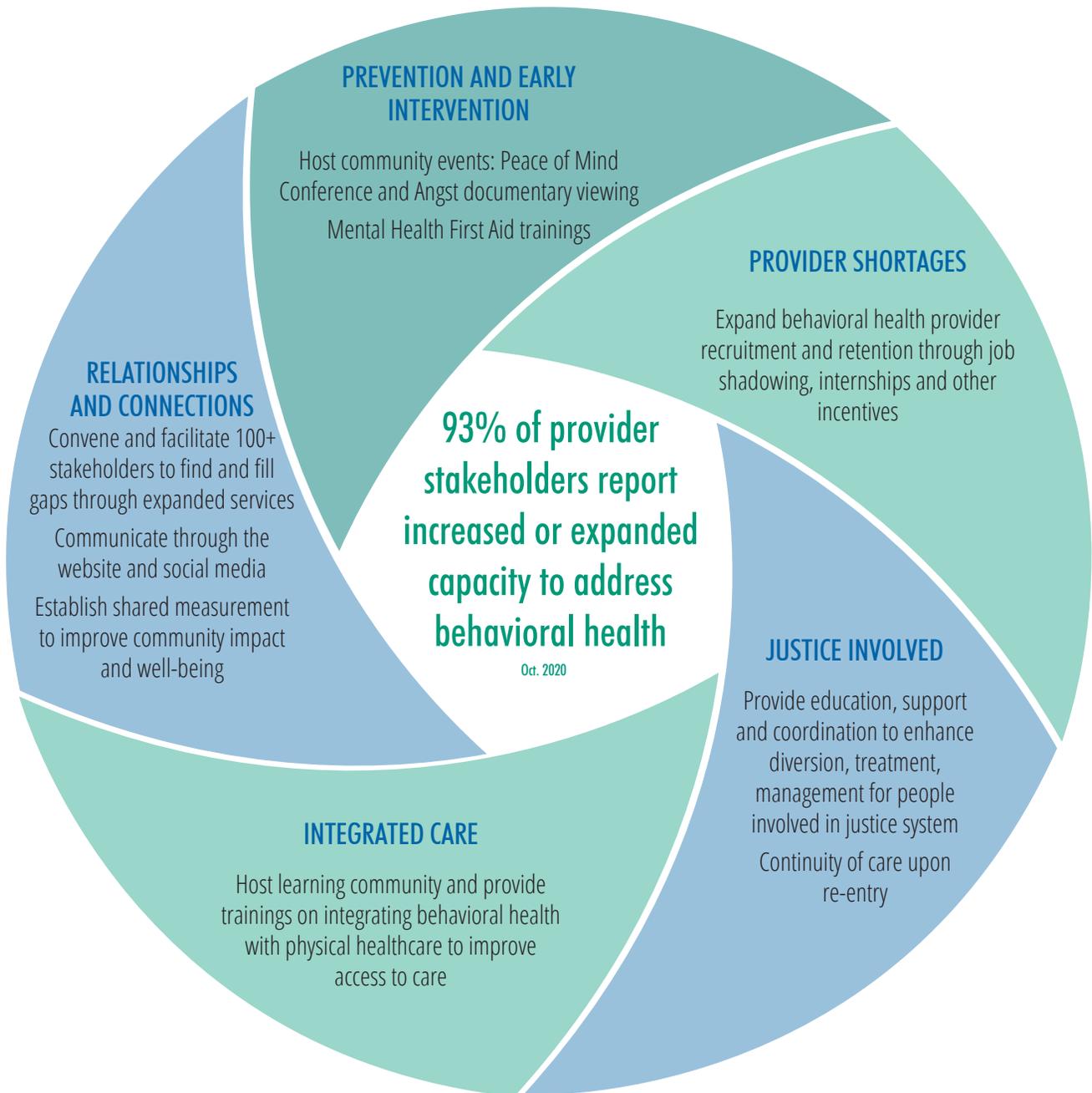
Following presentations from the speakers, PBHA staff provided an introduction to the Panhandle Mental Health Guide and demonstrated its use for attendees. Attendees were able to learn how to access the Panhandle Mental Health Guide to find valuable resources in both crisis and non-emergent situations.

In collaboration with Panhandle Area Health Education Center (AHEC), PBHA was able to offer 1.5 Continuing Education Units to each attendee.

