



Recommendations Summary

Excerpted from “Out of Options: Addressing Inequities in Care for Texans with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) and Mental Illness,” an investigative report by The Arc of Texas on December 5, 2024

Hundreds of thousands of Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)—such as autism, down syndrome, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder—also experience mental illness. But the state is ill-equipped to help them, leaving families nowhere to turn, a report released December 5, 2024 by The Arc of Texas found.

With the help of Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Alex Stuckey, The Arc of Texas spoke to about a dozen families who have experienced this service void, examining the areas in which the state’s mental health resources for adults with IDD are lacking and how they can be improved. [View the full report here](#) (including personal stories, photos, datasets and definitions) and learn about [The Whole Person Project](#), an initiative of The Arc of Texas which seeks to expand access to quality mental health services for adult Texas with IDD.

These key findings and solutions are excerpted for quick reference, but should be considered in the context of the full report:

Finding: About 8.6 million Texans have no alternatives to restoring their competency beyond sitting in a jail cell waiting for a state psychiatric bed—a wait that can stretch on for months.

Solutions:

- *Fund more competency restoration alternatives.*
- *Invest in Coordinated Speciality Care (CSC) teams, which are designed to catch someone within the first two years of their first episode of psychosis (FEP) so that they can access care and services and don’t end up deteriorating to the point of no return.*

Finding: Texans in at least 62 of the state’s 254 counties have access to jail diversion centers, which connect individuals with IDD and/or mental illness with care instead of sending them to jail.

Solutions:

- *Increase the number of diversion centers across the state, with buy-in from local law enforcement.*

Finding: Nearly 2,000 people are waiting for a bed in a state-funded psychiatric hospital—most of them from a jail cell—a 500 percent increase since 2015.

Solutions:

- *Increase funding for LMHAs and LIDDAs so they can provide services in the community and prevent crises.*
- *Increase funding for state psychiatric beds.*

Finding: It can take up to a month for Local Intellectual and Developmental Disability Authorities to receive an alert that one of their clients is in jail.

Solutions:

- *Ensure LMHAs and LIDDAs receive instantaneous notification.*

Finding: Texas does not require training for county jailers on how to handle individuals with IDD.

Solutions:

- *Require all county jailers to take at least four hours of IDD training, either as a stand-alone curriculum or as a supplement to the required mental health training.*
- *Make said IDD training available to other members of the judicial system, such as judges, magistrates, and public defenders.*

Finding: At least ten privately funded psychiatric hospitals in Texas have an IQ cutoff of around 70, meaning individuals with IDD are often barred from entrance.

Solutions:

- *Change admission criteria for psychiatric inpatient treatment so it is no longer exclusionary.*
- *Add IDD units to psychiatric inpatient hospitals.*

Finding: Only two of the 18 Texas colleges and universities with Masters and/or Doctoral Psychology programs with a clinical component surveyed by The Arc of Texas offer IDD training beyond assessment and diagnostic services.

Solutions:

- *Build master's programs across the state that focus on IDD and mental health.*

Finding: Personal care attendants who work in peoples' homes and help disabled individuals with everyday tasks such as bathing, dressing, and toileting make an average of \$10.60/hour in Texas. Louisiana is the only state with lower pay.

Solutions:

- *Increase pay for personal care attendants in the community so their hourly wages are on par with those of attendants who work in SSLCs make significantly more.*

Finding: More than 176,000 people are waiting for care through Medicaid waiver programs—which aim to keep individuals with IDD living in their communities—a 73 percent increase since 2015. Some people wait nearly 20 years to reach the top of the list.

Solutions:

- *Increase funding for Medicaid waiver programs to keep pace with the growing demand for services and supports that allow individuals with IDD to live independently in their communities.*
- *Revise how the waiting list is managed using input from stakeholders, including individuals with IDD, their families, service providers, and advocacy organizations.*

Related: The Arc of Texas' Policy Priorities for the 89th Texas Legislative Session

[The Arc of Texas' Policy Priorities for the 89th Texas Legislative Session](#) provide a roadmap to a future in which barriers to inclusion and accessibility are dismantled, and Texans with disabilities are met with opportunity, respect, and support at every turn.

The Whole Person Project report and recommendations offer a large-scale examination of the systemic issues that Texans with dual-diagnoses of IDD and mental disorders face. Thus, many recommendations in the report are not articulated in our 89th Texas Legislative Session Policy Priorities because they require longer-term work.

Learn more about The Arc of Texas at www.thearcoftexas.org.

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