

Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

Andy Keller, PhD – Invited Testimony on Senate Bill 74 – March 8, 2017

- **Narrowing the School-to-Prison Pipeline**
 - **32,000 Texas children** with severe mental health needs are at high risk before entry into the juvenile justice system.
 - **MMHPI local assessments** have found that Texas has little to offer children and families who need mental health services that are more intensive than a routine outpatient visit but less intensive than residential care. We have completed assessments in the following counties: Bexar, Dallas, Denton, El Paso, Harris, Tarrant, the Rio Grande Valley (4 counties), the Permian Basin (8 counties), and 26 counties in the Panhandle.
 - **For example, in Bexar County**, about **100 children** per year of the **2,300 who need** this level of care receive it.
 - **95%** of children statewide do not receive the **intensive mental health care** they need.

- **Children and Youth in Foster Care**
 - As in the broader system, Texas lacks **adequate, high-quality capacity** in the child welfare system, particularly for **children with high needs**.
 - There are about **4,000 high-needs children** in the child welfare system, according to The Stephen Group.
 - Despite **83(R) SB 58**, in nearly **four years, only four new providers for children** have been credentialed in the STAR Health Medicaid managed care program.
 - **Texas needs to act to fill gaps in intensive mental health services to help high-need children in foster care.** Without “jump starting” more intensive capacity, children with severe mental health needs will continue to experience broken homes, school failure, expensive out-of-home placements, high risk of juvenile justice involvement, and a broad range of tragic outcomes.

- **Barriers in a Post-83(R) SB 58 Children’s Mental Health System**
 - Provider requirements in the **Medicaid managed care contracts** and **manual** have not been clarified.
 - Despite **83(R) SB 58**, providers have found the criteria and requirements to provide these services unclear.
 - **One example:**
 - MMHPI has heard from multiple providers that thought they had to provide a **24/7 crisis hotline** and a **mobile outreach team** to be credentialed to provide these services; these perceptions are inaccurate.
 - The language in the managed care contract and manual is unclear, which has caused some managed care organizations to think these were requirements for providers.
 - **85(R) SB 74** would clarify these requirements and encourage more providers to become credentialed to provide these critical services.