



Bringing Faith and Mental Health Together:
**An Inventory of Faith and
Mental Health Initiatives**
in San Antonio and Nationally

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Executive Summary

A key component of recovery from mental illness is having meaningful, lasting social connections. By providing opportunities to become members of a community and to develop and maintain positive social relationships, congregations and other faith-based groups can play a significant role in supporting people with mental illness on their journeys to recovery. This can be especially effective when they collaborate with mental health providers and other agencies who deliver evidence-based and clinically necessary treatment and supports.

San Antonio has a long history of facilitating the connection between faith and mental health. For decades, faith-based volunteers have worked to educate congregations and equip them to become caring communities for people struggling with mental illnesses. More recently, the city embarked on an ambitious faith-based initiative aimed at enhancing the quality of life for its residents by engaging faith communities and social and health services entities through a comprehensive array of public-private partnerships. A significant component of the initiative includes mental health. The Pathways to Hope conference, which has become an orienting event each year, also features important efforts to integrate faith and mental health.

San Antonio's efforts are comprehensive and appear to be enduring. For these reasons, the H.E. Butt Foundation engaged the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) in March 2018 to gather an inventory of faith and mental health initiatives in San Antonio, as well as best practices in faith and mental health in Texas and nationally. This report's compilation of the current initiatives and the network of existing (and potential) relationships in San Antonio, as well as its description of exemplars in other areas of Texas and nationally, is intended to further inform San Antonio's efforts. To our knowledge, no repository of best practices and models currently exists that is readily available for people to learn about other resources and approaches, making this project of particular importance not only to San Antonio, but to people engaged in faith-related mental health initiatives around Texas and the nation.

In developing the inventory, we interviewed leaders from health and behavioral health programs in San Antonio, elsewhere in Texas, and nationally, who were collaborating with faith communities, as well as congregations and other faith-based groups that had a focus on mental health concerns. We also interviewed university training programs that had a faith or spiritual component. The faith and mental health initiatives, also referred to in this report as "faith-based" and "faith-related" initiatives, that we discovered over the course of our review represent a wide array of different types of initiatives, each of which provides guidance and resources upon which to draw in enhancing the existing initiatives in San Antonio. We also created an emerging taxonomy of initiatives to help the reader organize and better understand the wide array of emerging models. The taxonomy should be useful as faith and mental health leaders consider how to supplement and strengthen their current work.

Taxonomy of Faith-Mental Health Initiatives

The faith and mental health initiatives that we describe in this report can be organized into the following taxonomy of ways in which the initiatives have attempted to address mental health issues:

- **Educate faith communities** to increase mental health literacy and awareness,
- **Equip congregations** for mental health ministry,
- **Engage faith communities as partners** in efforts to improve mental health system access and performance,
- **Establish system-level efforts** to promote faith and mental health collaboration, and
- **Embed mental health services** in faith communities.

Recommendations for Enhancing Faith and Mental Health Initiatives

This report is intended to provide input to leaders in San Antonio as they make plans for disseminating their initiatives and developing new and stronger collaborations. It represents an occasion to take a step back, develop a more comprehensive sense of what has developed in San Antonio (and elsewhere), and to consider how all of the tremendous energy, talent, and creativity that is driving current faith-based mental health initiatives might become even more productive and effective. The recommendations in this report for San Antonio, if adopted and implemented, could further enhance the exciting developments in faith and mental health collaboration that had already gained significant momentum before we embarked on this project. The recommendations include the following:

- **Let faith also inform mental health.** Most initiatives focus on educating the faith community about mental health, but we also found emerging examples of mental health organizations learning how to incorporate faith and spirituality into their work, improving care effectiveness through the framework of “cultural competence.”
- **Further develop a two-way model of faith community and mental health community engagement.** Some of the more ambitious efforts, found in Texas and nationally (for example, the Memphis Model and adaptations of it by hospital-based systems and congregations in both Dallas and Houston, and the Bridges to Care and Recovery program in St. Louis), involved extensive, highly-organized collaboration between faith communities and mental health providers. These models could provide helpful input for San Antonio, which has the requisite infrastructure and faith community engagement to successfully develop more comprehensive and integrated approaches.
- **More widely disseminate resources and training in mental health ministry.** Collectively, the various initiatives in San Antonio represent a powerful set of training and educational resources that, coupled with resources developed elsewhere in Texas and nationally, could be more widely and systematically disseminated throughout the city and county. In addition, a connection to MMHPI’s Okay to Say™ initiative would allow these efforts to be shared more broadly, increase opportunities for people to share how

faith-based services have contributed to their recovery from mental health issues, and help the faith community reinforce the message that mental health conditions should not be seen as a weakness or moral defect.

