



# News Release

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Aug. 24, 2020

CONTACT: Suzanna Cisneros, [suzanna.cisneros@ttuhsc.edu](mailto:suzanna.cisneros@ttuhsc.edu)  
(806) 743-7605

### **West Texas Mental Health Collaborative Unveils Meadows Report Findings and Status of Lubbock's Mental Health**

In 2016, Billy Philips, Ph.D., Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) executive vice president for Rural and Community Health, and John Opperman, Ph.D., Texas Tech University (TTU) associate vice provost for University Outreach and Engagement at Texas Tech University, discussed the importance of convening community partners who have a stake in mental health services in Lubbock. Those conversations led to the establishment of the Texas Tech Mental Health Initiative (TTMHI). The initiative works to establish clinical, education and research opportunities to bring together faculty from TTUHSC and TTU.

Now these efforts will connect through the West Texas Mental Health Collaborative (WTMHC) to work with community partners currently providing mental health care services and with individuals who are working to support families that are experiencing mental health challenges.

“From the beginning, it was understood that a broader community initiative would be needed to adequately address the needs in the community,” Opperman said. “The convening of community leaders and mental health providers that followed, the creation of the TTMHI, the completion of the community assessment by the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, and now the formation of the West Texas Mental Health Collaborative all lay the foundation for a more intentional and coordinated effort to improve mental health care in the West Texas region.”

WTMHC was established to strengthen mental health efforts from TTMHI, the City of Lubbock, Lubbock County, University Medical Health System, Covenant Health System and StarCare Specialty Health System, the local mental health authority.

The original group began to identify the mental health needs of the Lubbock community and commissioned the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute to complete a comprehensive mental health needs assessment of the Lubbock area, focusing on Cochran, Crosby, Hockley, Lubbock and Lynn counties. The initial efforts of the WTMHC have focused on the areas identified by the Meadows Report needs assessment.

Some key findings from the Meadows Report include the need for continuity of care in Lubbock through integration of services and increased service capacity to divert individuals toward treatment and away from jails and emergency departments as the first response to a mental health crisis. The report acknowledged the strong collaborative relationships that exist within the Lubbock area and the opportunity for enhanced coordination and integration of care. The report also suggested focusing on youth and families as an integral part of early intervention and provided specific findings for populations of youth who are involved in foster care and the juvenile justice system. The emphasis on youth and their families is particularly significant because most mental health challenges begin before adulthood.

“One of the most revealing pieces of data from the Meadows report is that we continue to treat those with mental health conditions separately than those with physical conditions,” TTUHSC President Lori Rice-Spearman, Ph.D., said. “We have a real opportunity to change that by building on the groundwork of this initiative laid by Dr. Philips and Dr. Opperman and working together with the collaborative. For TTUHSC, our goal is to serve as a convener bringing together the fragments of care across our entire system and community to help guide and direct the synergy to better serve the mental health needs of our populations.”

The WTMHC will serve as a bridge to create and expand needed services including counseling services, crisis response, substance use treatment, intensive outpatient treatment and inpatient treatment capacity for children and adults. Nancy Trevino, Ph.D., TTMHI director, said these partnerships are unlike those of other communities. They are unique because of the support structure and leadership. TTMHI is working to facilitate opportunities for multidisciplinary collaboration for mental health education, service and research, to work with the community at large and to expand the existing efforts of WTMHC for greater access to mental health care and related services within our community.

“We established the Texas Tech Mental Health Initiative to catalyze our commitments and people,” Philips said. “We were able to produce a comprehensive needs assessment that will guide out long-term planning and coordination efforts into the foreseeable future. With the ongoing work of the West Texas Mental Health Collaborative, we can imagine that one significant thing will happen – that gifted and committed people will be engaged in promoting a high level of mental health services than we have had. That will pay dividends for each of us who are residents of the South Plains and that is a good thing.”