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Nonprofit Group Receives Grant from Hogg Foundation to Promote Mental Health of Texas Children in Child Care

AUSTIN – The [Texas Association for Infant Mental Health](#) was awarded a \$93,168 grant from the [Hogg Foundation for Mental Health](#) to promote changes in Texas child care licensing standards that will support healthy social and emotional development and mental wellness of infants and toddlers in child care.

The association is one of six Texas-based organizations that received a total of \$456,565 in grants from the Hogg Foundation in November. The foundation awarded the grants to support timely, meaningful projects that address key issues related to mental health and are likely to improve mental health policies affecting Texas residents.

“The foundation is continuing our longstanding practice of funding projects to address important and relevant mental health issues that directly affect the people of Texas,” said Dr. Octavio N. Martinez Jr., executive director of the foundation. “The grants also will help build interest in and capacity for mental health policy research and development work among nonprofit agencies, academic institutions and government agencies in Texas.”

More than half of the nation’s infants and toddlers are enrolled in child care. The exact number in Texas is unknown, although Texas had 5,341 licensed child care centers with the capacity to serve more than 80,000 infants under the age of 18 months in 2007, according to the association.

“The most important factor in the healthy development of children under three is a consistent, nurturing relationship with a caring adult. Current licensing standards undermine these relationships,” said Susan Craven, executive director of the association. “The foundation’s grant will enable us to advocate for policies that support the mental and emotional health of infants and toddlers in child care.”

Current child care standards in Texas allow for high child-to-staff ratios for children 11 months and older, and large group sizes that inhibit secure, consistent and responsive relationships between children and caregivers. Children may be moved suddenly from one group to another without adequate emotional preparation. And caregivers must have only a high school degree or equivalent and just eight hours of pre-service training, according to Craven.

The association will collaborate with the [Texas Association for Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies](#) to propose changes to the current standards. Their goals are to lower child-to-staff ratios and group sizes for children under the age of three, require staff training on responsive care-giving and young children's social-emotional development, and promote continuity of care by staff to foster children's attachment, trust and sense of security.

The associations will carry out a three-tiered process that includes gathering information, preparing and distributing a policy paper, and building a coalition of support to promote change.

The project's timing will coincide with a state agency review of Texas child care licensing standards that occurs every six years, Craven said, presenting a unique opportunity to advocate for policy changes that promote infant mental health.

"This grant exemplifies how important it is to address all aspects of our children's development. Texas should ensure that parents are leaving their infants and toddlers in child care facilities that understand and will enhance the mental well-being of their youngest clients," Martinez said.

The Hogg Foundation was founded in 1940 by Miss Ima Hogg, daughter of former Texas Governor James Stephen Hogg, to promote improved mental health for the people of Texas. The foundation's grants and programs support mental health consumer services, research, policy analysis and public education projects in Texas. The foundation is part of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin.

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