F. Marie Hall Institute for Rural and Community Health

Mission & Vision

The F. Marie Hall Institute for Rural and Community Health exists to work in close collaboration with the people of West Texas for the advancement of health through innovative and scholarly research, the advanced use of technology, comprehensive education and community outreach.

Motto: We focus our imagination, our talents and our energy to improve the health and well-being of the people and communities of West Texas and beyond.

We thank you for allowing us to spend our time with purpose and to strive each and every day to make the world a better place.
When we started this year in the F. Marie Hall Institute, none of us could have foreseen what we have experienced. Who could have seen the COVID-19 pandemic? I have been asked what the F. Marie Hall Institute for Rural Health is like, and I have always answered about something. As I read this annual report, I keep thinking about 2020. It has been a year in mind that unlike any of the other annual reports, one has been produced solely from home-based, well-equipped offices. That’s how we have been working this year and will likely work into next year. It is very possible that we will work in a hybrid of home-based and building-based offices.

Being trained as an epidemiologist and having worked in public health most of my career, my first priority this year was to protect our people. About this time last year, while we were all blissfully unaware of what would hit the news in early January, still not thinking or imagining anything like what we have experienced, I called some old friends at the CDC and they did not reassure me. They did tell me the best protection was to isolate everyone I could from community exposure to health care providers and connect patients with loved ones. We called just about every local hospital in our rural network to be sure we got them connected with the products of the TTU Engineering School, who built a con-...

I can’t help but recall Charles Dickens’ famous opening to A Tale of Two Cities, since it is such an apt description of 2020. “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the year in which we hoped for so much, it was the year in which we lost so much. It was a winter of despair, it was a spring of hope, it was the age of innocence, it was the dawn of reason.” We hope that is so as we move toward the close of 2020.

Dr. Billy U. Philips, Jr.

~ Dr. Billy U. Philips, Jr.
Why is it so crucial for the state to be concerned with health care across this rural and remote half of the state? The answer lies within the vast resources that West Texas contributes and the people who make it all possible.

West Texas plays a significant role in the daily lives of most Americans as a primary source of food, fuel, and fiber. West Texas is home to major beef and pork production, including some of the world’s largest cattle feedlots. We have some of the top-producing oil and gas fields in the nation as well, and the region also serves as a prominent source of agriculture for the country.

The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center is centered in the midst of this perfect rural research environment and is uniquely situated to lead efforts that go beyond statistics to create real-world rural health solutions.

Serving West Texas

**OUR FOCUS**

1. **HEALTH TECHNOLOGY**
   - Telemedicine and telehealth training, health IT support, practice management, clinical quality coaching and network improvement support.

2. **HEALTH EDUCATION**
   - Coordination of pipeline activities to recruit and engage students to enter the health care workforce and practice in rural West Texas.

3. **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**
   - Behavioral health counseling, triage, intervention and referral for West Texas public school students via LPCs and telemedicine.
Innovations in Healthcare Technology (InHT)

InHT assists healthcare providers and hospitals in modernizing their organizations with the use of certified electronic health records (EHRs) and telehealth technology. Because of its work in assisting providers and hospitals in implementing certified EHRs, InHT continues to be recognized as experts in the field and are called upon to provide technical support and health care expertise to individuals across the region.

Currently, of the 108 counties in the TTUHSC service region, 20 have no practicing physician and 11 have no practicing physician, nurse practitioner, or physician’s assistant. Outside the seven urban centers – Lubbock, Amarillo, Midland/Odessa, El Paso, Wichita Falls, San Angelo, and Abilene – there are fewer, if any, specialists providing, resulting in many patients having to travel to seek medical care. InHT addresses these access barriers related to distance through its Telemedicine department, yielding better quality patient care that meets the local needs of rural and urban communities that are great distances from specialists and other kinds of providers. Telemedicine has expanding innovations in several areas including: Rural Telemedicine; Correctional Telemedicine; Mental Health Services; HIV Services in Abilene; EMS Trauma Point of Care Telemedicine Services; Telehealth Resource Center servicing Texas and Louisiana Telemedicine Services; and our state of the art Frontiers in Telemedicine Training Laboratory.

InHT Staff

InHT Staff (LEFT TO RIGHT): Cameron Onks, Program Manager; Kelly Murro, InHT Program Manager; Alex Richards, Technology Manager; Becky Bounds, TexLa Program Manager; Laura Lappe, Telemedicine Project Manager; Frances Quintero, FIT Program Manager; Sharon Rose, EMS Project Manager; Lisa Wynn, Administrative Assistant.
The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) Telemedicine Program continues to bridge barriers across West Texas. The TTUHSC Telemedicine Program provides patient services including rural health clinic-based specialty care, school-based clinic primary care, correctional telemedicine, and mental health services, including a school-based triage and referral project and an HIV+ clinic for uninsured and underserved patients.

