



PAPN TEXAS

PSYCHIATRIC ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSES OF TEXAS



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As we welcome 2026, we're grateful for our PAPN Texas community and the collective work we do to support and advocate for psychiatric nurse practitioners across Texas.

This year, we'll continue sharing important legislative updates and advocacy efforts that impact our profession, along with updates on our annual Mental Health Conference and other educational opportunities. Ongoing connection and support remain a priority, with spaces designed to foster collaboration, consultation, and community.

If you've considered becoming more involved—through advocacy, leadership, or participation—now is a great time to step in and make an impact. Here's to a year of momentum, connection, and progress. Let's make 2026 a great one together.

– Amy Owens Horelica, Communications Chair



PRESIDENT ELECT GREETINGS

Back to the Basics in the Digital Age and a Call to Advocacy

Welcome to 2026 and thank you for being a member of the Psychiatric Advanced Practice Nurses of Texas (PAPN Texas)! As psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners (PMHNPs) caring for clients with challenging conditions in today's environment where the mental health crisis continues to build for children and adults, it is vital to maintain perspective and build personal resilience. We all know self-care and work-life balance are paramount for professional fulfillment and success. After all, we are unable to give our best to loved ones and clients if we ourselves are tired, ill, frustrated, or just burned out. Building our own personal resilience requires planning with a proactive approach. Prevention is key!



What are we up against? It is well documented that Texas falls behind significantly in overall access to healthcare, and access to mental healthcare. Unfortunately, 246 of 254 counties in Texas are designated as mental health professional shortage areas, and Texas ranks 51 st in the nation for mental healthcare access (Texas Legislative Study Group [LSG], 2025). Additionally, 70% of psychiatrists are near retirement age (Harrar, 2022). Mental health services for children remain of high concern since the state of emergency was declared jointly in October of 2021 by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and the American Hospital Association (AHA), related to the intensifying crisis in pediatric mental health nationwide (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Academy of Pediatrics, and Children's Hospital Association, 2021). The elephant in the room remains. Texas ranks in the top 10 most restrictive states for nurse practitioner practice and ranks last in the nation for occupational freedom (Garza, 2023; Stofa, 2024). As time goes on, there will be less psychiatrists to "supervise" nurse practitioners. The physician supervision requirement in Texas is just not realistic, especially in psychiatric practice. While any physician trained in any specialty can "supervise" NPs in Texas, this is not practical when they have not been trained in psychiatry and have no experience treating clients with complicated mental illness, not to mention it is expensive. I know nurse practitioners who pay anywhere between 500 to 5,000 dollars per month just to procure a "supervising physician" to be able to treat patients. This is not in the best



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interest of the public, especially in a state where so many people are suffering from mental illness and do not have access to care. To quote the former President of Texas Nurse Practitioners (TNP), Erin Perez, “this pay-to-play model is just, it’s not right, and it’s not helpful. It’s detrimental to our patients; it’s detrimental to our health care systems.” (Stofa, 2024). With such a need for mental health access in Texas, the time is now to join your professional organizations like TNP and PAPN Texas to support or contribute in any way possible to nurse practitioner advocacy within the state of Texas, not just for our profession, but for the citizens of Texas who deserve access to care.



How do we maintain our own mental health to be effective clinicians in this challenging practice environment? Self-care is key! Often this includes things we do for ourselves, as well as things we avoid for best results. We all know about maintaining hygiene, appearance, following a healthy diet, exercise, and keeping up with our own check-ups and recommended medical screenings, but what else is there? New research highlights the risks and potential consequences of too much digital technology use. In a recent study published in January of this year, frequent social media use was associated with rumination, envy, social media addiction, and social media burnout, which were associated with the development of depression (Ma & Liu, 2026). Minimizing or decreasing social media use can help. Screen-time is also important, especially considering most of us must be in front of a screen most of the workday to chart, or conduct appointments. Increased screen time is associated with mental illness and conversely, a documented improvement in mental health is observed when screen time is reduced (Pieh et al., 2025). Children are also significantly impacted by screen time. Providing psychoeducation to families to avoid screen time in toddlers and young children early on and limit it in older children is an excellent preventive measure to promote mental and physical wellness (Muppalla et al., 2023). Staying socially active is also important for our mental health. Setting aside time to participate in groups with peers and people who share common interests is helpful for us to feel connection to the people and communities where we reside and provides the potential to achieve better mental and physical health, a concept worth sharing with clients (World Health Organization [WHO], 2025). Lastly, don’t forget about the power of music and nature. While listening to your favorite songs or taking a hike in the woods can be therapeutic, combining the two could be



