

A RETROSPECTIVE ON A DECADE OF INVESTMENT

Hogg Foundation for
Mental Health Policy
Academy & Policy
Fellow Initiative

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Hogg Foundation
for Mental Health

“By building the capacity for more effective mental health policy development and advocacy, we are creating an environment that will ultimately result in improved access to, and quality of, mental health services in Texas.”

- Dr. Octavio N. Martinez, Jr.
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, Executive Director

HELPING TEXANS THRIVE BY INVESTING IN POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Public policy shapes the way neighborhoods are built and resources are allocated. Policy processes determine an individual’s access to quality medical care, good schools, healthy food, reliable transportation, and a living wage. Ensuring that the systems, rules, and policies that govern us are equitable is key to building healthy communities and resilient people.

The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health’s mission is to transform how communities promote mental health in everyday life. Policy engagement has always been a strategic priority for the organization and through education, the dissemination of policy briefs and system guides, as well as offering issue-area expertise, technical assistance, training, and legislative testimony, the foundation has become a trusted resource for mental health and substance use policy issues in Texas.

Policy engagement is fundamental to maintaining and improving the social determinants of health. It is the conviction of the Hogg Foundation that until issues of health disparities and racial inequities are made a priority and are addressed systematically, a healthy Texas will not be possible. However, the mental health advocacy community is limited in size and training. To leverage the foundation’s investments, the state’s mental health and substance use policy workforce would need to expand. In 2010, the foundation launched the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health Policy Academy and Policy Fellow Initiative (“initiative”) with the goal

of bolstering the mental health and substance use policy workforce to make long-term systems change.

The initiative supports ten host organizations, either 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, government entities, or higher education institutions, to employ and mentor a full-time, mental health or substance use policy or peer policy fellow for two years. Policy fellows have graduate degrees in health, policy, law, social work, or other relevant fields. A peer policy fellow is an individual willing to use their lived experience with a mental health or substance use condition professionally, to advance public policy efforts. Policy fellows and their mentors also participate in a policy academy which meets at least monthly and builds participants’ knowledge and skills at the same time as they receive hands-on, experiential learning through their work at their host organization.

Please note that although there are differences between the two types of policy fellows, both are addressed as “policy fellows” within this report and in program activities. It is important to program officers that policy fellows see themselves as one cohort, with little distinction about the peers, unless there is a specific reason for acknowledging their role as a peer policy fellow.

ACHIEVING OUTCOMES

The goal of the initiative is to improve access to and quality of mental health services in Texas by building capacity for more effective advocacy, policy development, and legislative implementation. The theory of change involves:

Increasing the number of knowledgeable and skilled mental health or substance use policy advocates through investing in two-year policy fellowships, offering hands-on work experience and mentorship in the policy arena, as well as creating opportunities for professional development and networking.

Building workforce capacity to engage in mental health and substance use policy development and advocacy by offering dedicated funding for host organization costs, including the policy fellow's salary, general operating funds, technical assistance, and a professional development stipend, with the goal of integrating mental health policy engagement into the everyday work of grant partner organizations.

Strengthening collaboration and effectiveness of the mental health and substance use policy advocacy community in Texas – by infusing monetary and social capital and providing meaningful space to learn together and cultivate relationships.



PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

Throughout the two-year fellowship, the policy fellows focus on diverse and innovative policy projects and activities that focus on the unique vision and mission of their host organization. The policy fellows explore being researchers, writers, presenters, trainers, organizers, collaborators, and leaders. Additionally, all policy fellows engage in a set of policy activities and experiences as depicted in the program map below.

YEAR 1

POLICY ENGAGEMENT INTRODUCTION

- Onboarding into host organization
- Introduction to policy academy and fellow cohort
- Understanding the influence points for mental health policy
- Deep dive into the various systems: i.e. executive, legislative, judicial branches

LEGISLATIVE SESSION PREPARATION

- Learning about the legislative and budget process
- Identifying priorities, researching policy solutions, developing legislative relationships, building advocacy collaborations, preparing policy briefs and other support documents
- Policy fellow cohort building and networking among host organizations

TEXAS LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- Collaborate with diverse stakeholders on issues of mutual interest
- Continue meeting with legislators and staff
- Provide education and technical assistance
- Assist with bill development and hearing preparation
- Provide testimony (oral and/or written)
- Respond to inquiries for information

