



Building and Sustaining Community Wellness in Nacogdoches County

A Common Agenda

Executive Letter

We are Better Together.

In July 2018, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health awarded the School of Social Work at Stephen F. Austin State University a grant through its Collaborative Approaches to Well-Being in Rural Communities Initiative. The award was followed by the development of Better Together, a local collaborative focused on actively engaging residents in the process of developing a common agenda for improving mental health, health, wellness, and well-being for all who live in Nacogdoches County.

In the last three and a half years, we have strengthened existing relationships, listened to each other, made new friends, shared creative ideas, and worked together to develop a clearer understanding of the challenges we face as a community. Our substantial investment of time and effort in these activities is a clear indication of our belief that every community member's voice is imperative to developing a better understanding of what is important for our well-being. Our common agenda represents a culmination of this work and our stakeholders' commitment to improving mental health, health, wellness, and well-being for all residents of Nacogdoches County.

We would be remiss if we did not take an opportunity to point out that Better Together's successes thus far are a direct result of the hard work and dedication of our Appreciative Inquiry Team members and partners. We are also grateful for the staff and faculty of the School of Social Work who have contributed to the success of this endeavor, especially Lenola Wyatt, Julia Cañas, Chloe Sledge, Carol Levine, Dr. Jose Carbajal, and Dr. Freddie Avant. And, our accomplishments are a direct result of the support and encouragement provided by the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, especially our program officers, Tammy Heinz and Rick Ybarra. Finally, we offer a heartfelt thank you to the Nacogdoches County residents and stakeholders who participated in conversation cafés, focus groups, and/or community listening sessions. We truly appreciate the commitment these individuals and organizations have demonstrated to improving mental health, health, wellness, and well-being in Nacogdoches County.

If you are not already involved with Better Together, we hope that you will join us as we transition from developing our common agenda to putting it into action!

Sincerely,



H. Stephen Cooper, PhD, LCSW
Project Director, Better Together
Professor & Associate Director of Research, School of Social Work
Stephen F. Austin State University

Better Together

We are Better Together

We are a group of residents who are working together to improve the mental health, health, and well-being of **all** residents of Nacogdoches County. We are all members of the community, including city, county, and school officials; public safety; business leaders; and health and human services organizations. We are committed to a process that welcomes, includes, and listens to **all** members of the community. To accomplish this, we need individuals from **all** communities in Nacogdoches County. *We need you.*

Our Context

Rural residents tend to have the same mental health challenges and needs for services as urban residents. However, comparable mental health care services are often unavailable and rural areas have unique characteristics that affect utilization of services. For Nacogdoches County, these factors, combined with systematic funding cuts for community-based mental health services, narrowing of eligibility criteria for state funded mental health services, limited access to psychiatric inpatient services, reductions in third party payment programs, and the lack of mental health parity¹, have made it increasingly difficult for residents who have a mental illness to maintain their recovery² and wellness³ in the community, especially those who have a chronic mental illness. These factors also hamper the efforts of local health and human services providers to deliver services that are imperative to maintaining recovery and wellness. For example, the lack of comprehensive community-based services increases the likelihood of a psychiatric crisis, which will most likely result in an inpatient hospitalization. And, the community-based services do not allow for adequate support of individuals returning to the community from an inpatient hospitalization. The end result being a “revolving door” between the community and inpatient services, which is counter to both recovery and wellness.

Our Beginning

Better Together was established in July 2018 through a grassroots effort to improve the mental health, health, wellness, and well-being of **all** residents of Nacogdoches County. Our project began with key partners and citizens who sought to include community members in the process of developing a common agenda⁴ to guide our efforts. Our activities are supported by funding from the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health via their Collaborative Approaches to Well-being in Rural Communities Initiative. The first phase of the process (July 2018 – December 2021) is primarily focused on working with community stakeholders to develop the common agenda. The second phase of the process (January 2022 – June 2026) will involve working with community stakeholders to implement the common agenda.