- **Consider “task-shifting” as a means of further equipping congregations.** Some of the more comprehensive and well-resourced initiatives (for example, Houston’s Hope and Healing Center and Institute) were found to train congregation members in delivering supports and even interventions that were rooted in an evidence base. San Antonio leaders could examine these initiatives more closely to see which components could be fruitfully adopted and disseminated.

San Antonio’s efforts to improve mental health outcomes for its residents by strengthening faith-based mental health initiatives take place within the context of other initiatives for improving mental health systems in the community. These initiatives include the redesign process for the San Antonio State Hospital, led by UT Health San Antonio; ongoing crisis system improvement initiatives in Bexar County focusing on diverting people with mental illness from both jails and emergency rooms to treatment settings; a rapid assessment of Bexar County’s children’s mental health systems to build consensus on up-stream service improvement opportunities that was completed by MMHPI in early March 2019 with the support of the Kronkosky Foundation and the San Antonio Area Foundation; and the broader continued interest of health systems in San Antonio (and throughout Texas and the nation) to pursue large-scale strategies for early detection and treatment of mild to moderate mental illnesses in primary care. All of these system-level initiatives create opportunities for linkages and more intentional planning and programming with the faith-based initiatives identified in this report.

About Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute



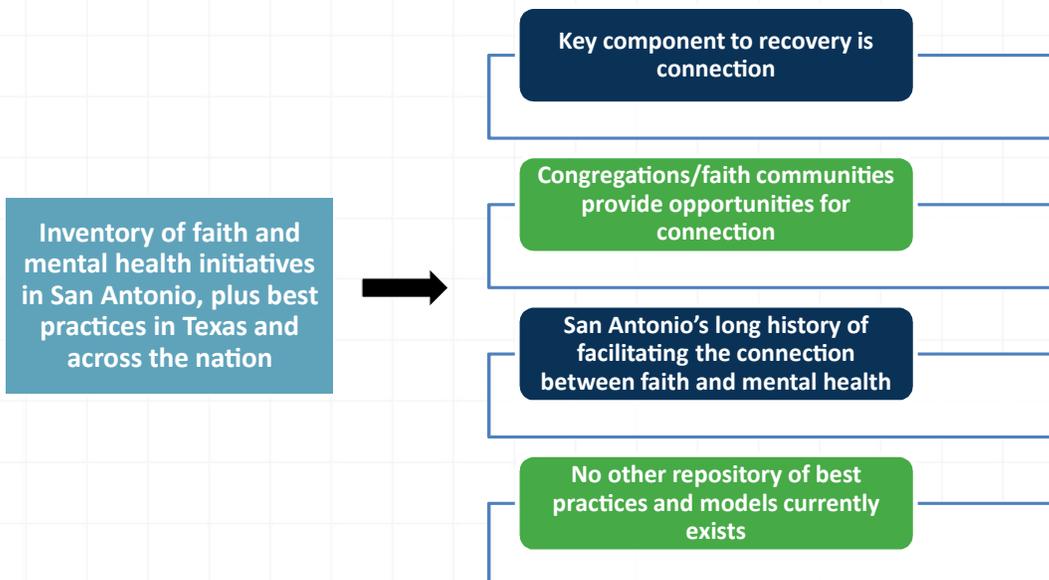
Mission Statement

To provide independent, non-partisan, and trusted policy and program guidance that creates systemic changes so all Texans can obtain effective, efficient behavioral health care when and where they need it.