Telemedicine encounters for FY 2019-20 included the following:

- **1,356** Total Patient Encounters*
- **1,912** Correctional Patient Encounters
- **249** Community Patient Encounters
- **95** Infectious Disease Clinic Patient Encounters

*ID Clinic ceased operations in March 2020 for patient safety due to COVID-19

The telemedicine program at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center has been recognized nationally through several distinctions and honors.

In FY 2019-20, Telemedicine facilitated all patient encounters for telemedicine clinics in Correctional Managed Care, as well as trained Managed Care staff to provide telemedicine clinic support. Telemedicine equipment has been deployed to launch the TTUHSC Family Medicine Residency Telemedicine clinic in Midland/Odessa, and the program also provided camera equipment to support services at the TTUHSC School of Medicine when in-person services were restricted due to COVID-19.

Looking ahead, the TTUHSC Telemedicine program will continue to create awareness of telemedicine programs and the use of technology in medical practice among local physicians, administrators, and health service providers, as well as in surrounding areas. Awareness includes the advancements of telemedicine and other technologies, improvements in reliability, simplicity of equipment/software use and the potential that exists to expand telemedicine to West Texas communities and beyond, seeking help to overcome barriers to care and increase access to health services.
The Frontiers in Telemedicine Course was launched in 2016 as a unique program to train clinical staff about telemedicine. Today, students complete hands-on simulation center training, online modules, and objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs) designed to educate them on telemedicine equipment, procedures, etiquette and ethics. The program also trains licensed health care professionals who desire to gain a certificate of completion in telemedicine.

After completion of training, students should be able to:

• Demonstrate the basic knowledge of telemedicine and telehealth and define those who could benefit from this technology.
• Demonstrate knowledge of the originating/patient site and distant/provider site, as well as the clinician and staff roles at each one.
• Demonstrate knowledge of the operation of telemedicine technology.
• Demonstrate knowledge of a telemedicine encounter.
• Demonstrate the basic ability to assess a patient in the ambulatory telemedicine setting.
• Demonstrate the utilization of knowledge required to present and manage the patient with a specific problem.
• Demonstrate the application of communication skills in patient and medical team communication.
The TexLa Telehealth Resource Center is a federally funded program designed to provide technical assistance and resources to new and existing telehealth programs throughout Texas and Louisiana. Nationally, there are a total of 14 TRCs which include 12 regional centers, all with different strengths and regional expertise, and two national centers, one focusing on technology assessment and one on telehealth policy. The TexLa TRC works to eliminate barriers and supports the expansion of telehealth throughout the region.

**TexLa Telemedicine Resource Center**

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<tr>
<th>TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE</th>
<th>OUTREACH AND EDUCATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>436 CLIENTS ASSISTED IN FY 2019-20</td>
<td>3K OUTREACH CONTACTS IN FY 2019-20</td>
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The TRC provides technical assistance to advance telehealth across Texas and Louisiana. Technical assistance describes the information, tools and resources provided addressing such telehealth topics as technology, policy and reimbursement. The TexLa Telehealth Resource Center reached 3,406 individuals in FY 2019-20 by outreach and education through speaking engagements, workshops, conference exhibits and booths, websites and social media.

**Next Generation 911 Project**

**FY 2019-2020**

The Next Generation 911 project continues to monitor and collect data from 5 rural EMS providers and their community hospitals: Scurry County EMS and Cogdell Memorial Hospital, Medical Arts Hospital EMS and Medical Arts Hospital, Seminole EMS and Seminole Hospital District, Bailey County EMS and Muleshoe Area Medical Center, and Granbury/Hood County EMS and Lake Granbury Medical Center. The project has implemented 3 Regional Trauma Centers: University Medical Center, Covenant Health System Adult ED and Pediatric ED.
Transforming Communities through Outreach, Recruitment & Education (T-CORE)

Education and outreach, youth recruitment and counseling, and community health worker training

The T-CORE division of the Institute encompasses the community outreach arm of TTUHSC programming. In addition to West Texas AHEC—a program that works to reduce health service disparities, health care provider shortages, and barriers to health care access—programs under T-CORE include the Community Health Worker Development—Bridge to Excellence Program, the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program, AHEC Scholars, AHEC Jr. Scholars, and the Double T Collegiate Health Service Corps.

CATHERINE HUDSON, MPH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF T-CORE

T-CORE STAFF (TOP TO BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT): Wendy Bryan, T-CORE Project Manager; Celeste Hoffman, AHEC Data Coordinator; Estela Salazar, BHWET Coordinator.
West Texas AHEC’s accomplishments for FY 2019-20 included:

• West Texas AHEC’s Bridge to Excellence CHW Program provided certification training for 26 new CHWs, 13 of which were on the (BHWET) community health worker track.