Our Approach

The primary goal of Better Together is to improve the mental health, health, wellness, and well-being of all residents of Nacogdoches County. We understand that rural communities are unique and each one should be

¹ Expectation that health insurance plans will provide equivalent coverage for health, mental health, and substance abuse conditions.

² Recovery is a “a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential” (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2012).

³ Wellness is marked by the presence of a positive purpose in life, satisfying work and play, joyful relationships, a healthy body and living environment, and happiness” (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2017). It includes multiple dimensions (i.e., emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual).

⁴ A Common Agenda is a strategic plan based on a shared vision for change – a vision that is shared by all stakeholders. It includes a collaborative approach to addressing challenges through actions that stakeholders have identified and agreed upon. For Better Together, this is an inclusive grassroots process from identification of challenges and actions through implementation and evaluation.

approached from a holistic perspective that incorporates strengths. Given this, our approach seeks to improve the following aspects of our community:

- **Safety** – Prevent violence across the lifespan and create safe physical environments.
- **Trustworthiness** – Foster positive relationships among residents, elected officials, police, schools, and others.
- **Environment** – Ensure that opportunities for growth are available for all.
- **Collaboration** – Promote involvement of residents and partnerships among agencies.
- **Peer Support** – Engage residents in opportunities to work together on issues of common concern.
- **History, Gender, Culture** – Values and supports history, culture, and diversity.

Our approach is consistent with the population health and population mental health approaches, both of which emphasize improving the quality of care for all members of the community, while reducing inequities among groups (e.g., access to care, quality of care, cost of care). Furthermore, it allows for incorporation of resilience⁵, well-being, recovery, and wellness.

Appreciative Inquiry

Realizing and sustaining our goal of improving the mental health, health, wellness, and well-being of all residents of Nacogdoches County requires the entire community's involvement in each step of the process. Therefore, we chose to employ appreciative inquiry to engage residents and organizations. Appreciative inquiry is a community-based participatory action research⁶ method that utilizes a bottom-up approach to identifying community strengths and leveraging them to bring about change.

Our Appreciative Inquiry Team

Better Together is led by an Appreciative Inquiry Team, which consists of the project staff, partners, and key community stakeholders who have lived experience and/or knowledge of the issues (e.g., consumers, residents, community leaders, and agency representatives). The Appreciative Inquiry Team has worked together since July 2018 to ensure that the process of developing our common agenda and the agenda itself are representative of the voices, strengths, and needs of **all** Nacogdoches County residents, including those groups who are typically excluded from the decision-making processes. Our activities are based on reflection, seeking answers and solutions, validating information, and identifying priorities for change.

Common Agenda

A common agenda is a typical outcome of an extensive appreciative inquiry and enables the Appreciative Inquiry Team to plan educational activities, identify advocacy opportunities, address policies, and create change related to the well-being of the community. Our common agenda consists of specific actions identified by stakeholders that we can take to improve the mental health, health, wellness, and well-being of all residents of Nacogdoches County. It is our hope that our common agenda will help our Appreciative Inquiry Team and community stakeholders make steady progress toward:

- meeting the safety needs of all our residents;
- including diverse groups in all aspects of life in our community;
- creating an atmosphere of open, inclusive, and continuous communication in our community;
- creating an environment that is conducive to the wellness and well-being of all our community members; and
- increasing the quality of care for all members of our community, while reducing inequities among groups (e.g., access to care, quality of care, cost of care).

⁵ The capacity of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to adapt to changes and overcome challenges.

⁶ A research method that actively involves community members and stakeholders in designing and planning the study; collecting information and data; analyzing and interpreting the data; and applying the results.