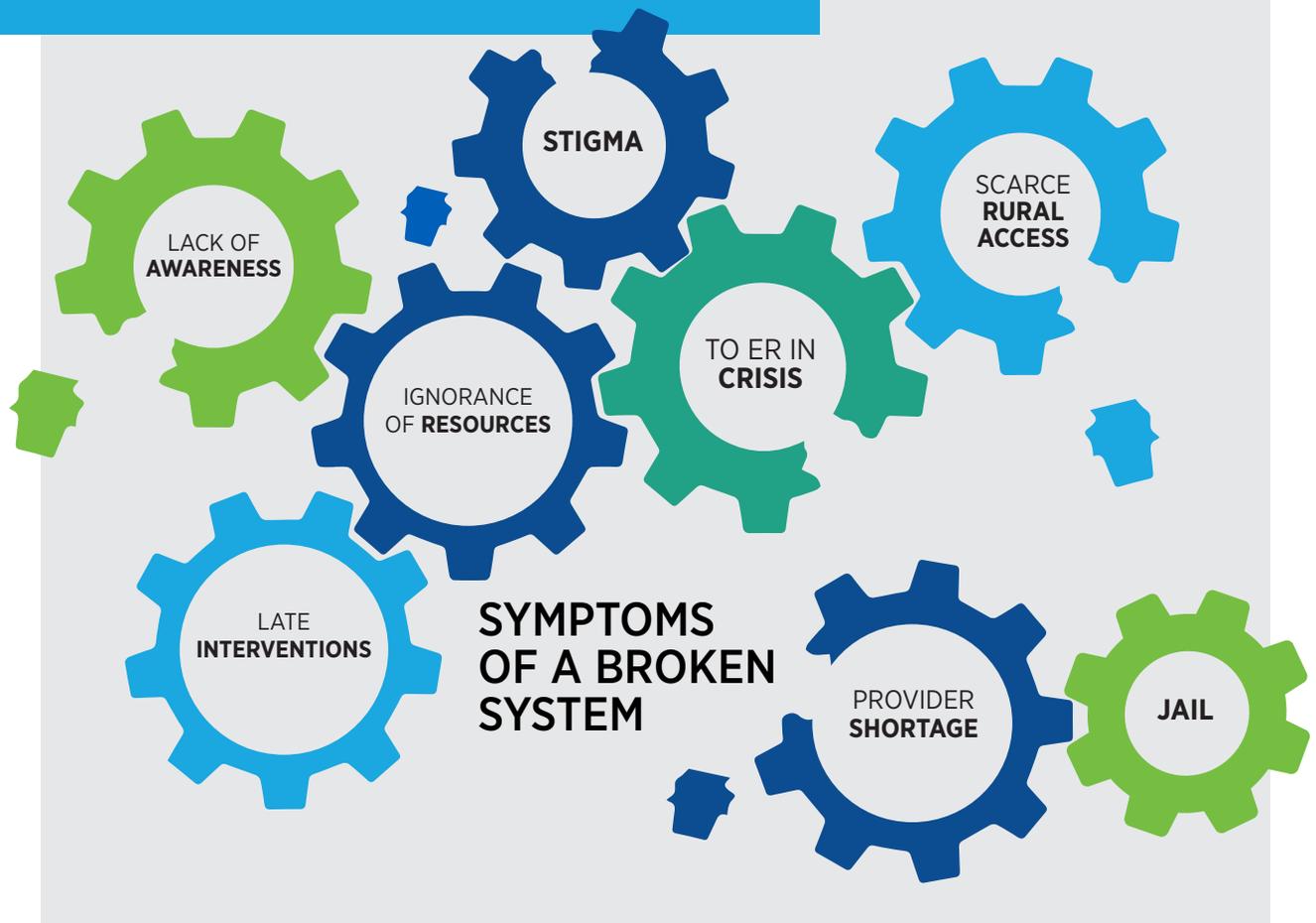
# PBHA

## Panhandle Behavioral Health Alliance

### FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY WELL-BEING



# OUR WORK



**THE BEST MENTAL HEALTHCARE SHOULD BE JUST LIKE  
THE BEST PHYSICAL HEALTHCARE**

## 8-10 YEARS

average delay between onset of symptoms and intervention

At this time, the main entry points to care for mental health issues in extreme crisis are law enforcement, jail or the emergency room. Compare that to physical ailments, which can be treated at a primary care doctor, urgent care or hospital. PBHA is working to make mental healthcare more accessible in the Texas Panhandle.

# **FAITH GROUP COLLABORATION**

## **Improves Community Mental Health**

More than any other institution, churches and faith centers have the strongest access to the human heart. If someone is in pain or trouble, a pastor or church layperson is often uniquely situated to intervene.

In a time where one in five Americans will suffer from mental illness in their lifetime – yet only a third of those people will ever seek treatment on their own – it is crucial that pastors and laypeople have the requisite training to identify signs of distress and seek help for those affected. Startlingly, only a third of American churches reported having any lay counseling staff at all. For this reason, getting churches the mental health training they need is vital.

To this end, PBHA is working with local churches to offer mental health programs and enable pastors to better care for their staff and congregation. So that they can identify mental health issues, understand them, and respond appropriately – local pastors are getting Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) certified.

### **Working with Churches to Lower Stigma**

Because many people are untrained to identify and accommodate people with mental illnesses, they are often the subject of ridicule and are ostracized for their behavior. While church members often mean well, many are not equipped with the skills they need to care for their fellow believers.