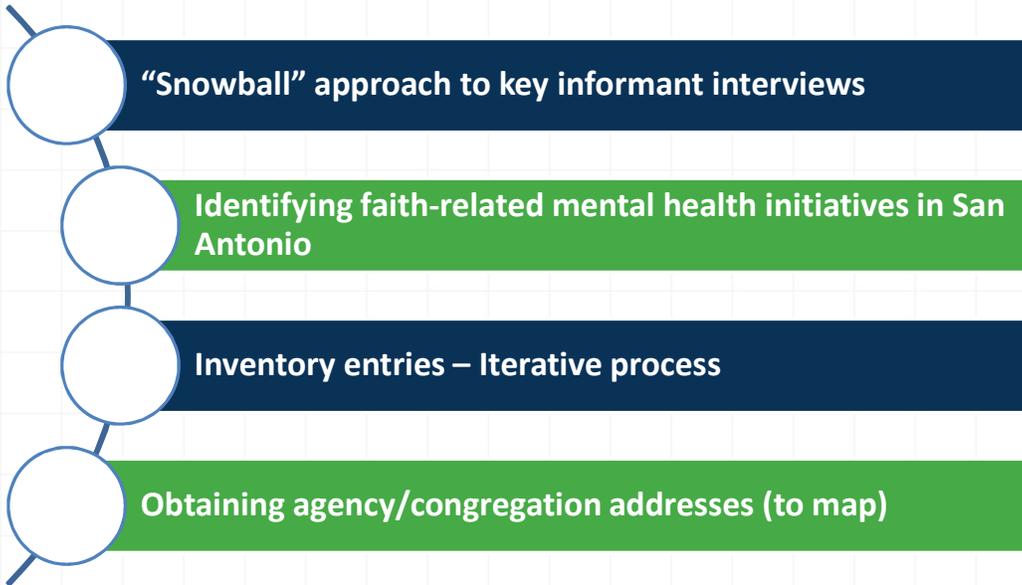
Vision

We envision Texas to be the national leader in treating people with mental health needs.

Why is Examining Faith and Mental Health Important?