Common Agenda

Anchor Goal: Build a 21st Century identity (i.e., one that balances the “Oldest Town in Texas” with the need to move forward in the best interest of all residents). (87)⁷

The *anchor goal* is the foundation for Better Together’s common agenda and serves to tie the following nine goals and related objectives together:

- Ensure that affordable behavioral health care services are available to all residents.
- Provide all our youth with the support they need in order to develop and maintain social and emotional health.
- Create an environment where community partnerships are utilized to divert individuals with mental illness from the criminal justice system to appropriate services that allow them to maintain stability and quality of life in the community.
- Ensure affordable comprehensive healthcare services are available to all residents. (114)
- Create a healthy economic environment where all residents can thrive.
- Engage in activities to raise awareness regarding issues that impact community members. (110)
- Create an environment where all members of the community are able to meet their basic needs.
- Improve the overall health of our community by transforming it into a Blue Zone Community. (82)
- Ensure that affordable broadband service is available to all residents. (10)

Each of the goals along with their related objectives and tasks are outlined in the following common agenda.

Goal: Ensure that affordable behavioral health care⁸ services are available to all residents.

Objective: Increase the availability of psychiatric⁹ services for all residents.

1. Recruit and retain psychiatrists. (99)
2. Build a local inpatient psychiatric facility. (102)
3. Offer prescription medication assistance for individuals with mental illness. (28)
4. Work with local government to create incentives for psychiatrists to establish practices in our community. (19)

Objective: Increase the availability of licensed mental health service providers (e.g., Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists) for all residents.

1. Address mental health care provider shortages by working with local government to create incentives for mental health care practitioners to establish practices in our community. (18)
2. Explore the use of incentive programs to attract and retain mental health service providers (e.g., National Health Service Corps Rural Community Loan Repayment Program).

Objective: Increase the availability of mental health services for individuals who are not in crisis. (1)

1. Offer mental health support groups. (9)
2. Increase the availability of tele-mental health services. (7)
3. Advocate for policy changes that allow for the continuation of tele-mental health services. (6)

⁷ Elements of the common agenda that are followed by a number in parentheses were generated during the brainstorming process (Concept Mapping). The numbers are included here as a reference for the Appreciative Inquiry Team and project staff.

⁸ “Behavioral health care services” is an umbrella term that includes both mental health and substance abuse services.

⁹ Psychiatric services are those specifically provided by a psychiatrist, such as prescribing and managing medications for the treatment of mental health conditions (psychotropic medications).

Objective: Increase the availability of mental health services for community members whose primary language is Spanish.

1. Increase the availability of Spanish-speaking mental health providers. (56)
2. Offer an ongoing community outreach psychoeducation group with rotating topics for Spanish speaker. (57)
3. Develop and strengthen city, county, and state partnerships in order to increase the availability of bilingual mental health services for our community members who are without the resources to access services. (90)

Objective: Improve the ability of health care and social services providers to address the mental health needs of individuals and families who they serve.

1. Improve the ability of primary care providers to recognize, refer, and follow-up on mental health concerns. (68)
2. Improve the ability of social service providers to recognize, refer, and follow-up on mental health concerns. (69)

Objective: Increase the availability of affordable substance abuse treatment for all residents.

1. Offer affordable outpatient substance abuse treatment to individuals before they enter the criminal justice system. (25)
2. Offer affordable outpatient substance abuse treatment to individuals who are on community-based supervision (probation or parole). (26)
3. Offer a rehabilitation focused jail diversion¹⁰ program for individuals charged with drug related offenses (e.g., Drug Court).

Goal: Provide all our youth with the support they need in order to develop and maintain social and emotional health.

Objective: Increase the social and emotional health of all our youth through education and awareness.

1. Offer social/emotional learning (i.e., empathy, resiliency) as a curriculum in all of our county schools. (76)
2. Offer an emotional awareness educational group for elementary school-aged children. (70)
3. Address mental health in school districts by providing early education on how to recognize mental illness and access assistance. (32)

Objective: Increase the availability of school-based prevention and early intervention services for all children in Nacogdoches County.

1. Offer an ongoing comprehensive psychoeducational group on mental health and substance abuse for K-12 children. (55)
2. Create a program that improves K-12 students' access to tiered behavioral/emotional services (i.e., services for everyone, supportive services, and crisis intervention services). (83)
3. Provide Mental Health First Aid Training in all Nacogdoches County schools for students, parents, faculty, and staff.

