



# Center for Evidence-based Policy

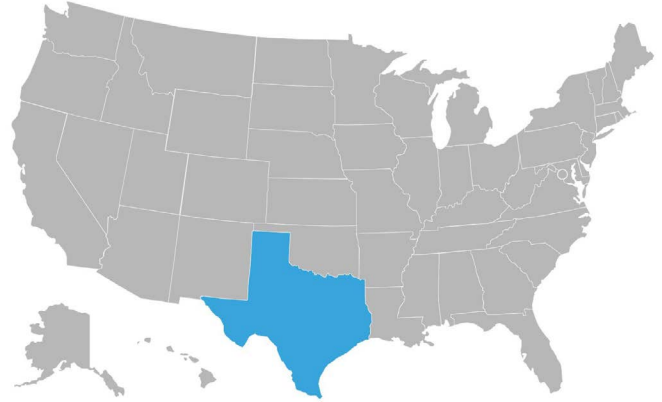
## THE SCIENCE OF GOOD POLICY

### CASE STUDY: TEXAS

#### *BENEFIT DECISION PROCESS REDESIGN*

Setting benefit guidelines is one of the most important—and sometimes controversial—decisions for state Medicaid programs. Clear, transparent, and evidence-based policies help ensure guidelines best serve the vulnerable adults and children who count on these services.

In 2014, the state of Texas engaged the Center to help improve their medical and dental coverage development process. State officials, seeking to inform process improvements with national best practices, and assistance from an experienced team contracted the Center for Evidence-based Policy to redesign their benefit decision process. Mary Haifley, Director of the Program Policy Unit for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, noted, “The Center immediately understood what we were trying to do and how they could help. The staff has first-hand experience with Medicaid so they were able to hit the ground running.” Haifley added, “Because of the work of the Center, we have greater confidence that the benefit decisions we make are based on all the available evidence, that our stakeholders are engaged, and we are better serving the people of Texas.”



#### ENGAGED STAKEHOLDERS

Job one for the Center was meaningful engagement with stakeholders. Center staff did surveys, in-person interviews, group meetings and webinars with internal and external stakeholders. That work was essential for informing the development of an effective and responsive process.

“Successful policy development cannot happen in a vacuum,” says Duke Shepard from the Center. “It can be all too easy to make assumptions and roll out policies that never take off. That’s a waste of time and resources with real life effects on Medicaid clients, providers, state budgets, and taxpayers.”

#### TRANSPARENT PROCESSES

The Center learned from stakeholders that the medical and dental coverage development process was confusing, difficult to navigate, and challenging to access. With the Center’s assistance, the State now has an accessible and user-friendly topic nomination process that helps stakeholders work with HHSC to identify topics that are important to them. Through this revised process, stakeholders have a single point of contact and know exactly what information they need to provide to have their nomination considered. In addition, a website has been created for public comment and tracking of the nomination through every step.

#### EVIDENCE-BASED DECISIONS

HHSC is committed to ensuring that benefit coverage is based on best available evidence. The Center helped HHSC establish a review process modeled on successful programs in other states but customized for Texas’s unique needs. Center staff also provide ongoing training and technical assistance to HHSC staff. Today, state policymakers are able to analyze nominations for coverage based on clear, standardized, and documented criteria. Using consistent, high-quality sources for evidence and policy reviews helps ensure HHSC’s decisions are evidence-based, responsive to the changing health care environment, relevant to stakeholder needs, and provide opportunities for continuous learning and improvement.