Church outreach also offers an opportunity to further lower stigma and improve resources in rural communities. Not only are rural churches faith centers, they are the most resilient social space for the rural community. While small businesses struggle to stay open, the church is often the single place that defines a rural community's identity. Because of this, it is vital that these churches have the resources to help when a crisis affects the town.

### **Successful Partnerships**

Already, the faith initiative is seeing some success. With PBHA's help, Hutchinson County United Way is working with the faith groups in the Borger community and on March 22, 2021, convened five churches in Borger to hold an Adult MHFA training. Event attendees found the experience positive, equipping them with the skills to address mental health crises. Many attendees came to the training not knowing the signs of mental distress, and after the training, they knew the signs and how to help.

### **Going Forward**

Because of the importance of faith for many individuals in the Texas Panhandle, the opportunities to improve mental health outcomes through partnerships with churches are endless. PBHA is continuing to find new ways to work with churches to reduce stigma and offer education and training to increase their capacity to serve their communities.

SECOND ANNUAL

# PEACE OF MIND CONFERENCE

## Focuses on Mental Health During Pandemic

The Second Annual Peace of Mind (POM) Conference filled a glaring information need during the 2020 pandemic. Participants heard intriguing insights from a diverse group of speakers, including a seventh grader who experiences anxiety and a chaplain who serves the mental and emotional needs of employees at a large car dealership.

The conference was offered virtually over parts of two days, and sessions earned high marks from participants. Recordings of the sessions can be found on PBHA's YouTube channel.

The keynote, *Caring for Employees' Mental Health*, featured Joe Street, owner of Street Auto Group, and Chaplain Danny Mize telling the story of Street Auto Group's effective approach to assist employees with mental well-being. Mize joined the dealership several years ago in a staff support capacity with a main objective of developing relationships with employees and offering encouragement and faith-based affirmation that supports mental, emotional and spiritual needs.

Street and Mize agree that "people have needs, and they need to talk." Thanks to this transformative, confidential program, they are making a difference in their employees' lives and the lives of their employees' family members.

A panel discussion titled *Community Perspectives on COVID-19 and Mental Health* covered the effect the pandemic has had on all of us, especially those with

mental illness. Led by Sara Northrup, program administrator in adult behavioral health services at Texas Panhandle Centers for Behavioral & Developmental Health, the panel included Andy Crocker, senior extension program specialist at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service; seventh-grader Stella Hales who experiences anxiety, and her mother, Reagan, who is the executive director of Amarillo College's new Innovation Outpost; and Elia Moreno, executive director at Texas Christian Community Development Network and author of *Permission to Rest*.

Their overall message of awareness and when to seek professional help encouraged participants to engage in more open communication about mental health and well-being.

That message was also part of the *Ask an Expert Provider* panel discussion, which was moderated by Margie Netherton, professor of English at Amarillo College and former president of the National Alliance on Mental Illness-Texas Panhandle. She was joined by Jennifer Hale, who supports AISD students and families by providing appropriate community resources and referrals; Amy Stark, MD, a board-certified psychiatrist practicing at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center; and Kathy Tortoreo, director of crisis services at Family Support Services.

These expert panelists encouraged people with mental illness to connect with them and other providers, and to come in unafraid, open and honest. Confidentiality is a priority, and some local services are free of charge.

The Peace of Mind Conference was presented by the Amarillo Area Foundation and the Xcel Energy Foundation, with additional support from Panhandle PBS, the United Way of Amarillo and Canyon, West Texas AHEC, Amarillo College and First Presbyterian Church.

*Dr. Amy Stark, a board-certified psychiatrist practicing at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, answering questions during the Ask an Expert Provider panel.*



# Panhandle Mental Health Guide:

## A Searchable Directory of Services in 27 Counties

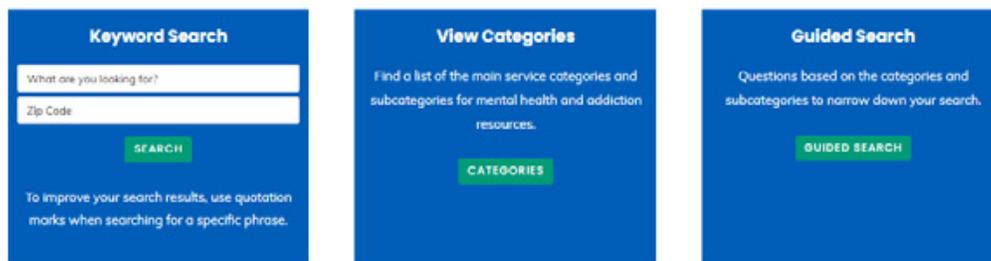
A great deal of research, discussion, fundraising and website development work over the course of more than three years has resulted in the Spring 2021 launch of the Texas Panhandle's only searchable and comprehensive service directory with resources for mental health and substance use disorders.



### DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START?

LEARN ["HOW TO USE THIS SITE"](#) AND ["HOW TO SEARCH FOR INFORMATION IN THE SERVICE DIRECTORY"](#)

WATCH SHORT VIDEO TUTORIALS ABOUT HOW TO NAVIGATE AND USE THE WEBSITE



The Panhandle Mental Health Guide is an initiative of the Panhandle Behavioral Health Alliance (PBHA). Members of PBHA were determined to create an easy way for those in need to find and get access to mental health providers and other supports.

### The service directory has programs, agencies and facilities in these areas:

- Mental health and counseling
- Addiction and dependency
- Support groups
- Youth and family services
- Crisis and emergency services
- Residential and inpatient care
- Day programs
- Information and advocacy
- Case management

The free, web-based resource features a searchable guide to agencies and providers who offer services for a wide spectrum of mental health and substance use concerns. Additionally, visitors can use the website's resource library to find articles on many mental and behavioral health topics, including symptoms, tests and treatments.

"It's difficult for many people in our area to access care," said Shree Veeramachaneni, executive director of PBHA. "We have tremendous need, and navigating the system isn't easy for many. The Panhandle Mental Health Guide addresses this barrier with an easy-to-use website that makes mental health care more accessible for everyone in the Texas Panhandle."

At PanhandleMentalHealthGuide.org, visitors have two options to find important services: a keyword search that can help them find specific services near them and a guided search that can make it easier to understand which services would fit their needs.

Along with efforts of many stakeholders involved in this project, the Panhandle Mental Health Guide was made possible with support from the Amarillo Area Foundation, the Mary E. Bivins Foundation, the West Texas Area Health Education Center and Superior HealthPlan.

PBHA is conducting outreach to providers and the regional community to encourage use of this valuable resource. This includes providing information to all healthcare providers and encouraging them to include a link to the guide on their websites.

If your organization would like to help spread the word about the Panhandle Mental Health Guide, visit PanhandleMentalHealthGuide.org and click "Add This Service Directory to Your Website," found in the website's footer. There, you'll find the instructions you need to share the directory on your own site.