¹⁰ Jail diversion programs for behavioral health issues typically suspend prosecution or sentencing in return for a commitment to actively participate in treatment and related services. The individual does not necessarily “beat the rap” and gains access to the treatment and resources needed to begin and maintain the process of recovery in a community setting.

Goal: Create an environment where community partnerships are utilized to divert individuals with mental illness from the criminal justice system to appropriate services that allow them to maintain stability and quality of life in the community.

Objective: Increase the ability of Nacogdoches County Jail to address the mental health needs of individuals who are placed in its care.

1. Partner with Burke to create a full-time mental health therapist position for the county jail. (91)
2. Provide the jail with 24 hour a day access to a psychiatrist. (92)
3. Develop a strategic partnership among the County of Nacogdoches, Nacogdoches Memorial Hospital, and Burke to provide mental health and health care services in the jail. (93)
4. Advocate for policy changes that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of jail-based mental health services.

Objective: Improve after-hours access to emergency mental health evaluations. (27)

1. Provide law enforcement with 24-hour access to a medical provider(s) to facilitate and expedite medical clearance for inpatient psychiatric facilities. (97)
2. Fund or reallocate funds to finance transportation from local hospitals to the MHEC (Mental Health Emergency Center) in Lufkin. (96)
3. Mandate mental health workers be available to emergency first responders 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. (43)
4. Seek legislative changes in order to remove barriers to accessing emergency inpatient psychiatric facilities. (98)
5. Provide emergency first responders with training to work with individuals with mental health needs. (80)
6. Identify and implement innovative alternatives to existing policies and procedures that dictate how we work together to provide emergency mental health services in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of those services.

Objective: Focus on efforts to improve law enforcement-community relationships. (108)

1. Encourage/facilitate ongoing communication among law enforcement officers, social services providers, and community members. (111)
2. Create opportunities for law enforcement and social services organizations to work collaboratively to address community issues. (112)

Goal: Ensure affordable comprehensive health care services are available to all residents. (114)

Objective: Increase the availability of health care services for all residents of Nacogdoches County.

1. Address health care provider shortages by working with local government to create incentives for health care practitioners to establish practices in our community. (13)
2. Collaborate with health care providers to offer triage clinics in outlying areas of the county to provide health screenings and health education. (23)
3. Integrate physical and mental health care services into school districts. (39)

Objective: Increase residents' use of preventive health care services.

1. Educate residents about the importance of preventative health care. (11)
2. Educate residents about availability of and access to preventative health care services. (12)
3. Identify and engage in strategies to increase the availability of preventative health services.

Objective: Increase awareness of elected officials and stakeholders regarding the importance of supporting efforts that expand access to affordable health care services.

1. Advocate for changes in policy regarding affordability of health care insurance. (13)
2. Support the expansion of Medicaid (benefits of doing so include funding indigent care services provided via the County Hospital, care provided to those incarcerated in jail, and prenatal care provided by the CareFirst Clinic). (103)

Goal: Create a healthy economic environment where all residents can thrive.

Objective: Increase the opportunities for residents to earn a living wage.

1. Implement an initiative to increase the number of living wage jobs in Nacogdoches County. (89)
2. Create job opportunities for residents who face employment barriers due to a criminal history. (116)

Objective: Increase the number of individuals who are ready to enter the local workforce.

1. Provide job training to create a skilled workforce. (35)
2. Provide technical and job training (K-12, associate, undergraduate, graduate). (33)
3. Collaborate across county school districts to offer a county-wide career and technical education (CTE) institute. (34)
4. Create clear pathways of “grow-your-own” from grade school to career through partnerships among businesses, schools, and community stakeholders. (45)

Objective: Increase local efforts to foster and retain innovation.

1. Provide entrepreneurial support. (44)
2. Identify and implement the supports necessary to retain local entrepreneurs and innovation.

Objective: Increase the availability of the resources necessary for the financial survival of low-income individuals and families.

