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## **Hogg Foundation for Mental Health awards \$1.2 Million to Train Mental Health Policy Fellows in Texas**

### **One of 10 grant recipients, Girls Empowerment Network will focus on state-level mental health advocacy for girls, as well as regional needs in Austin, Houston and Dallas**

Austin, TX – June 18, 2020 – The Girls Empowerment Network today announces it is one of ten nonprofit advocacy groups receiving a total of \$1.2 million in grants from the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health over two years to hire in-house policy fellows. The fellows will receive intensive training, education and experience in mental health advocacy and policy work.

[Girls Empowerment Network](#) is the recipient of a \$134,000 Policy Fellow grant and will hire an on-staff Hogg Mental Health Policy Fellow in July 2020. The Fellow will work under the supervision of Girls Empowerment Network’s Director of Impact, Sarah Miller-Fellows, PhD, MPH, with input and collaboration with Girls Empowerment Network program staff located in Austin, Houston and Dallas.

“The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health recognizes Girls Empowerment Network’s opportunity to make significant contributions at both state and local levels, informing public officials and systems about the state of Texas girls,” said Sarah Miller-Fellows, PhD, MPH. “Engaging in direct public policy work will allow Girls Empowerment Network to broaden our impact across the state, promote best practices for prevention and early intervention for girls services, and collaborate with other agencies advocating for mental health policy for girls.”

The need for a state level advocate for girls in public policy discussions is underscored by [2019 data from the Centers for Disease Control](#)<sup>[1]</sup>. Two in five Texas girls report experiencing depressive symptoms for more than two weeks in the past year. Texas high school and middle school girls also report higher rates of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts than Texas boys. Texas girls also report higher rates of mental health risk factors than Texas boys. Texas high school and middle school girls report more than double the rate of bullying than Texas boys, and additionally, Texas high school girls experience sexual violence at more than double the rate of Texas boys.

“Girls’ mental health is at the core of our 24-year mission, and we currently address the unique needs of Texas girls through primary prevention and secondary intervention programs that we have in place in Austin, Houston and Dallas,” says Julia Cuba Lewis, MSW, CEO of Girls Empowerment Network. “Our programmatic emphasis on building [self-efficacy](#) and studying how our curriculum is increasing self-efficacy in girls has been a giant discovery in our agency over the past two years and is a critical part of our recent success. This grant allows us to change the landscape for Texas girls’ mental health policy.”

The first year of the Girls Empowerment Network’s grant will focus on state-level advocacy and the second year will focus on regional advocacy and development of a long-term policy advocacy strategy that can be sustained for years to come.

The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health first launched the [Mental Health Policy Academy and Fellows](#) initiative in 2010. The grant program builds both individual and organizational capacity for effective mental health policy and advocacy work.

In 2016, the initiative was expanded with the launch of the Peer Policy Fellows program. This program built on our existing fellows program by creating a track for peer policy fellows, increasing the role and voice of consumers in mental health policy development and implementation.

Each fellow is provided with an experienced mentor. Both fellows and mentors attend the Hogg Mental Health Policy Academy. The academy provides training and support for the fellows, their mentors and others involved in advocacy work in Texas.

Recipients of the Peer Policy Fellow grants are:

- Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (\$132,000)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness Texas (\$128,000)
- Prosumers International (\$129,000)
- RecoveryPeople (\$126,000)
- Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (\$149,000)

Recipients of the Policy Fellow grants are:

- Girls Empowerment Network (\$134,000)
- Network of Behavioral Health Providers (\$148,000)
- Texas Center for Child and Family Studies (\$144,000)
- Texas Network of Youth Services (\$141,000)
- Young Invincibles (\$126,000)

“The next legislative session will be taking place either amid the COVID-19 pandemic or in its immediate aftermath, so the state’s mental health needs will be especially severe,” said Dr. Octavio N. Martinez, Jr., executive director of the Hogg Foundation and senior associate vice president for diversity and community engagement at The University of Texas at Austin. “We all stand to benefit from the difficult and important work that these policy fellows will be doing.”

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “1991-2017 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data,” 2019, <https://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx>.

ABOUT GIRLS EMPOWERMENT NETWORK - [www.girlsempowermentnetwork.org](http://www.girlsempowermentnetwork.org)

Girls Empowerment Network’s mission is to ignite the power in girls by teaching them the skills to thrive and believe in their ability to be unstoppable. Founded in 1996, Girls Empowerment Network envisions a world where all girls believe in their power.

ABOUT 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.