# ALLIANCE STAKEHOLDERS

## Ashley Allcorn

Chicago Counseling Associates

## Maira Argomaniz

Texas Panhandle Centers

## Lora Baggerman

Frank Phillips College

## Kristen Barrick \*

Private Practice

## Susan Barros \*

Downtown Women's Center

## Kristy Bartlett

West Texas A&M University

## Malvika Behl

West Texas A&M University

## Sherri Bohr \*

Central Plains Center

## Tim Bowles ^

TTUHSC - Pediatrics

## Kim Braswell ^

Downtown Women's Center

## Terry Briscoe ^

Golden Plains Community Hospital

## Kay Brotherton \*

Central Plains Center

## Rynn Burkett ^

Community Volunteer

## Morgan Canales \*

Randall County Sheriff's Office

## Devin Cantwell

Amarillo Police Department

## Deadra Carver

Superior HealthPlan

## Adrian Castillo

Potter County District Attorney's Office

## Dave Clark \*\*

Healthcare Consultant

## Douglas Coffey \*

NWTHS Behavioral Health

## Kathy Cornett \*\*

Community Volunteer

## Brittany Cotgreave \*

Community Supervision & Corrections 47th Judicial District

## Mary Coyne \*\*

AscentHealth Consulting & MCMC - Mary Coyne Marketing Communications

## Belinda Crelia-Palacios \*\*

Amarillo Children's Home

## Joseph Dad \*

Regence Health Network

## Lidia Dailey \*\*

Dailey Recovery Services

## Steve Dalrymple

Baptist Community Services

## Tiffany Daniel ^

Oceans Behavioral Hospital

## Gainor Davis

Harrington Cancer & Health Foundation

## Judy Day \*\*

Community Volunteer

## Margaret Dean

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

## Meg DeJong-Shier \*\*

West Texas A&M University

## Bob Dempsey \*

Retired Veteran

## Kathleen Dostalick \*

NWTHS Behavioral Health

## Linda Dudley

Coalition of Health Services

## Katherine Duke \*

Randall County Sheriff's Office

## Terry Easterling \*

Community Volunteer

## Candice Elliott ^

NWTHS Behavioral Health

## Lara Escobar

Amarillo Area Foundation

## Tony Foster

Amarillo Area Mental Health Consumers

## Kiona Freelen

Community Supervision and Corrections, 47th Judicial District

## Steven Garcia

Texas Panhandle Centers

## Julianne Gaut

Clinical Social Worker

## Randall Scott Giles \*

Potter County Sheriff's Office

## Patricia Gill

Superior HealthPlan

## Diann Gilmore \*\*

Downtown Women's Center

## Perry Gilmore \*\*

Texas Panhandle War Memorial Foundation

## Adrian Gonzalez \*

Recovatry, NAMI Texas Panhandle

## Guillermo Gonzalez \*

Central Plains Center

## Leigh Green

West Texas A&M University

## Julianne Guy ^

MCMC - Mary Coyne Marketing Communications

## Jennifer Hale ^

Amarillo Independent School District

## Ken Haney

Ken Haney Counseling

## Darrel Harp ^

Potter County Sheriff's Office

## Rene Havel \*\*

NWTHS Behavioral Health

## Denise Hefley

Potter County District Attorney's Office

## Michael Hemphill ^

Regence Health Network

## Linda Hilario

Community Volunteer

## Elishia Hoots

Kenikor

## Nathan Hoover

Superior HealthPlan

## Amy Hord ^

Family Support Services, Texas Panhandle Suicide Prevention Coalition

## Danna Jackson \*\*

Social Worker

## Shanna James

Amarillo Public Health

## Holly Jeffreys

West Texas A&M University

## Cody Jones

Randall County Sheriff's Office

## Melissa Kalka ^

Texas Panhandle War Memorial Foundation

## Alan Keister \*\*

Heal the City

## Gracen Key

West Texas A&M University student

## Angela Knapp \*\*

Laura W. Bush Institute for Women's Health

## Tim Lacey \*

Randall County Sheriff's Office

## Pace Lawson \*

Recovatry

## Adam Leathers

United Way of Amarillo & Canyon

## Mary Nell Lemert \*\*

Texas Panhandle War Memorial Foundation

## Rex Lemert \*

Texas Panhandle War Memorial Foundation

## Debi Lemmons ^

NWTHS Behavioral Health

## Nicole Lopez

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

## Stephanie Loya \*\*

Panhandle Area Health Education Center

## Amanda Mathias

Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

## Amber Mattheus

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## Jenni Mayes

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## Marianne McCoy \*

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\* Member 2020-2021

^ Member 2021-2022

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NAMI Texas Panhandle

**Jami Miller** \*

NWTHS Behavioral Health

**Meagan Miller**

Prevention Resource Center  
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**Dakota Milloway**