1. Offer short-term low interest loans as an alternative to high interest title and payday loans. (105)
2. Offer low-income individuals and families access to affordable financial assistance.
3. Offer a financial literacy program for children, adolescents, and adults.

Goal: Engage in activities to raise awareness regarding issues that impact community members. (110)

Objective: Increase residents’ understanding of the importance of mental health, health, and wellness.

1. Offer an informational series on mental health via social media as a way to educate the general public about and normalize mental health and illness. (5)
2. Destigmatize mental health via a campaign that focuses on seeking help as a sign of strength. (37)
3. Offer testimonial-based education to create awareness about mental health and illness. (36)
4. Actively engage in targeted community outreach and education about mental health and wellness. (51)
5. Identify and engage community leaders in efforts to improve mental health, wellness, and well-being. (95)
6. Implement a culturally appropriate value-based health education program. (113)

Objective: Increase the availability and accessibility of up-to-date information about community services.

1. Develop and maintain a web-based guide for resources, services, apps, etc. related to mental health, wellness, and well-being. (54)
2. Provide physical location(s) where adults can access information about substance abuse resources. (53)

Goal: Create an environment where all members of the community are able to meet their basic needs¹¹.

Objective: Ensure that all residents have access to healthy food.

1. Address food insecurity among persons with disabilities by increasing access to local food pantries via collaborative partnerships with churches and community organizations. (14)
2. Identify and develop a plan to address the food deserts that exist within Nacogdoches County.

Objective: Reduce the poverty rate among both children and adults in Nacogdoches County.

1. Implement a program to address generational poverty. (40)
2. Actively engage in targeted community outreach and education about poverty. (61)

Objective: Increase the availability of affordable housing for all residents of Nacogdoches County.

1. Address the shortage of housing options for low-income families.
2. Address the shortage of housing options for middle-income families.

Objective: Increase the availability of childcare options for all residents of Nacogdoches County.

1. Ensure affordable childcare/daycare services are available to all residents. (109)
2. Offer affordable daycare options for parents who work shiftwork (e.g., evenings, nights, weekends).

Goal: Improve the overall health of our community by transforming it into a Blue Zone Community¹². (82)

Objective: Improve the built environment (roads, transportation options, parks, and public spaces).

1. Expand the availability of safe and useable sidewalks throughout the community. (117)
2. Construct bike lanes throughout the community. (118)
3. Improve access to social services, health care, and mental health care by expanding the days/times for Brazos Transit routes. (29)

Objective: Work with elected and government officials to promote healthy activities through municipal policies and ordinances.

1. To be determined
2. To be determined

Objective: Build healthier options into the places people spend most of their time (restaurants, schools, grocery stores, faith-based organizations, and workplaces).

1. Promote healthy lifestyles through creating access to healthy food options. (8)
2. Implement a K-12 curriculum that focuses on health, emotional health, mental health, and wellness. (60)

Objective: Forming and nurturing social groups that support healthy habits.

1. Encourage fitness activities through a program that connects all ages, demographics, and neighborhoods. (24)
2. Promote and encourage people to lead more active lives with outdoor activities. (46)

Objective: Helping people design homes that nudge them into eating less and moving more.

1. To be determined
2. To be determined

¹¹ In this context, basic needs are our physiological or survival needs (i.e., food, water, clothing, shelter, sleep). We acknowledge the importance of safety/security, love/belonging, healthcare, and education, all of which are addressed elsewhere in the common agenda.

¹² The Blue Zone Project is a community-wide approach to improving health and well-being for entire communities – please see www.bluezones.com for more information.

Objective: Encourage people to reduce stress, find their purpose, and give back to the community (creating new social networks, getting people involved in volunteering, and helping them define a sense of purpose).