YEAR 2

TRANSITION TO INTERIM

- Evaluate and summarize legislative session outcomes and impact
- Post-session policy strategy development
- Participate in agency rule-making process
- Continue engagement with diverse stakeholder groups

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Continue professional development within host agency and through the policy academy
- Begin preparing for career advancement – resume preparation, interview skills, job search strategies

PROGRAM WRAP-UP

- Monitor implementation of legislative priorities
- Create transition materials for the work to continue after fellowship
- Participate in 1-week Washington, D.C. federal immersion experience
- Identify ways for policy fellows and host organizations to stay engaged and connected

AFTER A DECADE OF INVESTMENT IN THIS STRATEGY, THE FOUNDATION WONDERED:

In what ways is the initiative making an impact?

What lessons were learned over time?

RETROSPECTIVE EVALUATION

To answer those questions, policy fellow alumni, as well as other participants, such as host organization supervisors, mentors, program consultants, and foundation staff were invited to share their insights and experiences.

Results showed that the initiative has:

Increased the number of individuals with the skills and expertise needed to advance mental health and substance use policy priorities.

Increased the number of organizations that have the capacity to successfully engage in mental health and substance use policy work.

Improved collaboration between nonprofit organizations, advocacy groups, and government institutions engaged in mental health and substance use policy.

Shown that the inclusion of those with lived experience amplifies the program's investment and has produced some of the initiative's most significant outcomes.

Infused both monetary and social capital into the mental health and substance use policy workforce, creating both expansion and cohesion in the advocacy community in Texas.

The work of the policy fellows contributes to mental health and substance use issues remaining high on Texas's policy agenda. Increased workforce capacity has generated significant advances in mental health funding for:

Peer support services; including increasing the Medicaid reimbursement rate for peer support services to a level that reflects the value of the services provided and the integrity of the profession.

Mental health supports in the criminal and juvenile justice systems, and peer specialists who can help clients navigate the barriers and pitfalls that come with community reentry.

Access to quality healthcare for those struggling with substance use, and non-punitive approaches to reducing negative consequences associated with substance use.

Improving state hospitals and making them a hub of a continuum of care that can deliver evidence-based services available at the right time and place.

With these findings in mind, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health Policy Academy and Policy Fellows Initiative has shown that it has succeeded in making a substantial difference in the mental health and substance use policy landscape in Texas.

IN WHAT WAYS IS THE INITIATIVE MAKING AN IMPACT? RESULTS SHOWED



Knowledge

At the beginning of the program, 73 percent of respondents reported that they felt slightly or not at all knowledgeable about public policy and mental health advocacy.

After completing the program, 84 percent said they were now very or extremely knowledgeable

Before ■ After ■

Extremely Knowledgeable



Very Knowledgeable



Moderately Knowledgeable



Slightly Knowledgeable



Not at all Knowledgeable



Skills

At the beginning of the program, 83 percent of respondents said that they were not at all or only slightly skilled at mental health policy and advocacy.

After the program, 80 percent reported now being very or extremely skilled.

Before ■ After ■

Extremely Skilled



Very Skilled



Moderately Skilled



Slightly Skilled



Not at all Skilled



CONCLUSION

The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health Policy Academy and Policy Fellow Initiative has shown to have a profound impact on mental health and well-being in Texas. Over the past decade of investment, the initiative has succeeded in significantly expanding the pool of knowledgeable and skilled advocates, increased organizational capacity for policy engagement, and strengthened relationships between stakeholders in the field.

Policy fellows have contributed to substantial achievements at their host organizations, initiating and completing projects that they otherwise would not have had resources to prioritize. Young professionals have launched careers and individuals with lived experience have had access to the knowledge and network that they need to succeed in policy engagement.

As a result of the peer policy fellows and the emphasis on their meaningful involvement in policymaking, consumers of mental health services have more opportunities than ever before to shape the systems that impact their lives. Texas's behavioral healthcare system has changed and now includes more access to peer support services than ever before. With these findings in mind, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health Policy Academy and Policy Fellows Initiative have shown that over the last decade, it has succeeded in making a substantial difference in the mental health and substance use policy landscape in Texas.



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ABOUT THE HOGG FOUNDATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Established in 1940, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health envisions a future in which the people of Texas thrive in communities that support mental health and well-being. Using a variety of approaches, including grantmaking, convening, research and public policy, the foundation works collaboratively to transform how communities promote mental health in everyday life.

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