Canyon ISD

**Rudy Montana**

Randall County Sheriff's Office

**Libby Moore** \*^

Texas Panhandle Centers

**Zenaida Morales** ^

Texas Tech Mental Health Initiative

**Elia Moreno** ^

Living Intentionally Ministries

**Matt Morgan**

Amarillo Area Foundation

**Tracey Morman** ^

Amarillo ISD

**Avis Morris**

Potter County Court

**Crystal Morton** \*

Texas Panhandle Centers

**Bruce Moseley** \*

Turn Center

**Michael Nash** \*

Regence Health Network

**Hillary Netardus**

Attorney

**Margie Netherton** \*^

NAMI Texas Panhandle

**Katie Noffske** \*^

United Way of Amarillo & Canyon

**Sara Northrup**

Texas Panhandle Centers

**Patrick Osei-Hwere** \*^

West Texas A&M University

**Nina Parvin**

Randall County Sheriff's  
Office

**Jennifer Potter** \*^

Family Support Services

**Vincent Rapp**

Combined Arms

**Chellsea Rea**

Regence Health Network

**Helen Reyes**

West Texas A&M University

**Jason Riddlespurger**

City of Amarillo

**Raul Rodarte-Suto**

United Way of Amarillo & Canyon

**Stacy Sandorskey**

Texas Panhandle Centers

**Dayna Schertler**

West Texas A&M University

**Ashley Schultz**

69th Judicial District CRG Chair

**Rachel Scott** \*

Heal the City

**Mandi Seaton** ^

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

**Sara Shook** ^

Potter County Sheriff's Office

**Virginia Sicola** \*^

Heal the City

**Yvette Smallwood** ^

Oceans Behavioral Hospital

**Steve Smart** \*^

Another Chance House

**Miquela Smith** ^

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

**Valerie Spanel**

Heal the City,  
Texas Panhandle Centers

**Amy Stark**

Texas Tech University  
Health Sciences Center

**Chelsea Stevens** \*^

Heal the City

**Haley Stoddard**

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**Casie Stoughton**

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**Laura Street** \*^

Laura Street Consulting

**Clay Stribling**

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**Kirby Sutterfield** \*

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**Tommy Sweat** \*^

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**Mellisa Talley** \*^

Texas Panhandle Centers

**Nancy Tanner**

Potter County Judge

**Robin Terry**

Region 16 - Education Service  
Center

**Brad Thompson** \*

Turn Center

**Gracie Thorp** ^

Heal the City

**Nancy Trevino** ^

TTUHSC Mental Health  
Initiative

**Jessica Tudyk** \*^

Mary E. Bivins Foundation

**Jessica Tyler**

Meadows Mental Health  
Policy Institute

**Carolina Walden** \*

Turn Center

**Jennifer Wall** \*^

NWTHS Behavioral Health

**Kelli Watson**

Community Volunteer

**Walt Weaver**

Potter County Court

**Stefanie West** \*^

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Education Center

**Amber White**

Amarillo College

**Steven White** \*^

Potter County Sheriff's Office

**Ruth Whitehead**

Community Volunteer

**Katharyn Wiegand** \*^

Mary E. Bivins Foundation

**Desire Winslow**

Regence Health Network

**Carolyn Witherspoon** \*^

Coalition of Health Services

**Jim Womack** ^

Family Support Services

**Jerry Ross Womble**

Texas Panhandle Centers

**Emily Wood**

First Presbyterian Church

**Erin Wyrick**

Randall County Youth  
Center of the High Plains

## Organizational Members

**Amarillo Children's Home**

**Amarillo Independent  
School District**

**Another Chance House**

**Central Plains Center**

**Coalition of Health Services**

**Community Supervision  
and Corrections Department,  
47th Judicial District**

**Downtown Women's  
Center**

**Family Support Services**

**Heal the City**

**Laura W. Bush Institute for  
Women's Health**

**Mary E. Bivins Foundation**

**NAMI Texas Panhandle**

**NWTHS Behavioral Health**

**Oceans Behavioral Hospital**

**Panhandle Area Health  
Education Center**

**Potter County Sheriff's  
Office**

**Randall County Sheriff's  
Department**

**Recovraty**

**Regence Health Network**

**Texas A&M AgriLife  
Extension Service**

**Texas Christian Community  
Development Network**

**Texas Panhandle Centers**

**Texas Panhandle War  
Memorial Foundation**

**Texas Tech Mental Health  
Initiative**

**Turn Center**

**United Way of Amarillo &  
Canyon**

\* Member 2020-2021

^ Member 2021-2022

# FEEDBACK ON RETENTION ISSUES

PBHA's Behavioral Health Provider Shortage workgroup aims to increase the number of providers so that mental health consumers can get the help they need when and where they need it.

The workgroup planned and hosted three events on Careers in Behavioral Health that focused on the elderly population, pediatric mental health and addiction, and forensic mental health, along with an employee fair that facilitated mentorship and internships.

The workgroup includes local educators and employers working to improve the recruitment and retention capacity of the behavioral health workforce in the region. The group distributed an anonymous survey in late 2020 to employees in mental health and addiction professions to gain a better understanding of what factors influence employee retention with their behavioral health employer.

The Behavioral Health Employee Retention Factors survey gathered feedback from both clinicians and non-clinicians in the behavioral health sector regarding mental well-being at work, career development, workplace culture and environment, and other topics.

## WHAT ADDITIONAL BENEFITS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE AT YOUR WORK?



### OVERALL FINDINGS INCLUDED:

- **76%** feel valued at work
- **69%** reported they have fun at work
- **88%** feel mentally well at work
- **70%** were satisfied with the perks and benefits offered by their employer
- **69%** receive ample learning opportunities at their current job
- **69%** have a clear understanding of their career or promotional path
- **66%** believe they will be able to reach their full potential at their current workplace
- **84%** feel like their co-workers give each other respect
- **65%** believe the leadership team takes their feedback seriously
- **83%** would re-apply to their current job if given the chance
- **90%** would refer others to work at their current place of work
- **80%** would not have chosen a different profession than mental health (are satisfied with their career choice)



By all accounts, Ashley\* was a success story for how the justice system handles individuals with mental health conditions. After being convicted of a crime, a jail diversion program helped her become stable. Ashley was able to receive social security benefits and housing. She got back together with her mom. Ashley was even independent and only required the lowest level of care. Her Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, where she received peer support, were the highlight of her day.

## COLLABORATION AND RELATIONSHIPS Improve Justice System Outcomes

But then her progress was thwarted by her mental illness. In a manic phase, she was asked not to come back to Alcoholics Anonymous. Instead, she trespassed and “redecorated” AA and removed clothing. This incident earned her a third-degree felony and meant she couldn’t go back to Alcoholics Anonymous. It also landed her in the Randall County Jail.

Fortunately for Ashley, the Randall County Sheriff’s Office partners with Texas Panhandle Centers to offer programming and treatment for inmates with COPSD, co-occurring psychiatric and substance use disorder.

By bringing stakeholders like Texas Panhandle Centers and Randall County jail officials to the table for regular discussions, PBHA continues the work of coordinating

and improving the care for people during incarceration and beyond.

One promising practice identified at the Randall County Jail was the communication between jail staff and the Randall County Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) regarding individuals with serious mental illness exiting jails. CIT officers are notified of mental health needs to aid in transition back into the community. This practice is now being adapted for the Potter County Jail and Amarillo CIT.

From jail diversion programs to emergent needs psychiatric services, our community is better able to ensure people like Ashley don’t fall through the cracks.

Improving the ways our justice system works with individuals with mental illness requires voices and participation from every part of the system – from government employees to police and jail administrators to service providers and consumers. The discussion panels PBHA hosts, access to training and project-based work, such as the Sequential Intercept Model map, have brought these stakeholders together and strengthened relationships to allow for a stronger, more cohesive system that can rebuild lives.

*\*Name changed*



## Combined Arms Enhances Case Management

# SERVICES FOR VETERANS

When PBHA was working on building out the Panhandle Mental Health Guide, veterans were a key part of the conversation. Everyone wanted to know: How can our community make it easier for veterans to find the resources they need to support their mental health? Working with stakeholders like Major General Bob Dempsey (U.S. Air Force, Ret.) and the Texas Panhandle War Memorial Center, PBHA began a conversation with Combined Arms to better achieve this goal.

