

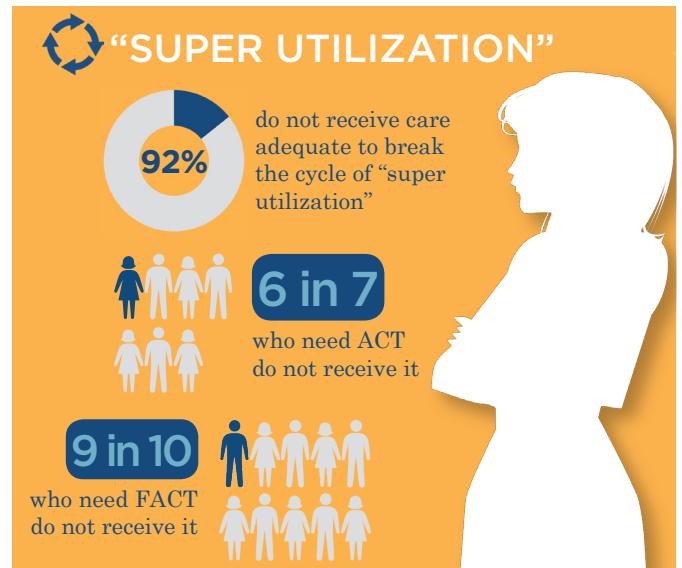
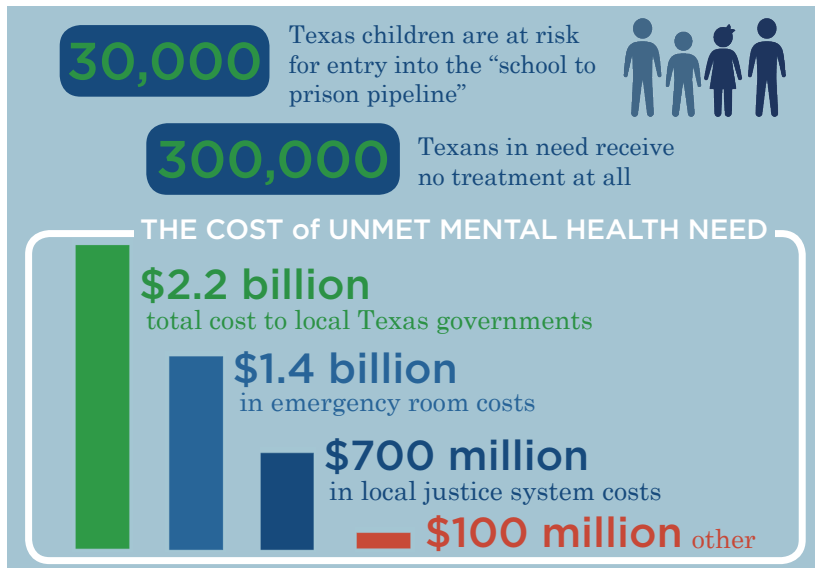
The Local Burden of Unmet Mental Health Needs on Texas Counties

In 2015, the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute partnered with the Texas Conference of Urban Counties to document the burden of unmet mental health needs on local governments. We worked closely with the Texas Council of Community Centers, the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas, and the Texas Association of Counties to survey Texas counties about the impact on them and their local systems.

In 2016, the Institute again partnered with the Texas Conference of Urban Counties to update these estimates. Using updated 2015 data on the extent of mental health needs in each county, we updated all of the costs to local governments and estimated that these costs exceed \$2 billion annually.

The Institute also expanded its work to calculate estimates of the number of individuals with unmet mental health needs more broadly. While most adults with severe needs (63%) and even more children and youth with severe needs (77%) receive some level of care, 300,000 Texans with severe needs still go without care each year.

Even more troubling, too many of those with the most severe and complex needs do not receive the right care. Nearly 40,000 adults in poverty with complex health conditions end up in cycles of “super utilization” where they move repeatedly through jails, emergency rooms, hospitals, and homeless shelters. Less than 1 in 12 of these Texans receive care adequate to break this cycle. Among children, even fewer (less than 1 in 20) of the estimated 30,000 children and youth in poverty who are at highest risk of school expulsion and eventual involvement in the juvenile justice system due to unmet mental health needs (sometimes called the “school to prison pipeline”) receive mental health services adequate to turn their lives around.