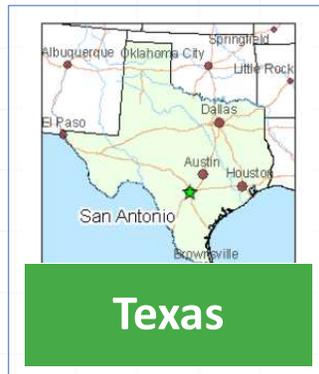


Methods for Developing the Inventory

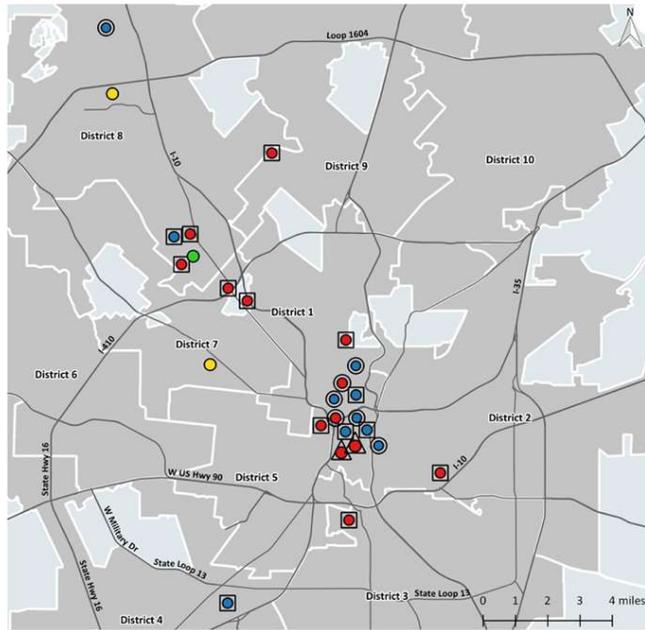


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Inventory Organization

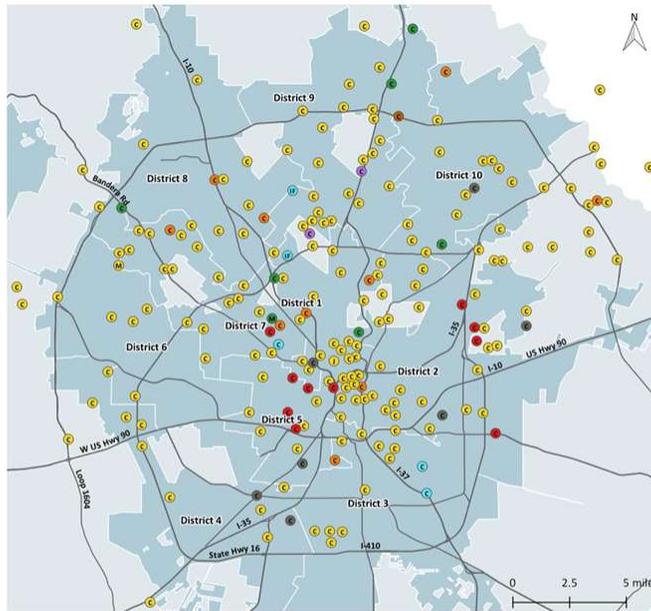


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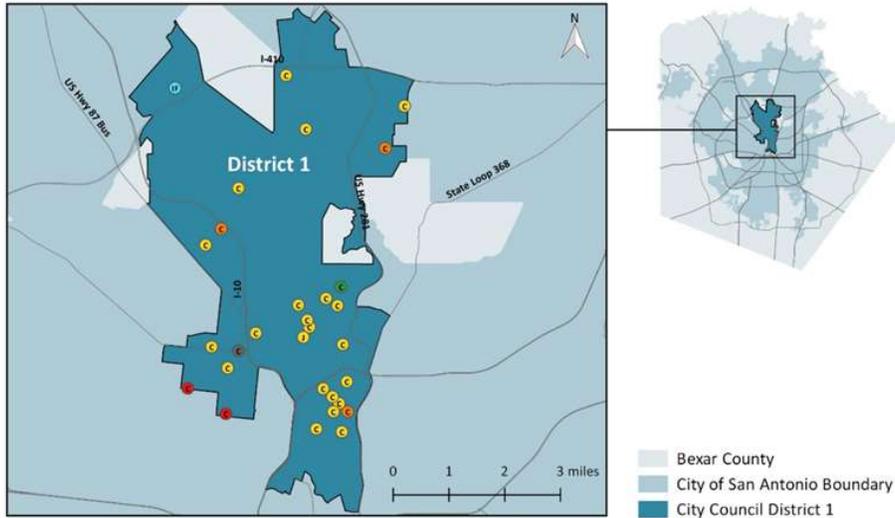
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|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Faith-Based Organizations | Mental Health/Human Services Organizations | Other Organizations |
| ● Congregations | ● MH/Human Services Advocacy | ● Foundations |
| ● Nonprofits | ● MH/Human Services Administrator | ● Universities |
| | ▲ MH/Human Services Provider | |

TEXAS STATE of MIND



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|----------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Congregations | | |
| Religions | Single Affiliation | Multiple Affiliations |
| Ⓢ Christian | ● Pathways to Hope | ● Pathways to Hope and Mental Health Action |
| Ⓢ Interfaith | ● Mental Health Action | ● Pathways to Hope and Wellness Center |
| Ⓢ Jewish | ● Wellness Center | ● Mental Health Action and Wellness Center |
| Ⓢ Mormon | ● Young Minds Matter | ● 3 or More Affiliations |

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Congregations

Religions

- Ⓒ Christian
- Ⓘ Interfaith
- Ⓜ Jewish
- Ⓜ Mormon

Single Affiliation

- Pathways to Hope
- Mental Health Action Team
- Wellness Center
- Young Minds Matter

Multiple Affiliations

- Pathways to Hope and Mental Health Action
- Pathways to Hope and Wellness Center
- Mental Health Action and Wellness Center
- 3 or More Affiliations

Taxonomy Overview



Educate Faith Communities to Increase Mental Health Literacy and Awareness

Uses educational and training methods to increase understanding of mental illness, reduce stigma, and increase capacity to refer for services

Wellness Center for Families of Faith
(San Antonio, TX)

Mental Health Action Team
(San Antonio, TX)



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Equip Congregations for Mental Health Ministry

Trains congregation members in the provision of community-based support to people with mental health conditions and/or their families

Grace Alliance
(Waco, TX)

Fresh Hope
(Omaha, NE)

Mental Health Chaplaincy
(Seattle, WA)



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Engage Faith Communities as Partners to Improve Mental Health System Access and Performance

Works collaboratively with congregations to improve system access and mental health outcomes

Memphis Model
(Memphis, TN)

Bridges to Care and Recovery
(St. Louis, MO)



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Organize for System-Level Efforts to Promote Faith and Mental Health Collaboration

Leaders develop a community-wide coalition or collaborative that systematically disseminates mental health education, training, and ministry throughout a geographic region

Interfaith Mental Health Coalition
(Chicago, IL)

Pathways to Promise
(St. Louis, MO)



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Embed Mental Health Services in Faith Communities

Mental health services are delivered in the congregation setting in order to increase access to faith-friendly approaches to mental health

West Texas Counseling and Guidance
(San Angelo, TX)

Hope and Healing Center and Institute
(Houston, TX)



Recommendations Overview

Let Faith Also Inform Mental Health

Further Develop a Two-Way Model of Faith Community and Mental Health Community Engagement

More Widely Disseminate Resources and Training in Mental Health Ministry

Consider “Task-Shifting” as a Means of Further Equipping Congregations