

Behavioral Health Care in Texas: Supply and Demand

By Sean Price

SIMPLY PUT, Texas doesn't have enough health care professionals to address its mental health needs. That problem isn't unique to Texas, but the state's workforce shortfall is especially acute. Mental Health America, a national nonprofit dedicated to improving care for mental illness, ranked Texas 50th out of the 50 states and District of Columbia in access to mental health care (tma.tips/MentalHealthAmerica).

The data on this page are designed to show where some of the greatest needs are in addressing behavioral health. But they come with a caveat. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unusual exodus of behavioral health care professionals at all levels that current statistics don't reveal, says Brian Hepburn, executive director of the National Association of State Mental Health Directors. Many of them are leaving because of "anti-public health behavior they haven't dealt with previously," he said in an email interview.

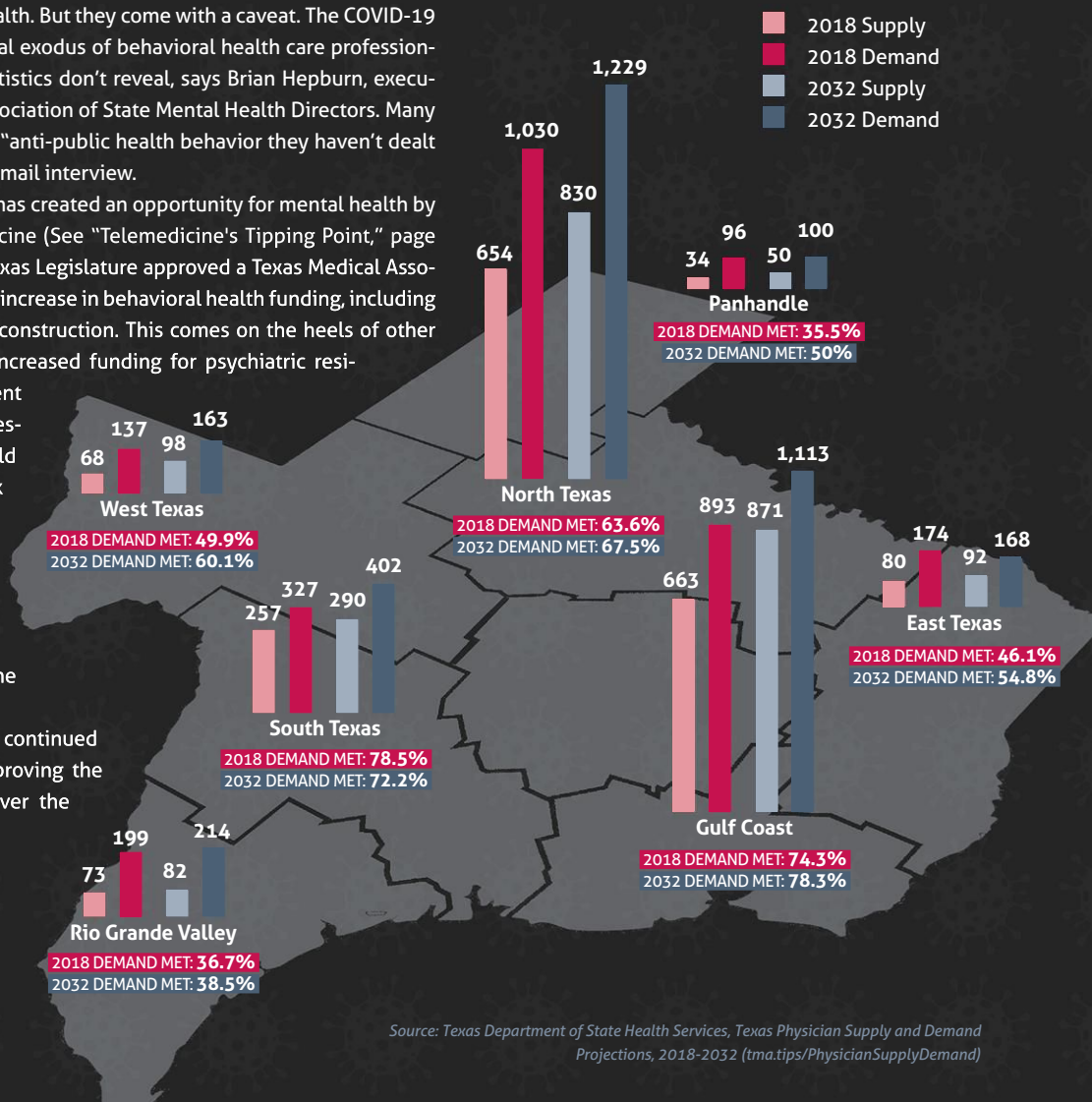
However, the pandemic also has created an opportunity for mental health by expanding the use of telemedicine (See "Telemedicine's Tipping Point," page 44). And earlier this year, the Texas Legislature approved a Texas Medical Association-supported \$339 million increase in behavioral health funding, including funding for new state hospital construction. This comes on the heels of other sessions in which lawmakers increased funding for psychiatric residencies, funded loan-repayment plans for mental health professionals, and established the Child Psychiatric Access Network (CPAN), says David Lakey, MD, vice chancellor for health affairs and chief medical officer at The University of Texas System and presiding officer for CPAN. (See "Making the Right Call, page 26").

