

Community Investments with Precision Behavioral Health Work Plan

COMMITMENT TO OUR NEIGHBORS

The McKenna Foundation is committed to addressing social disparities in New Braunfels and Comal County. **Through strategic grant-making, we empower nonprofits to meet critical needs focused on housing, mental and behavioral health services, and early childhood development.** Our efforts, driven by the forces of inspiration, influence, and impact, reduce inequities and enhance the well-being of vulnerable populations. Through these community investments, the McKenna Foundation and trusted partners can address immediate challenges and build sustainable support systems for generations to come.

In 2024, the McKenna Foundation reconvened a Mental and Behavioral Health Taskforce, which refined 19 key goals to ensure that every individual facing mental health challenges is seen, heard, and supported. This collaboration and resultant goals will guide the Foundation's efforts to further develop and strengthen the mental and behavioral health ecosystem. The objectives and priorities listed in this plan reflect this work.

CURRENT STATE

Rapid growth in New Braunfels and Comal County has outpaced the expansion of mental and behavioral health resources. **With a 92% growth in population since 2010, the needs of our residents and rates of mental illness and behavioral health challenges have escalated.**

- River City Advocacy has experienced a 72% increase in counseling clients and a 91% increase in peer support participants since 2021.
- Hill Country MHDD reports 76.8% of individuals served have a history of suicidal thoughts.
- In 2021, Comal County experienced 1 suicide every 14 days.
- 44.9% of students in Comal County are classified as 'at-risk.' High school students with depression are more than twice as likely to drop out as their peers.
- In 2022, Comal County had only 5.7 psychiatrists per 100,000 residents.
- In 2023, 45.3% of Texans needing mental health care did not receive it due to affordability issues.

DESIRED FUTURE STATE

All New Braunfels and Comal County residents have timely access to affordable, high-quality mental and behavioral health support

VISION

To be a leader in development of a vibrant and thriving community for all our neighbors

OBJECTIVE 1

Shared understanding of mental health as a necessary component of a thriving community

OBJECTIVE 2

Community members with mental and behavioral health needs are connected to treatment before a crisis

OBJECTIVE 3

People in crisis have timely access to low-barrier mental and behavioral health care

PRIORITIES

- Improve community awareness and education
- Support partnerships between providers
- Adopt evidence-based early intervention and prevention programs

PRIORITIES

- Build a comprehensive continuum of locally available services
- Expand the qualified mental and behavioral health workforce
- Support evidence-based programs
- Support substance use disorder treatment

PRIORITIES

- Support multi-disciplinary crisis intervention initiatives
- Promote the integration of mental health professionals
- Support crisis stabilization programs

OBJECTIVE 1: Shared understanding of mental health as a necessary component of a thriving community

Priority	Improve community awareness and education opportunities on mental wellness, illness, early warning signs and the negative impact of stigma
Priority	Support partnerships between social service providers, local government, faith-based communities, education institutions, and other stakeholders targeting youth, veterans, seniors, and other high-risk populations
Priority	Adopt evidence-based early intervention and prevention programs- focusing on behavioral health and suicide prevention programs benefitting children, youth, and other vulnerable populations
Metrics	Improved access to social-emotional support, decrease in community mental health distress indicators, increased number of students engaged in mental health programming, reduction in youth alcohol and substance use rates, increased community mental health training rates

OBJECTIVE 2: Connect community members with mental and behavioral health needs to treatment before a crisis

Priority	Build a comprehensive continuum of locally available low-barrier mental health and substance use treatment services with access points at all stages of recovery
Priority	Expand the local workforce of qualified behavioral and physical health providers and support staff through training, licensure, and supervision opportunities.
Priority	Support evidence-based programs utilizing credentialed providers- expand access to individual and group therapy, Integrated Behavioral Health (IBH), Trauma-Informed Care, and peer support
Priority	Support substance use disorder treatment- maintain and expand therapeutic and peer services to support recovery for the whole family
Metrics	Number of clients seen by providers, reduction in anxiety and depression symptoms, percent of persons with mental disorders reporting an improvement in functioning, improved ratio of residents per mental health provider, reduced drug and opioid overdose deaths, reduced rates of alcohol and substance use

OBJECTIVE 3: Improve timely access to low-barrier mental and behavioral health care for people in crisis

Priority	Support multi-disciplinary crisis intervention initiatives- maintain and expand coordinated response teams of mental health professionals, law enforcement, and emergency medical providers dedicated solely to crisis response and follow-up
Priority	Promote the integration of mental health professionals within law enforcement and justice systems- support alternatives to incarceration through education, training, and diversified local resources
Priority	Support crisis receiving and stabilization- create programs and facilities offering short-term (under 24 hours) and mid-term observation
Metrics	Reduction in successful suicide attempts, reduced time on scene, increased rates of jail diversion practices, creation of local stabilization/observation beds, reduction in emergency room visits for mental health issues

The McKenna Foundation prioritizes programs that develop or expand services to under resourced, economically disadvantaged, emotionally vulnerable and geographically and historically underserved populations.