

Introduction: The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health is applying for a forum grant of \$148,698.00 to develop and host multiple virtual convenings and one nationwide, in-person convening of stakeholders of public mental health records. During these convenings, archivists, librarians, historians and researchers, genealogists, consumers of mental health services and their family members, peer support mental health providers, and state hospital administrators will gather to discuss shared challenges, potential solutions, and create best practices and policy priorities for preserving and making accessible mental health records. This project aligns with Goal 5 - strengthen the ability of libraries, archives, and museums to work collaboratively for the benefit of the communities they serve – and both of its objectives. The National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) and the University of Texas at Austin School of Information (UT iSchool) have committed to being partners on this project.

Project Justification: The preservation and accessibility of state hospital records requires coordination from hospital administrators, archivists, and consumers of mental health services due to their sensitive nature. Hospital administrators often do not know how to manage their historical records and either dispose of them or let them collect dust in a warehouse, preventing them from reaching archivists, researchers, and family members. Because of the complexity of HIPAA and the sensitivity of the subject matter, many archivists are afraid to make these records available when they do receive them. There have been efforts in several states to preserve and improve accessibility to state hospital records, but each state has approached it differently with varying degrees of success. These differences make it difficult for researchers and family members to navigate access.

A series of convenings bringing together stakeholders in mental health records aligns with Goal 5 - by connecting libraries, archives, and museums to the creators, subjects, and users of mental health records. It is important for archivists to have an understanding of the environment where records are created, but it is particularly important when the records are of a sensitive nature. These records tell the history of a system and people who are often forgotten because our larger society is afraid of them. Sharing this history helps destigmatize mental health care facilities by making explicit the actual care that goes on inside them, creates more effective advocates for mental health services, and provides consumers of mental health care services and their families a space to have their story told.

Project Work Plan: For the last three years, PI Elizabeth Stauber has worked with Texas' Health and Human Services Commission, Austin State Hospital (ASH), and Dell Medical School at the University of Texas at Austin to develop a historical preservation program for the state hospital system in Texas by providing recommendations for administrators and legislators, working alongside ASH peer support to develop an oral history program, and managing a grant to the University of Texas at Austin to digitize historical hospital records. Through this work she has met others engaged in similar work in other states and has identified common challenges, making her uniquely qualified to lead this work.

The first activity would be to hire a Graduate Research Assistant from the UT iSchool to conduct a landscape analysis over the 2024 fall semester. They would identify all the mental health record preservation activities happening in different states, summarize common challenges, goals, and outcomes of these activities, and create a list of potential stakeholders that would be invited to participate in the virtual and in-person convenings. The second activity would be to organize a series of virtual events gathering archivists, librarians, records managers; people who work in mental health systems; consumers of mental health services and peer support staff; and researchers, genealogists, and

family members of patients. These virtual convenings would be organized by the Hogg Foundation will take place in 2025 throughout the year. NASMHPD will provide promotion and connections to the hospital administrators and peer support stakeholders. The UT iSchool will provide promotion and connections to other library and information schools and researchers. The purpose of these convenings is to discover challenges, needs, and potential uses of mental health records for each stakeholder group. For example, archivists might request HIPAA training and peer providers of mental health services might request programs that connect current patients with historical points of interest. The third activity would be to organize a national in-person convening that brings together the stakeholders identified in the first two activities to take place in the spring of 2026. During this convening, participants would highlight current projects in different states; discuss common issues and potential solutions; create best practices; create a directory of nationwide contacts; develop models of collaboration; and draft policy priorities to improve our ability to preserve records and provide access to them to researchers, families, and other interested parties. This in-person convening would be organized by the Hogg Foundation. The fourth activity, to be completed by the Hogg Foundation and a contracted researcher, would be compiling the learnings into a publication as well as identifying future coalitions and activities that should be undertaken to further this work.

Diversity Plan: State hospitals are places where people of all backgrounds have found themselves, so intentional consideration to include people with different lived experiences is necessary to ensure that respectful boundaries of access are identified. Due to the sensitive nature of the records, including people who have formerly been patients in a state hospital is essential to determine the boundaries of access. Consumers of mental health services and peer support staff have been identified as one of the stakeholders for the virtual and in-person convenings. Additionally, segregation and disparate treatment of patients based on race, gender, and class is a part of the history of state hospitals. Researchers who work with historically segregated Black hospitals have also been identified as stakeholders.

Project Results: Currently, if a state is addressing the challenge of preserving mental health records, they are doing so independently. The goal of these convenings is to establish joint solutions and guidelines to help states navigate these records without having to duplicate work. Bringing together the diverse stakeholders of mental health records will help archivists and hospital administrators to respectfully preserve and provide access by working directly with consumers of mental health services and family members. Collaborating and learning from each other will give everyone who is responsible for these records a better understanding of the larger systems and policies that currently prevent these records from being preserved and accessed. Through this collaboration we hope to create a few different models of preserving these records that can be applied across the states, identify potential policy changes for each stakeholder to advocate for, form coalitions and other support structures, and open a line of communication between archivists, records creators, and records subjects. Learnings from the virtual and in-person convenings will be put together in a publication that includes guidelines and best practices for handling these sensitive records.

Budget Summary: The Hogg Foundation will contribute budget funding for materials, salaries, and some student costs. We are requesting from IMLS the following: Subawards and Contracts for the in-person convening and publication: \$70,000.00; Student Support: \$41,346.00; Total Costs: \$111,346.00; Indirect Costs: \$37,352.00; Total amount requested: \$148,698.00.