

News Release

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TTUHSC to Host West Texas Regional Mental Health Conference

Topics Available for Health Professionals, Policy Makers, Educators and Advocates

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, mental illnesses annually affect tens of millions of people across the U.S., yet it is estimated that only half of people with mental illnesses ever seek or receive treatment. The Texas Tech Mental Health Initiative (TTMHI), as part of the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) Department of Psychiatry, has been working to build capacity to address mental health issues by connecting local partners, Lubbock-area professionals and community members with TTUHSC and Texas Tech University (TTU) faculty and clinics.

To continue that effort, TTUHSC will host the virtual West Texas Regional Mental Health Conference from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. July 16 using the TTUHSC Zoom platform. Registration and the conference agenda are available at <https://familycenter.brushfire.com/events/502628>.

Nancy Trevino, Ph.D., director of the TTMHI, said many area mental health care providers have expressed that mental health care is provided in a very siloed nature.

“The motivation for this conference is to break down those silos by inviting providers from across the continuum of care – licensed professional counselors, licensed chemical dependency counselors, marriage and family therapists, psychologists, primary care providers and psychiatrists through learning together and growing their referral and support networks to improve patient treatment and outcomes,” Trevino said.

The conference also will kick-off an effort to offer more training opportunities for area mental health providers, a request Trevino has heard frequently in her first year as TTMHI’s director. To plan the conference, Trevino joined forces with Gaston Rougeaux-Burnes, Psy.D., an area psychologist who for three years organized a small conference as a way to provide local mental health professionals with an opportunity to earn continuing education credit. They began their collaboration by conducting a quick needs assessment survey and then sent out a call for proposals.

“We received a great response from all of the mental health programs and expertise across the TTUHSC campuses in our region and from our collaborators at TTU,” Trevino said. “We also received support from the Laura W. Bush Institute for Women’s Health, and one track is sponsored by the TTU Center for Collegiate Recovery Communities as part of this year’s Barbara and Mickey McKenzie Lectureship Series. We also have community support from the West Texas Mental Health Collaborative and the 100 Black Men of West Texas.”

Conference attendees also can earn continuing education units, continuing medical education credits or continuing nursing education credits. This is unique, Trevino added, because conferences

generally offer only one kind of continuing education credit, which contributes to the silos in training and practice.

The conference program consists of sessions that have been peer-reviewed by experts who live and have worked in the West Texas region. Trevino said those working and researching in the field from the TTUHSC university campuses, hospitals, clinics, schools and other offices will be sharing their expertise and the current statistics related to mental health from the region, which can advocate for additional resources or utilize those that are locally available. She hopes participants can connect with each other to improve their mental health care and implement systemic changes that help their communities.

“This is an opportunity to break down those silos,” Trevino stressed. “It’s an opportunity to learn about best practices, specific therapeutic interventions and new models in mental health care and substance use treatment. Many times we hear about something really innovative happening ‘over there,’ but it’s hard to make the connection or know where to turn to ask for advice to implement it in our own community. We want to help conference attendees to make those connections.”

For more information about the conference, contact Zenaida Morales (zenaida.morales@ttuhsc.edu), Trevino (nancy.trevino@ttuhsc.edu) or Rougeaux-Burnes (grburnes@gmail.com).