• 634 students were recruited for the AHEC Scholars program, implemented on September 1, 2018.

Additionally, the West Texas AHEC Program expanded community-based opportunities to increase health professions training capacity, provides community-based clinical training for health professions students through the new AHEC Scholars Program, provides practice entry support, introduces youth to health careers through AHEC Jr. Scholars programs, and supports placement and retention of health professionals in high need areas.

AHEC Jr. Scholars

West Texas AHEC implemented a Jr Scholar program in September 2018, targeted at rural schools in an effort to recruit students at the high school level. The goal is to target students who already know they want to pursue a career in health care, regardless of the field of study. Each year each center is charged with recruiting new schools to participate in this program. To date, the centers have recruited 53 schools for a total of 1,627 active participants. This approach yields a greater impact due to the ability to provide resources such as shadowing opportunities, tours of the different health career programs and a curriculum created for future health care professionals.

Student Rotations

Rotations were facilitated for 158 health care profession students in our West Texas AHEC region, including rotations for:

• Respiratory (44)
• Nurse Practitioner (9)
• Certified Medical Assisting (79)
• Other (26)

The West Texas AHEC program has six regional offices—Canyon, Plainview, Midland, Abilene, El Paso, and Wichita Falls. Goals for the West Texas AHEC program include coordination of pipeline activities to recruit and engage students to enter the health care workforce.
The Bridge to Excellence Community Health Worker (CHW) program is a hybrid class consisting of traditional face-to-face classroom in Lubbock coupled with virtual connectivity through telemedicine.

The continuing education offerings were moved to an online platform in an effort to reach CHWs unable to commute to an urban location for their required continuing education hours.

This fiscal year, WTAHEC received supplemental funding from HRSA to provide education in the community about opioid use. Each of the centers hosted a CHW Graduate Academy in their designated region. West Texas AHEC partnered with Texas Oversed Naloxone Initiative (TONI) who provided the opioid expertise. This one-day event provided community health workers with 8 hours of continuing education. The combination of events throughout West Texas garnered 531 participants.

CHW Graduate Academy

The Bridge to Excellence program provided certification training for 26 new CHWs in FY 2019-20, 13 of which were on the BHWET community health worker track.
Research, Reporting & Data Management (R²DM)

R²DM is a resource within the Institute which supports endeavors throughout the Texas Tech University System as well as the communities within the TTUHSC service area. The R²DM supports academic and community based endeavors by providing information through geomapping and analysis, needs assessments, gathering data for and helping process grant applications, and developing reports, maps and other publications for TTUHSC and Institute special projects. In addition to developing media material and enhancing the Institute's social media presence, R²DM produces the Rural Health Quarterly magazine which is available both in print and digital format (www.RHQ.com).
Grant Applications and Awards

The Institute has six active grants for FY 2019-20.

The Staff Attorney was successful in assisting departments within the Institute in developing and executing a total of 66 contracts during FY 20-20.

The Institute also executed strategic partnerships with hospitals, county governments, and school districts across the TTUHSC service area. For FY19-20, there are 24 active partnerships.

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<thead>
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<th>GRANT</th>
<th>START DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Telehealth Resource Center Grant Program</td>
<td>September 1, 2016</td>
<td>Awarded</td>
<td>$1,706,290</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioral Health Workforce Education</td>
<td>May 8, 2017</td>
<td>Awarded</td>
<td>$484,384</td>
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<td>Model State-Supported AHEC (HRSA)</td>
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<td>AHEC Program - COVID</td>
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<td>Coronavirus Telehealth Resource Centers</td>
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Funding for FY 2019-20

ENDOWMENTS

- The Marie Hall Chair in Rural Health $ 211,308
- Smith/Vela/Patterson Senior Fellowship for Rural Health Research $ 154,369
- F. Marie Hall Institute for Rural and Community Health $2,132,822

STATE APPROPRIATED LINE ITEM FUNDING

- Rural Health Care $ 708,482
- West Texas AHEC Program $1,824,000

ALLOCATED FUNDING TO SUPPORT TELEMEDICINE SERVICES

- Correctional Managed Health Care Contract, Billed Clinic Services, and Community Telemedicine Network $ 452,018
PRESENTATIONS


Penuliar, M., Clark, C., Hudson, C., & Philips, B. (2020). Telemedicine Stakeholder Committee, Texas Medical Board


Bounds, B. (2020). Telehealth in Texas after the Start of the 2020 Academic Year. medRxiv 2020.11.25.20238899

VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS


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