1. Create opportunities for community members to interact with one another across neighborhoods and/or communities for the purpose of getting know others with who they do not normally interact. (31)
2. Strengthen communication among communities (geographical, ethnic, etc.) within Nacogdoches County. (38)
3. Offer at least monthly music events that are free to the public. (72)
4. Offer secular community trust building activities. (85)
5. Focus on building relationships among diverse groups with an emphasis on healing and transformation (e.g., Kellogg Foundation’s Truth, Reconciliation, Healing, and Transformation model). (119)

Objective: Improve partnerships among stakeholders, elected officials, and government officials.

1. Create a safe space for community members to meet with government officials and local elected officials for the purpose of working together to solve local issues. (120)
2. Create an environment where transparency, trust, consensus building, and civility are norms in community decision-making. (88)
3. Create a position for a Chief Equity Officer within City and County Government. (87)

Goal: Ensure that affordable broadband service is available to all residents. (10)¹³

Objective: Continue the collaborative efforts of the Nacogdoches County Broadband Committee.

1. Collaborate with broadband providers and local officials on planning broadband projects that impact Nacogdoches County.
2. Create a technology portal/website to promote local broadband resources.
3. Track state and national broadband policy.

Objective: Increase access to reliable, fast, and affordable broadband through strategic partnerships with internet service providers, regional organizations, and local stakeholders who can expand and improve broadband infrastructure.

1. Review current and planned broadband deployments in the county.
2. Consider a broadband field validation study.
3. Pursue federal and state funding opportunities.
4. Eliminate local barriers to broadband deployment.

Objective: Increase the adoption and use of broadband and related technologies by the residents of Nacogdoches County.

1. Promote programs that help residents overcome the affordability barrier to broadband adoption.
2. Ensure that Nacogdoches residents have access to affordable internet-enabled devices that meet their needs.
3. Bring awareness and encourage the availability of public access computers across Nacogdoches County.
4. Increase digital literacy skills and digital readiness training available in Nacogdoches County.
5. Partner with public and private entities across Nacogdoches County to develop a public service announcement.

¹³ The objectives and tasks were informed by the Technology Action Plan (TAP) completed by Connected Nation under contract with Better Together and the Nacogdoches County Broadband Committee (Better Together, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches County, City of Nacogdoches, Nacogdoches Economic Development Corporation, Nacogdoches ISD, and NacSpace). The TAP is available online at <https://connectednation.org/nacogdoches-county-texas/>.

6. Address technology related challenges to accessing services by setting up technology pods throughout the community that provide internet access, computers for use, and training on how to access information related to food, nutrition, health, medication, and housing. (22)

Objective: Increase broadband access, adoption, and use across all community sectors through a public education campaign and corresponding outreach and community workshops designed to highlight the quality of life offered by broadband.

1. Promote quality of life offered by broadband access, adoption, and use.
2. Develop curriculum for free, community workshops.
3. Utilize media partnerships to publicize upcoming workshops.

Acknowledgements

Partners

Better Together would like to thank our community and organizational partners for their support:

Burke	Community Arts Center of East Texas
Rural East Texas Health Network	Nacogdoches Progressive Leadership Group
Greater East Texas Community Action Program	Nacogdoches Area United Way
Concerned Black Men of Nacogdoches	East Texas Community Health Services
Nacogdoches Independent School District	Rev. Kyle Childress
Interdenominational Ministers' Alliance	Jim Lemon
Nacogdoches Ministerial Alliance	James Montoya
Brown Family Health Center	Jane Childress
Resilient Nacogdoches	

Appreciative Inquiry Team

Better Together would like to acknowledge our Appreciative Inquiry Team members for their hard work and dedication to this endeavor. Our past and current members include:

Gary Lee Ashcraft, Nacogdoches Area United Way	Candace Ivory, Greater East Texas Community Action
Kim Barton, Healthy Nacogdoches	Anna Kay Johnson, Community Rx Help
Marva Black, EJ Campbell Alumni Association	Teresa Land, Greater East Texas Community Action
Jordan Bridges, Burke	Kerry Lemon, Resilient Nacogdoches
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Celena Garrett, Nacogdoches Progressive Leadership	Amber Teal
Arsenio Hall, Boys and Girls Club of Nacogdoches	Marilyn Toc, Family Crisis Center of East Texas
Barbara Holl, Nacogdoches County Chamber of Commerce	Cindy Vargas, ADAC of Deep East Texas
Erin Hollis, DETCOG	Casey Williams, Starr Ave Co
Sarah Hottman, Etoile ISD	Erin Windham, Nacogdoches ISD