Jail Costs for Individuals with Mental Illness	\$461 million
Juvenile Justice Costs for Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbances	\$236 million
Psychiatric Emergency Department Costs	\$965 million
Alcohol and Substance Abuse Emergency Department Costs	\$457 million
Other Costs (e.g. shelter services to homeless individuals and school district costs)	\$100 million
Total Costs to Local Governments	\$2.2 billion

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Unmet Mental Health Need

For the 2016 report, unmet need was estimated by finding the difference between the number of individuals estimated to both have a serious mental health disorder and live below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL), and the number of individuals who received at least one mental health service in a 12-month period through either a local mental health authority or separately through the Medicaid system. An estimate of the number of people with complex needs stuck in a cycle of “super utilization” was calculated by multiplying the number of adults with serious mental illness (SMI) below the 200% FPL by prevalence estimates of the percent likely to need either Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)¹ and Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT)² based on the published work of Cuddeback and colleagues. The Institute’s estimates of the prevalence of mental health disorders are based on the work of psychiatric epidemiologist, Dr. Charles Holzer.³

To determine the number of adults, children, and youth receiving publicly funded mental health services in Texas, estimates of (1) Medicaid utilization and (2) non-Medicaid service usage through local mental health authorities (LMHAs) were combined to obtain statewide totals. Adult Medicaid estimates came from a report on serious and persistent mental illness in Texas published by the University of Texas-Houston School of Public Health.⁴ These estimates were adjusted to remove duplicate individuals. Adult non-Medicaid service usage data was provided by the Texas Department of State Health Services, and data on children’s service usage came from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

Costs Associated with Unmet Need

In 2015, estimates for mental health-related jail and emergency room visit costs were determined based on 2013 prevalence levels. In 2016, these estimates were re-calculated using 2015 prevalence levels.

For the 2015 estimates, 21 Texas counties provided data on jail-related costs and the number of individuals with mental illness in county jails. Counties also provided data for the average number of days served and for average housing and mental health treatment cost per day. The Institute then determined the relationship between county jail costs and the prevalence of individuals with SMI in each county using multiple regression techniques (allowing a second order polynomial relationship between cost and prevalence). For the jail data set, variations in the prevalence of SMI explained 95% of the variation in jail costs, indicating a strongly predictive model. This algorithm was then used to interpolate the costs incurred by the remaining Texas counties. Ten counties provided information on juvenile justice costs for youth with serious emotional disturbances (SED). Using the same methodology as with the jail costs, the Institute then estimated the statewide county juvenile justice costs for youth with SED.

To estimate the cost of mental health (MH) and substance use disorder (SUD) related emergency department (ED) visits, MMHPI used the Texas Health Care Information Collection (THCIC) survey of 580 hospitals. In total, 406 hospitals from 184 counties provided data for either MH or SUD visits, or both. Using the data from hospitals that provided both MH and total ED visits, the relationship between these variables was estimated using multiple regression and a third order polynomial form. Institute staff then used this information to interpolate the missing MH or SUD counts for the hospitals that only provided one of the two totals. Average cost per visit was calculated using the Dallas Fort Worth Hospital Council Foundation (DFWHCF) November 2013 White Paper on emergency room visits in North Texas. DFWHCF reported average costs of \$2,940.87 per MH ED visit and \$3,545.12 per SUD visit. Using these cost data, the Institute converted hospital ED visits into costs and then aggregated hospitals by county, resulting in estimates for 184 separate counties.

¹ Cuddeback et al. (2006). How many ACT teams do we need? *Psychiatric Services*, 7(12), 1803-1806.

² Cuddeback et al. (2008). How many FACT teams do we need? *Psychiatric Services*, 59(2), 205-208.

³ Holzer, C., Nguyen, H., & Holzer, J. (2015). Texas county level estimates of the prevalence of severe mental health need in 2012. Dallas, TX: Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute.

⁴ Rowan, P.J. et al. (2015). *Serious and persistent mental illness in Texas Medicaid: Descriptive analysis and policy options, final report, February 2015*. University of Texas-Houston School of Public Health.

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About Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute was established to support the implementation of policies and programs to help Texans obtain effective, efficient mental health care when and where they need it. Our vision is for Texas to be the national leader in treating people with mental health needs. The Institute brings together mental health policy and program leaders to identify, evaluate and implement best practices and policies that improve mental health care for all Texans. To learn more, please visit texasstateofmind.org.

Contact the Policy Institute

One important role for the Institute is responding to the information needs of Texas leaders. Legislators, agency leaders, and their staff must often address mental health policy either directly or in relation to other health and human service policy matters. The Institute is a resource for Texas leaders. This Institute is here to assist. If you have questions about behavioral health data or policy, please contact:

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About Texas Conference of Urban Counties

The Texas Conference of Urban Counties is a non-profit organization created by 37 member counties to save tax dollars by facilitating collaboration. Member counties represent nearly 80% of the population of Texas. Counties collaborate in three areas: a unified voice with State officials regarding State policy; education, research and idea exchanges regarding public policy and management; and shared and collaborative services such as Public Power Pool (electric power purchasing) and TechShare (collaborative information technology projects). All services and activities are pursued for the benefit of the people of Texas. To learn more, please visit cuc.org.

Contact Urban Counties

If you have questions or would like more information about the Texas Conference of Urban Counties, please contact:

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