Combined Arms is a nonprofit organization that provides comprehensive support to military members and their families as they transition to civilian life and connects veterans and their families to organizations that can meet their mental health needs. Combined Arms is a terrific complement to the PBHA model because one of their core tenets is to build a system that encourages collective impact and collaboration between partner organizations.

In conversations with Combined Arms and PBHA and its stakeholders, the Texas Panhandle War Memorial Center stepped forward to become the champion for Combined Arms in the Panhandle. Texas Panhandle War Memorial Center board member Mary Nell Lemert and executive director Perry Gilmore were instrumental in building this relationship and launching the Texas Veteran's Network, a project of Combined Arms, for Panhandle veterans.

In addition to mental health services, veterans can use Combined Arms to connect with career services assistance, financial assistance, workshops, social life, volunteer engagement, legal assistance, benefits assistance and much more. Find these resources at [CombinedArms.us](http://CombinedArms.us).

## MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING Empowers Panhandle Residents to Address Behavioral Health Emergencies

Mental Health First Aid is a free 8-hour, evidence-based training for early intervention. The evidence behind the program demonstrates that it builds mental health literacy and provides an action plan that teaches people how to safely and responsibly identify and address a potential mental health or substance use challenge.

The course teaches attendees how to apply the ALGEE action plan:

- Assess for risk of suicide or harm.
- Listen nonjudgmentally.
- Give reassurance and information.
- Encourage appropriate professional help.
- Encourage self-help and other support strategies.

Getting people certified in Mental Health First Aid continues to be a key initiative for the Panhandle Behavioral Health Alliance, with steady growth in this area year after year. An additional

157 people were certified in Mental Health First Aid with the help of PBHA since the last community report, bringing the total up to 343 people.

PBHA's Mental Health First Aid initiative is gaining momentum each year, with the ultimate goal of getting 1% of the Texas Panhandle certified in Mental Health First Aid by 2028.

Due to COVID-19 and physical distancing measures, virtual and blended trainings are now available.

If you are not yet certified in Mental Health First Aid, we ask you to join us soon. To register or request an in-person training, email [Shawrlette Uy](mailto:Shawrlette Uy) at [shawrlette@PanhandleBehavioralHealthAlliance.org](mailto:shawrlette@PanhandleBehavioralHealthAlliance.org) or visit <http://PanhandleBehavioralHealthAlliance.org/mhfa>.



IMPROVEMENTS  
MADE FOR

# YOUTH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

One of the core goals of the Panhandle Behavioral Health Alliance is to improve the area’s ability to provide early intervention for mental health issues. Considering that the median age of onset for all mental illnesses ranges from 14.5 to 18 years old, this goal requires a concerted effort to address pediatric mental health.

To this end, PBHA has been a driving force in the expansion of two vital resources for pediatric mental health in the Texas Panhandle: Texas’s Child Psychiatry Access Network (CPAN) and Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHATT).

According to CPAN, 25-33% of the pediatric cases seen by pediatricians in Texas involve mental health concerns. However, two-thirds of pediatricians report a lack of training in treating childhood mental illness, according to a 2015 study in the journal Academic Pediatrics on barriers to the identification and management of psychosocial problems. CPAN addresses this gap through offering physicians free consultations and continuing education to family practice physicians, pediatricians, nurse practitioners and physician

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assistants in order to improve the quality of care provided to patients with pediatric mental health concerns.

For individual primary care providers, CPAN provides prompt access to a child psychiatrist for phone consultation on medication questions, including follow-ups. CPAN offers Child and

Adolescent Psychiatric consultations on difficult cases along with other behavioral health clinicians to identify treatment options and resources for ongoing care.

The TCHATT program delivers telemedicine services and builds on existing programs to assist public school districts with identifying mental health care needs and services across the state of Texas. Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center brought TCHATT to the Texas Panhandle as a program of the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium.

As public schools partner with TCHATT, students benefit from counseling services and telepsychiatry delivered at school. School personnel are guided in assessing, supporting and referring youth experiencing mental health challenges, allowing for earlier intervention for students.

PBHA has partnered with Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center to connect the TCHATT team with more public schools in the Panhandle, focusing especially on rural schools.

With these new programs in place, our area’s ability to provide early intervention for mental health concerns in children will greatly improve.

# MENTAL HEALTH

## In the Panhandle's Rural Communities

In PBHA meetings, we often talk about the broken system when it comes to mental health care. Stigma keeps mental illness from public discourse. Early intervention is rare. Treatment is hard to come by, especially for those without insurance. It's difficult for many to find resources. People often end up in jail or the emergency room when they're in a crisis.

Nowhere is this broken system more clear than in the rural communities around Amarillo and Canyon. Every county in the Texas Panhandle is considered a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area by the federal government's Health Resources & Services Administration, and many counties in the Panhandle have no mental health professionals at all.