Community Members

Better Together would like to thank the following community members for their involvement in activities related to our initiatives and/or development of the common agenda: Helena Abdullah, Islamic Center of Nacogdoches; Mohammed Abdullah, Islamic Center of Nacogdoches; Shannon Alvis, Together with Veterans; Roy Bolden, Nacogdoches City Council; Anne Bondesen, Rural East Texas Health Network; Mary Frances Bradford, NEDCO; Trey Cartwright, SFASU; Leigh Anne Carver, Nacogdoches Medical Center; Rev. Rhonda Christopher, St. Paul CME; Michael Coffee, SFASU; Michael Cunyus, Burke; Amelia Fischer, Nacogdoches City Council; John Fleming, County Attorney, Nacogdoches County; Dr. Scott Gordon, President, SFASU; Crystal Hicks, Nacogdoches Public Library; Sean Hightower, Board Member, Nacogdoches Memorial Hospital; Garth Hinze, Ark Pharmacies; Anita Humphreys, CEO, East Texas Community Health Clinic; Mario Morera Jimenez, SFASU; Keith Kiplinger, Chief, Nacogdoches Fire Dept.; Dr. Carey Lindemann; Rev. Fabian Lopez, Rey de Reyes; Lynsey McAninch, Nacogdoches ISD; Vista McCorskey, The Rose; Jaime McIntyre, Burke; Wayne Mitchell, President, Nacogdoches County

Chamber of Commerce; Jimmy Mize, Mayor, City of Nacogdoches; Nancy Niehaus; Sharon Ninness, HOPE; Richard Orton; Jeff Patterson, CEO, Nacogdoches Medical Center; Gus Patton; Ed Pool; Susan Rushing, Burke (Retired); Dr. Evelyn Saucedo, Nacogdoches ISD; Lauren Sieja, Nacogdoches ISD; Jessica Sowell, City of Nacogdoches; Ginger Stephens, Whole Again Counseling; Heather Stidham, Nacogdoches ISD; Karen Swenson, Executive Director, Greater East Texas Community Action Program; Melanie Taylor, CEO, Burke; Nic Trent; and Mario Torres, Nacogdoches ISD.

Nacogdoches County Broadband Committee

The Broadband Committee was formed in late fall of 2020 for the purpose of working with Connected Nation to conduct a county-wide technology assessment to inform a Technology Action Plan (TAP). The committee consisted of representatives from the partner organizations that committed matching funds to supplement a grant from the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health to cover the cost of the assessment/TAP. The partner organizations are Better Together, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches County, City of Nacogdoches, Nacogdoches Economic Development Corporation, Nacogdoches ISD, and NacSpace. The committee members are Erin Windham, Nacogdoches ISD (Chair); Judge Greg Sowell, Nacogdoches County; Mario Canizares, City of Nacogdoches; Larissa Philpot, NEDCO; Anthony Espinosa, SFASU; Philip Hale, NacSpace; Steve Cooper, Better Together/SFASU School of Social Work.

Project Team

Better Together's current project team is Dr. Steve Cooper, Project Director/Principal Investigator and Anna Hartman, Project Coordinator. Better Together also acknowledges the significant efforts and contributions of the following individuals: Lenola Wyatt, Julia Cañas, Chloe Sledge, Carol Levine, Judy Montgomery, and Dr. Emmerentie Oliphant. Better Together is especially appreciative of Dr. Oliphant, who served as Co-Principal Investigator for the first phase of the project and was instrumental in planning and guiding the appreciative inquiry.

