



Alycia Speasmaker, Policy Associate

Work: (512) 441-8123, ext. 112

Cell: (210) 392-1593

aspeasmaker@TexasCJC.org

www.TexasCJC.org

FACT SHEET 2019

HB 2707

Expand the Allowable Use of Mental Health Grants

Improve the continuum of care for people experiencing Substance Use Disorder to reduce health care costs, improve family stability, and save lives.

COMBAT THE SUBSTANCE USE CRISIS THROUGH SMART, COMMUNITY-BASED REFORM

While crime rates in Texas have fallen across nearly every offense category, drug-related charges continue to rise. In large part, Texas' lack of investment in Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment and recovery capacity limits prevention services and co-occurring SUD and mental health services, limits peer support and harm reduction opportunities, results in lengthy treatment wait lists (including for Medication-Assisted Treatment) and a declining provider base, and leaves few options for recovery housing.

Some of the most tragic downstream impacts are deaths and drug overdoses, as well as continued drug abuse. Overdose deaths rose by over 7 percent in 2016,¹ many due to opioids. Additionally, four Texas cities (Texarkana, Amarillo, Odessa, and Longview) are among the top 25 in the U.S. for prescription opioid abuse rates.²

This has a profound effect on Texas families. About 43 percent of child abuse/neglect investigations and 66 percent of child removals in Texas stem from concerns about caregiver substance use, including alcohol. Substance use was also an active influence in 52 percent of child fatalities in fiscal year 2017.³ Furthermore, Texas continues to face high rates of maternal mortality, with drug overdose as the top cause of maternal death during pregnancy and up to one year postpartum.⁴

By expanding the allowable purpose of Texas' existing mental health grant funds to include SUD treatment, communities will have greater mobility to improve their continuum of care for people with drug problems, saving lives and strengthening Texas families.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Low-income people with Substance Use Disorder in Texas are more likely to be arrested than to access recovery services.**⁵ Most defendants incarcerated for drug possession will be re-arrested within three years, while diverting people into community service lowers recidivism rates by 30-50 percent.⁶
- In Texas, \$0.60 out of every \$1,000 of general revenue spending goes to substance use agencies, far below the national average of \$4.17 per \$1,000.⁷
- Health care costs related to opioids reached almost \$2 billion in Texas in 2014.⁸

COST-SAVING AND PUBLIC SAFETY-DRIVEN SOLUTION: SUPPORT HB 2707 BY REPRESENTATIVE PRICE

HB 2707 simply expands the allowable use of community mental health grant program funds to include treatment for Substance Use Disorder services. This will ultimately allow communities to implement a public health approach to Substance Use Disorder by diverting individuals away from costly jail cells and into evidence-based community care.

IN SHORT

HB 2707 will expand the allowable purpose of Texas' existing community mental health grants to include treatment for substance use disorder services – in turn reducing drug abuse and related arrests, preventing overdoses, and helping families.

Citations

¹ National Center for Health Statistics, *Data Brief: Drug Overdose Deaths in the United States, 1999-2017*, 2018, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db329-h.pdf>.

² Castlight Health, *The opioid crisis in America's workforce*, 2016, https://content.castlighthealth.com/Opioid-Research-Report_LP.html.

³ Texans Care for Children, *Addressing Substance Use Among Pregnant Women and New Moms*, 2018, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5728d34462cd94b84dc567ed/t/5ab5236a562fa77d17564e36/1521820523725/pregnancy-sud-policy-brief-mar2018.pdf>.

⁴ Texans Care for Children, *Addressing Substance Use*, 2018.

⁵ Legislative Budget Board, *Statewide Criminal and Juvenile Justice Recidivism and Revocation Rates*, January 2017, http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/Documents/Publications/Policy_Report/3138_Stwide_Crim_Just_Recid_Revoc.pdf.

⁶ Texas Substance Use Disorder Coalition, *Recommendations for House Select Committee on Opioids and Substance Use Disorder*, 2018, <https://www.texascjc.org/system/files/publications/SUDC%20Recommendations%20for%20Interim%20Select%20Committee%20on%20Opioids%20%28Aug%202018%29.pdf>.

⁷ Council of State Governments, *Drug Abuse in the States: Treatment*, 2017, <http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/content/drug-abuse-states-treatment>.

⁸ Texas Substance Use Disorder Coalition, *Recommendations for House Select Committee*.