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fantastic! A recent study revealed combining nature-based activities and music can significantly improve mental health (Hand et al., 2025). Be on the lookout for announcements coming soon and save the date for Saturday August 1 st, 2026, for our PAPN Texas annual conference. I look forward to networking with each of you. Now, I think I will take a walk outside in nature while listening to my favorite Kenny Chesney song to set a good example and practice what I preach!

Be your best!
 Dr. Michelle Hext
 PAPN President Elect



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MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS



Advocacy in Action

PAPN Texas members recently took an active role in policy advocacy through a grassroots legislative presentation focused on building skills for engaging with lawmakers and understanding current policy issues. The session featured a panel of experienced advocates, including PAPN Texas member Stella Logan, alongside Tracy Wilson and Andrea Kirchner, who shared firsthand insights from their work at the legislative level.

A key highlight of the discussion was the TNP Advocacy Toolkit, created by Andrea Kirchner. This grassroots resource helps nurse practitioners understand what they need to know to become effective policy advocates and confidently engage with legislators. The toolkit is available to TNP members and serves as a practical guide for advocacy efforts across Texas.

“You’re never too young or too old to get involved with policy or the legislative process.” – Stella Logan

The panel underscored the power of grassroots involvement and the meaningful impact nurse practitioners can have when they are informed, prepared, and engaged in the legislative process.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Legislative & Policy Update

Recent legislative and policy discussions highlighted several developments relevant to nurse practitioners and healthcare delivery in Texas, with a focus on workforce issues, patient access, technology, and public health.

Provider Contracts & Practice Protections

SB 1318 (Schwertner) introduced new limits on provider non-compete agreements. Non-competes are now prohibited unless they include a buyout capped at no more than one year of salary, are limited to one year post-termination, and restrict practice within a maximum five-mile geographic radius. These changes aim to reduce barriers to mobility for healthcare providers.

Health Technology, AI, and Medical Records

SB 1188 (Kolkhorst) established new requirements related to electronic health records and artificial intelligence use in healthcare. EHRs must be stored within the U.S. or its territories, providers must disclose AI use and review AI-generated outputs, and parents are granted full access to minors' medical records unless otherwise limited by law. The bill also requires EHR systems to include an unchangeable "sex at birth" field and introduces civil penalties ranging from \$5,000 to \$250,000 for noncompliance.

Nutrition, Prevention, and Workforce Education

SB 25 (Kolkhorst) focuses on preventive health through expanded nutrition education and physical activity requirements in schools. It also mandates continuing education in nutrition and metabolic health for healthcare providers, creates a Texas Nutrition Advisory Committee, and adds nutrition coursework requirements in public higher education institutions.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Additional Healthcare Legislation

Other notable bills addressed dementia research (SB 5), rural hospital support (HB 18), perinatal palliative care (HB 37), direct primary care and nurse practitioner practice models (HB 541), military veteran licensing (HB 879), life-of-the-mother exceptions (SB 31), nursing workforce task forces (HB 2851, HB 2856, HB 3801), and expanded direct access to physical therapy (HB 4099).

Telehealth & Controlled Substances

The DEA and HHS issued a fourth temporary extension of COVID-era telemedicine flexibilities, now in effect through December 31, 2026. Under this extension, nurse practitioners and other clinicians may continue prescribing certain controlled substances via telehealth without an initial in-person visit, including teleprescribing buprenorphine for opioid use disorder.

NP Leadership & Advocacy

The update also highlighted growing nurse practitioner engagement in policy leadership, with Kimmie Ellison (House District 49) and Holly Jeffries (House District 86) currently running for office. With the Texas Legislature out of session, this is an important time for NPs to connect with legislators, share priorities, and participate in upcoming primary elections.