Appendix

The following action statements were generated during the brainstorming process. However, the Appreciative Inquiry Team chose to not include them in the common agenda at this time. Rather, we will revisit them on a regular basis as we move forward with implementing the common agenda. They may be added as appropriate. Please note that the number preceding each statement is the number assigned to the statement during the brainstorming process. The numbers are included here as a reference for the Appreciative Inquiry Team and project staff.

Remaining Statements – For Use at a Later Date

4. offer mental health fairs that provide mental health screenings and referrals to local providers.
 73. offer a “trained listener” program for community members who are not in mental health crisis but need someone to listen.
 75. offer a harm reduction program for substance abuse (decreases the spread of bloodborne diseases and raises awareness of overdose prevention).
 94. provide community-based mental health education that focuses on all community members and is designed to reduce stigma.
 106. develop a mental health resource center that addresses mental health issues and related challenges (e.g., housing, food insecurity, employment, etc.).
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2. offer parent/child interaction services (such as parent-child interaction training) for families who do not qualify for state funded mental health services.
 58. create a community-based insurance program so that folks who are under-insured or uninsured can access health, mental health, and substance abuse services.
 77. create a program that provides targeted support to someone (children and adults) who calls a hotline, makes an outcry at school, or is referred by a healthcare provider.
 78. offer a program that partners with local foodbanks to answer clients’ questions about mental health needs or challenges and uses that information to inform programs to address the identified needs.
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52. provide physical location(s) where youth can access information about substance abuse resources.
 81. create a program that teaches high school students about career opportunities in behavioral health care.
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3. develop a referral network among mental health providers, school counselors, and primary care providers.
 41. identify and provide traditional and virtual discussion forums where people can share their mental health concerns.
 50. offer an ongoing community outreach psychoeducation group with rotating topics.
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20. create a call center to provide 24 hour information and referral services for community health, mental health, social services, and resources.
 30. improve access to social services, health care, and mental health care by offering vouchers for Uber or Taxis.
 84. sponsor community events that serve to educate community members about mental health, wellness, and Better Together (e.g., fun runs, walks, etc.).
 100. provide opportunities for individuals to talk about the issues they face and their options for assistance.
 101. tap into local, state, and federal financial resources in order to enhance existing services.
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15. work with churches and other organizations to identify and deliver food to people who do not have access to transportation or a means to travel to the food pantries.
 47. identify and coordinate local resources for the purpose of increasing efficiency and effectiveness of services.

Remaining Statements – For Use at a Later Date

- 62. actively engage in targeted community outreach and education about resources and services available to address basic needs.
- 63. create a volunteer-based transportation service to help community members access services and resources.
- 107. assist individuals who are involved with community-based corrections with identifying and applying for assistance programs and resources.

- 21. create a clearinghouse to connect community volunteers with community members in need (i.e., assistance with transportation).
- 49. create a clearinghouse for social services and resources.
- 64. encourage the use of Meet-Up or similar apps to connect residents to existing resources, groups, social activities, etc.
- 65. use a public awareness campaign to connect residents to existing resources, groups, social activities, etc.
- 66. encourage collaboration among community groups and service providers to build awareness and facilitate referrals.
- 104. encourage people through faith.
- 115. shift the community's focus to prevention-oriented solutions.

- 79. offer city and county employees opportunities for continuing education related to best practices.

- 42. prioritize opportunities for youth with emphasis on academic, sports, and physical well-being.
- 71. implement a community-based motivational wellness reward system to encourage K-12 students to engage in healthy activities.

- 16. initiate a parenting mentorship program that includes instructions for newborns, parenting helpline, social media ask page, all with a focus on physical and mental health.
- 59. create a community funded voucher program so that folks who are under-insured or uninsured can access health, mental health and substance abuse services.
- 67. offer community-based mentoring programs for youth.
- 74. offer a youth shelter.

Center for Rural Social Work Research & Development
School of Social Work
Stephen F. Austin State University
420 E. Starr Avenue
Nacogdoches, Texas 75962
(936) 468-2228



bettertogethernac.com