When the Borger community noticed it had a major problem with youth mental health, including suicide attempts and completions, they recognized the need to solve the systemic issues with mental health. The United Way of Hutchinson County reached out to the Panhandle Behavioral Health Alliance, and together, formed a community coalition to address this issue for Hutchinson County.

The progress being made in Hutchinson County is a true testament to the power a community can have when they build a coalition around an important issue. United Way of Hutchinson County consulted with PBHA to build the mental health taskforce, develop accountability structure and design a plan to address community mental health, recovery and well-being.

Julie Winters, the executive director of the United Way of Hutchinson County, pulled together a mental health task force, and Jen Cobos, the director of TRiO Student Support Services at Frank Phillips College, Amber Buchanan, a juvenile probation officer with Hutchinson County, and Alex Gowdy, owner of 12 Roots Therapy, have joined Julie in leading the coalition in Hutchinson County. Their mental health task force includes the schools, the hospital, judges, doctors, community volunteers and faith-based community members to reach all parts of the system of care in the community.

As part of their collaboration with PBHA, they were able to get a first group of individuals trained in Mental Health First Aid. The schools found the training especially useful. PBHA trained 19 people and AgriLife conducted two additional youth MHFA trainings.

Because of the partnership between PBHA and this coalition, two PBHA stakeholders are now looking into the possibility of expanding their services to Borger, improving the system significantly.

The Hutchinson County mental health task force plans to focus on fundraising activities in 2021-2022.

PBHA's goal for rural engagement has been to develop a cohesive community effort to address mental well-being by fostering collaboration, relationship building, developing supportive infrastructure and resources for community needs. This would in turn lead to improved communication, coordination and collaboration with Amarillo-based resources. PBHA's role is to support planning, development and testing of sustainable rural solutions.

### HOW PBHA WORKS WITH THE HUTCHINSON COUNTY COMMUNITY

1. Leadership and resource development
2. Meeting facilitation and consultations/technical assistance
3. Capacity-building efforts focusing on alignment with PBHA efforts
4. Infrastructure/governance planning and resource development
5. Community education and health literacy to address root causes
6. Long-term commitment with short-term tangible projects and SMART goals
7. Cultural sensitivity and involving peers and community members in the task force

# PBHA

Panhandle Behavioral  
Health Alliance

*The Panhandle Behavioral Health Alliance is improving how our region promotes mental well-being in everyday life.*

## WHY OUR WORK IS NEEDED

People in the Texas Panhandle often do not get help for mental health and substance use before they have reached a crisis state. There are many reasons, including social and cultural stigma, a shortage of professionals who can help, and a general lack of knowledge about where to go for help or even that help is available.

## WHAT WE DO

Our regional partnership brings together community leaders, healthcare providers and organizations to connect the parts of the system of mental health and addiction care in a way that makes it easier for people to get the care they need for mental well-being.

## LOOKING AHEAD

### We work toward the day when ...

- Mental healthcare is given the same consideration as any other type of healthcare.
- Our behavioral health system improves outcomes and quality of life by detecting and treating well before a condition reaches a crisis level.
- Everyone speaks freely about issues around mental well-being.
- Every person in the Texas Panhandle with a mental health or substance use issue will get the help they need when and where they need it.

## PBHA Behavioral Leadership Team

- Dave Clark, PBHA Chair, Texas Organization of Rural & Community Hospitals
- Mary Coyne, PBHA Vice-Chair, AscentHealth Consulting/MCMC
- Laura Street, PBHA Past Chair, Laura Street Consulting
- Kathy Cornett, Community Volunteer
- Judy Day, Measurement Co-Chair, Community Volunteer
- Meg DeJong-Shier, Provider Shortage Co-Chair, Social Work Instructor, WTAMU
- Libby Moore, Chief Clinical Officer, Texas Panhandle Centers
- Patrick Osei-Hwere, Measurement Co-Chair, Media Communication Instructor, WTAMU
- Carolyn Witherspoon, Executive Director, Coalition of Health Services

## PBHA Workgroup Co-Chairs

- Jennifer Hale, Community Awareness Co-Chair, Amarillo ISD
- Elia Moreno, Community Awareness Co-Chair, Living Intentionally Ministries/Texas Christian Community Development Network
- Tim Bowles, Integrated Care Co-Chair, TTUHSC-Pediatrics
- Joseph Dad, Integrated Care Co-Chair, Regence Health Network
- Valerie Spanel, Integrated Care Co-Chair, Purposefully Driven
- Maira Argomaniz, Justice Co-Chair, Texas Panhandle Centers
- Judy Day, Measurement Co-Chair, Community Volunteer
- Patrick Osei-Hwere, Measurement Co-Chair, Media Communication Instructor, WTAMU
- Meg DeJong-Shier, Provider Shortage Co-Chair, Social Work Instructor, WTAMU
- Rene Havel, Provider Shortage Co-Chair, Nwth Behavioral Health