"The Texas Legislature has continued to show strong support of improving the Texas mental health system over the last several sessions," he said.

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CRITICAL SHORTAGES OF PSYCHIATRISTS BY REGION

A May 2020 report from the Texas Department of State Health Services found that psychiatry is in "critical shortage" in every region except Central Texas.



Source: Texas Department of State Health Services, Texas Physician Supply and Demand Projections, 2018-2032 (tma.tips/PhysicianSupplyDemand)

PHYSICIAN SUPPLY 2018-32

2,202
2018 Supply

3,263
2018 Demand

67.5%
2018 Demand Met

2,852
2032 Supply

3,895
2032 Demand

73.2%
2032 Demand Met

54,171
2018 Supply

60,389
2018 Demand

89.7%
2018 Demand Met

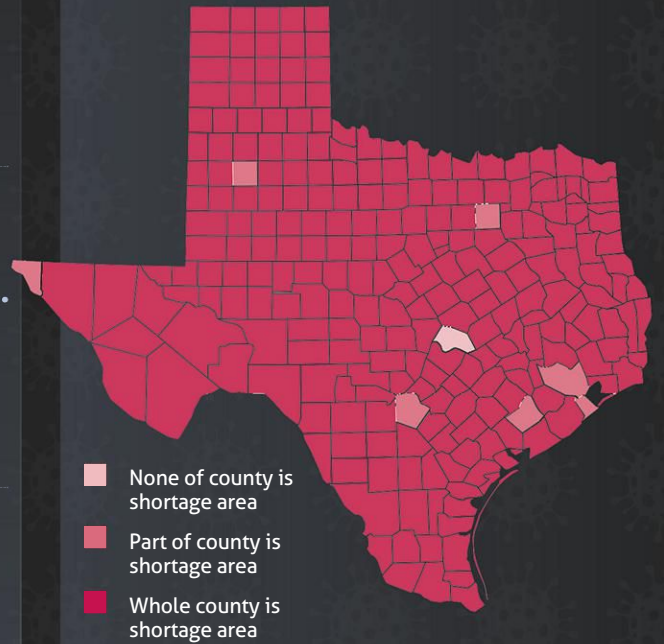
70,431
2032 Supply

80,761
2032 Demand

87.2%
2032 Demand Met

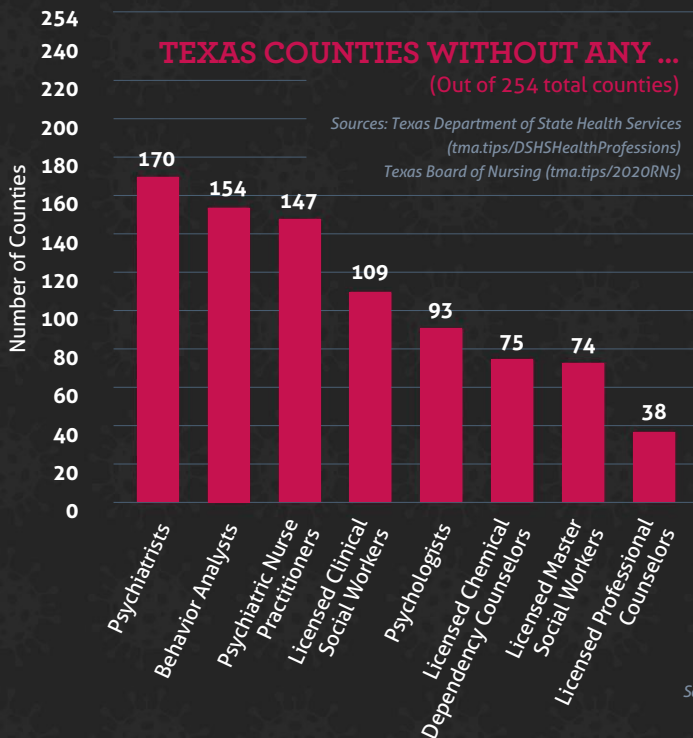
Source: Texas Physician Supply and Demand Projections, 2018-2032
(tma.tips/PhysicianSupplyDemand)

MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE AREAS



- As of September 2020, Texas has 410 mental health care professional shortage areas, second only to California with 536.
- Texas needed 644 health care professionals to remove that status, more than any other state.
- The number of people living in these health professional shortage areas is more than 15 million. Second-place California had 9.3 million.

Sources: Health Resources & Services Administration (tma.tips/HRSA-HPSA); Kaiser Family Foundation (tma.tips/KFF-HPSAs)



TEXANS NOT RECEIVING MENTAL HEALTH CARE, 2018-19



17.2%

Adults reporting any mental illness in the past year



4.3%

Adults reporting serious mental illness in the past year

Sources: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (tma.tips/SAMHSAmentalhealth); Kaiser Family Foundation (tma.tips/KFFCustomReport)

TEXAS PSYCHIATRY PRIMARY SPECIALTIES, 2020*

2,006
Psychiatry

225
Child and Adolescent psychiatry

8
Geriatric psychiatry

7
Addiction psychiatry

7
Forensic psychiatry

*Does not include physicians specializing in addiction medicine
Source: Texas Department of State Health Services