Hello I’m Mike Davis, CEO of Behavioral Health Center of Nueces County.

Behavioral Health Center of Nueces County is the Local Mental Health Authority and Intellectual and Disabilities Authority responsible for planning, developing policy, coordinating and allocating resources for Nueces County. The Center is accredited by the Joint Commission, ensuring the highest quality care.

We provide services to approximately 10,000 people per year.

The 2012 Community Needs Assessment by Regional Healthcare Partnership 4, states Coastal Bend hospitals reported schizoaffective disorder and manic depressive disorder were the third and fourth most common principal admission diagnosis. About 23% of those responding to a telephone survey of Coastal Bend residents stated they had depression, and 12.5% reported that one of their children needed mental health services. Of that group, 33% said they did not receive the mental health services they needed.

We currently do not have a waitlist for General Revenue funded IDD Services as we have an 1115 expansion program that serves 109 additional people a year. The Center’s Board of Trustees has decided to not have a waiting list for mental health services due to the critical needs of persons seeking services, but the impact of this is that we are serving 22.6% over the state funded targets. This means we have no limits on caseloads, high burnout and turnover rates, and our Center did not benefit from any funding allocated specifically to those Centers who do have a waiting list.

Data from a recent assessment indicates that 23% of youth and adult mental health self-report issues with substance use.

To facilitate referrals to local substance use treatment providers, our Center has an agreement with Tropical Texas Behavioral Health in the valley to provide outreach, screening, assessment and referral services to adults and children 13 years and above for substance use disorders. (OSAR)

To increase local capacity to provide accessible, effective, and comprehensive integrated evidence-based treatment services we partnered with Charlie’s Place Recovery Center in Corpus Christi to provide behavioral health services for chronically homeless individuals with co-occurring substance use disorders and serious mental illness. Charlie’s Place provides detox, residential, and intensive outpatient services and the Center provides psychiatric, mental health, and co-occurring disorder treatment services for 50 individuals per year, for three years.

Charlie’s Place staff also provide Screening Brief Intervention Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) and substance abuse education with in our Integrated Health Clinic where we offer primary care services to adults with severe and persistent mental illness.

Both our Integrated Health Clinic and our Wellness Center, run by certified peer providers, offer best practices models as part of our Center’s successful 1115 Waiver projects.

Our integrated health clinic uses patient navigators to provide enhanced social support and culturally competent care to patients with serious mental illness and chronic health conditions.
Adults with serious mental illnesses are known to have poor nutrition, high rates of smoking and a sedentary lifestyle—all factors that place them at greater risk for serious physical disorders, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke, arthritis and certain types of cancers. Despite such extensive medical needs, adults with serious mental illnesses often do not receive or seek the appropriate treatment for both their physical and behavioral health issues. This clinic links our most vulnerable with a primary care provider and a patient navigator to provide health education, linkages for appointments and medication and boasts a no show rate of 12% and 80% of individuals with a diagnosis of hypertension, controlled. To date, the clinic has served 386 clients with Medicaid or who are low income/uninsured.

The Wellness Center provides certified peer specialists in an open access, “drop-in” environment. The primary focus is on wellness and recovery, with individuals participating in Person Centered Wellness Planning, receiving health risk assessments, linkages to primary care and patient navigation services, and onsite gym equipment. To date 220 unique individuals have received peer supported health services.

According to the Texas Medical Association (TMA; 2014), the state of Texas is “the uninsured capital of the United States” with uninsured rates at almost twice the national average. The TMA presents information from the Congressional Budget Office which categorizes those with the highest likelihood of being uninsured as: income below poverty level, minorities, and individuals in fair or poor health status. The city of Corpus Christi’s population meets the above mentioned criteria with high incidence of individuals/families below the poverty level and ethnic-minority residents. As the most urban county within Health Region 11, Nueces County absorbs most of the burden of serving those with behavioral health issues. For instance, the 10 surrounding counties DO NOT have a licensed psychiatrist; elevating the estimated population per psychiatrist number to approximately 126,821 in the area. Nueces County needs board certified child and adolescent psychiatrists, more psychiatrist and psychiatric nurse practitioners. We also need private practitioners willing to serve persons with serious mental illness and intellectual and developmental disorders.

Nueces County needs funds to provide other services which serve as alternatives to hospitalization, such as a walk in crisis clinic, assessment by licensed mental health professionals which would allow law enforcement to drop off individuals in crisis and not waste time waiting for a disposition.

In the recent years, there has been reduced capacity for inpatient services in Nueces County including the Memorial Hospital and the Northwest Hospital operated by HCA/Corpus Christi Medical. There are NO psychiatric inpatient services available for beds for children under age 11 in Nueces County. Children must be sent to the valley or San Antonio or Austin to access this service

The reduced capacity for local inpatient psychiatric services has impacted law enforcement reporting increased time transporting persons around the County trying to secure a bed for them, and the Sheriff’s Department reporting increase arrests and jail beds for persons diagnosed with mental illness. Nueces County is in need of state funds to purchase private psychiatric beds locally for adults. This has been done in many areas of our state thanks for funds allocated legislatively. These programs are successful and needed. We believe we can treat people with
shorter lengths of stay and with reduced costs as the sheriff dept. would not have to transport people 2.5 hours or more to the nearest state hospital.

Our Center contracts with Texas Correction Office on Offenders with Medial or Mental Impairments to provide pre-release screening and referral to aftercare treatment services for special needs offenders referred from prisons, substance abuse felony punishment facilities, local jails or other referral sources. Our TCOOMMI program monitors, coordinates, and implements a continuity of care system for juvenile and adult offenders with special needs. Examples of services provided include: psychosocial rehabilitation, intensive case management, outreach and engagement, and a partnership with probation and parole in the criminal justice community.

The program needs funding for a Licensed Professional to provide psychotherapy to the youth offenders. Having a licensed professional added to the Special Needs Diversionary Program team would provide therapy to youth with depression and anxiety, treatment requiring enhanced knowledge and training.

Treatment works. People can live successfully with mental illness, intellectual disabilities and substance use disorders if the right support and treatment is available to them and their families, close to home. Investing in community services reduces the need for more expensive models of care.