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Treat Texas Calls on Legislators to Save Funding for Alcohol & Substance Abuse Treatment Programs

Coalition of Groups Launches Awareness Campaign to Highlight Efficacy & Cost-Saving Benefits of Treatment Programs

AUSTIN, TX— With the 82nd Texas Legislature in full swing, [Treat Texas](http://www.treattexas.org), (www.treattexas.org), a coalition of groups dedicated to serving Texans with drug and alcohol problems, calls on lawmakers to appropriately fund substance abuse treatment and prevention programs. Facing a budget shortfall, the Legislature is considering slashing several million dollars or more from the state’s budget currently allocated for such programs. This would result in Texas forfeiting the same amount in federal matching dollars. Rather than cut funding for these critical addiction treatment programs and support services, *Treat Texas* calls on the Legislature to **increase** funds for the programs as a preventative strategy to reduce the state budget shortfall over the long-term.

“We know that the state has a budget shortfall and that, as a result, cuts in all areas will be on the table. But reducing funds for drug and alcohol treatment programs is short-sighted and will ultimately cost taxpayers more in the long run,” says Cynthia Humphrey, Executive Director of *Treat Texas*. “Drug and alcohol treatment represents a miniscule portion of the state’s overall healthcare spending and actually saves money. Indeed, research shows a nearly \$7 return on investment for every dollar invested in prevention.¹ It is time for the Legislature to adequately fund programs for Texans struggling with alcohol or drug dependency.”

Over the past 16 years, Texas has doubled in population, and with that increase has come a proportional rise in the number of residents facing drug and alcohol addiction. Despite such exponential population growth over the past two decades, funding for the treatment of alcohol and substance abuse problems in the Lone Star State has not kept pace.

“Alcohol and drug dependence affects us all,” adds Humphrey. “Not all addicts are homeless and on the streets. With nearly 1.8 million Texans suffering from alcohol or drug dependency², it’s very likely this problem touches people in your life. It could be your good friend from high school, the guy who fixes your car, or even the woman working in the cubicle next to you.”

¹ Health Services Research *November, 2005*

² Texas Department of State Health Services

Numerous studies have proven that targeted, evidence-based substance abuse prevention and treatment programs provide significant return-on-investment for the state by improving work and/or educational performance, reducing utilization of the criminal justice system and reducing healthcare expenditures due to decreased drug and alcohol abuse³. Despite this, if you look at every dollar Texas spent solving substance abuse problems, you'll find a whopping 96 cents spent on the justice system, healthcare costs, and lost education. Only 2 cents is currently spent on prevention and treatment⁴.

Treat Texas hopes to see more funds dedicated to inpatient and outpatient care, thereby reaching more people in need. In 2008, Texas treated only 5.8% of chemically dependent people who qualified for state-funded services⁵. *Treat Texas* encourages family and friends of citizens facing alcohol and substance abuse problems, as well as concerned Texans, to contact their local legislators and urge them to invest budget dollars on expanding substance abuse prevention and treatment services and helping to close the addiction treatment gap in our state.

About Treat Texas

Treat Texas is a coalition of groups committed to closing the treatment gap for people facing alcohol and substance abuse problems. Treat Texas believes that helping Texans suffering from an alcohol or drug dependency by screening for addiction and accurately measuring those numbers will help us to close the gap and provide a significant return-on-investment for the state by reducing utilization of the criminal justice system, and reducing healthcare costs due to reduced drug and alcohol abuse. Treat Texas believes that all people have strengths, abilities, and inherent value; are equal before law; and must be treated with dignity and respect. Treat Texas supports families, advances public policies, provides treatment programs, and builds a statewide network of advocates.

For more information, visit <http://www.treattexas.org>

³ Spoth, Richard and Gyll, Max, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Technical Seminar on Drug Addiction Prevention and Treatment: From Research to Practice December 16, 2008

⁴ Shovelng Up II: *The Impact of Substance Abuse on Federal, State and Local Budgets*, Columbia University

⁵ TAAP Conference, "Partnering with DSHS", San Antonio, TX. Power Point. July, 8-10, 2010