CONFERENCE UPDATE



PAPN Texas has made the thoughtful decision to postpone this year's annual conference to allow new leadership time to transition into their roles and bring fresh perspective to the planning process.

This pause creates an opportunity to reimagine the conference with updated content, new insights, and a renewed vision. When the conference returns, it will feature a new look, a new date, and continue to offer professionally relevant education along with expanded opportunities for connection and collaboration.

We will soon be seeking presenters. If you're interested in expanding into speaking or presentation roles, now is a great time to start thinking about potential topics. Please watch for our upcoming Call for Presentations.

Thank you for your understanding and continued support. We look forward to sharing more details soon and welcoming you to an exciting, refreshed PAPN Texas conference experience.

SAVE THE DATE: PAPN CONFERENCE 2026

DATE: Saturday, August 1, 2026

More details to come!



www.papntexas.org

ONGOING SUPPORT

Monthly Private Practice Roundtable: Real Talk from the Trenches

Our latest PAPN Texas Monthly Private Practice Roundtable felt less like a meeting and more like a room full of colleagues swapping notes, ideas, and hard-earned wisdom about private practice in Texas.

We talked honestly about what many of us are seeing right now—slower months, unexpectedly busy weeks, and the constant juggling act of patient schedules, no-shows, and energy levels. Just hearing “same here” from other NPs was validating in itself. Prescribing—especially stimulants—sparked a lot of conversation. Members shared real experiences with pharmacy roadblocks, tighter regulations, and the extra coordination that’s become part of practice life in Texas. The takeaway? Clear collaborative agreements and good communication with physicians matter more than ever.

Marketing and growth came up too, in a very practical way. We traded ideas about what’s actually working—Psychology Today, local referrals, in-person care—and what might not be worth the effort, including a thoughtful discussion around free consultations.

We also made space for bigger, thoughtful conversations around ethics, including experiences with Spravato and ketamine. Members shared both wins and concerns, keeping the focus where it belongs: patient care, integrity, and doing this work responsibly.

What really stood out was the sense of community. People offered referrals, shared resources, and reminded each other that private practice doesn’t have to be a solo sport.

The Monthly Private Practice Roundtable is an easy, welcoming space to connect, ask questions, and learn from people who truly get it.

If you’re in private practice—or thinking about it—we’d love to have you join us at our next roundtable meeting on Tuesday, February 17 at 7:00 PM.



ONGOING SUPPORT



First Year PMHNP Support

The 1st Year PMHNP Support Group meets by Zoom teleconferencing on the 2nd Thursday of each month. The general goals of the group are to: 1) provide support and encouragement for new PMHNPs, 2) discuss reasonable pay and workplace conditions, and 3) to network with colleagues.

Case Consultation

Case consultations will return in March and will happen every fourth Tuesday of the month! Bring your urgent cases for insightful group discussion, and dive into relevant journal club articles with fellow professionals. It's a space for collaborative learning, fresh perspectives, and elevating patient care together.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Board Officers - Elected - Term Ends

President - Lisa Anderson - 2026

President Elect - Michelle Hext - 2028

Secretary - Kaylie Dozier Joachim - 2026

Treasurer - Linzi Leighton - 2027

Representatives At Large - Elected - Terms Ends

Stella Logan - 2027

Meshel Stewert - 2026

Becky Spencer - 2027

Toni Brent - 2026

Board Appointed Positions

Communications Committee Chair - Amy Owens Horelica - 2026

Education Committee Chair - J.T. Seaman - 2026

Legislative Chair - Becky Spencer - 2026

Membership Committee Chair - Martina Gallagher - 2026

Nominations Committee Chair - Connie Wang -2026

Student Representative - Katie Hanel - 2026

Conference Committee Chair - J.T. Seaman -2026

Non Voting Attendees

First Year Practice Group Chair - Justin Cullers

Private Practice Group Chairs - Sherry Grogan/Lola Bello

Case Consultation Chair - Wanda Hilliard

