



# PRESS RELEASE

## Regional Mental Health Study Conducted and Results Now Available for Review

**Kilgore, TX, August 19, 2014:** At the direction of the CEO Board of county judges in the region ETCOG commissioned a study of the costs associated with addressing the needs of residents of the region who have mental health and substance abuse disorders.

The study was requested due to State-funding for the four local mental health authorities (LMHAs) serving the ETCOG region is not sufficient to meet the needs in the region and the full impact of the 1115 Medicaid Waiver incentive payments is not yet known. In addition, services that are needed to provide stability and on-going support to residents, such as housing, are very limited. As a result, counties must bear the impact of the unmet need, expending resources to supplement the direct services provided by the LMHAs and to care for the number of untreated individuals who go through the legal system and sheriff's departments. Counties are burdened by the crises that emerge when community services are not available or are not accessible.

**"THE COSTS OF TREATING THOSE WITH MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS THROUGHOUT OUR 14-COUNTY REGION CONTINUE TO GROW FOR A VARIETY OF LEGITIMATE REASONS," SAYS GREGG COUNTY JUDGE BILL STOUTD. "WE MUST WORK TOGETHER AS A REGION TO ADDRESS THESE NEEDS IN A HUMANE AND EFFECTIVE MANNER. THIS REPORT REPRESENTS ONE STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION TOWARD A REGIONAL SOLUTION"**

In order to collect expenditure data from each of the 14 counties, a survey was developed with input from county judges and other elected officials. Survey results were considered as well as data collected on state funding for LMHAs by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). The report, conducted by Austin-based Morningside Research, will serve as a detailed background and planning document that will support the future development of a regional strategic plan for mental health.

The information in this report may be used by ETCOG and the elected officials in our region to develop a plan to: strengthen resource management practices related to the target population; identify system and community capacity for implementing best practices; assist local elected and appointed officials and community leaders in making meaningful decisions involving the management of care and the efficient management of related costs of care for the target population within the ETCOG region; and assist local elected and appointed official establish the context for future action.

A number of regional options for ETCOG elected officials to consider are included in the final chapter in the report. These options range from expanding regional coordination and partnerships on this issue to pooling resources to fund innovative treatment options for residents of the region. The report can be viewed at: <http://www.etcog.org/files/648-MentalHealthReport.pdf>.

For more information, contact ETCOG Executive Director, David Cleveland, at (903) 218-6423.

**About ETCOG**

The East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) is a voluntary association of counties, cities, school districts and special districts within the fourteen-county East Texas region. ETCOG assists local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. Established in 1970, ETCOG, either directly, or through its contractors, provides programs and services for East Texas seniors, employers, and job seekers. ETCOG and its contractors also build the 9-1-1 emergency call delivery system, provide peace officer training and homeland security planning services; and deliver rural transportation services, business finance programs, and environmental grant funding for the region.

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