



Increasing Demand and Declining Funds for the Mentally Ill in North Texas

Written On September 21, 2009 By [Bob Kraft](#)

The current economic crisis has resulted in many more North Texans seeking taxpayer-funded mental health care as people lose both their jobs and, with it, health insurance. At the same time, the company that runs the state program is preparing to cut its budget. Demand has increased by about 17 percent since July 2008 and 30 percent since January 2008 across the seven-county metropolitan area. Kim Horner of the [Dallas Morning News](#) reported at length over this local crisis in mental health care.

A few high points of her article are shared here:

- ValueOptions of Texas Inc., a company that runs the region's mental health program, plans to cut \$10 million from its program after being denied additional funds from the state. The program that serves homeless and poor residents was already stretched thin before the increase in people seeking help. Area mental health providers who also depend on money from ValueOptions will likely be forced to lay off employees and reduce services to some of the most ill people in the community.

- Liam Mulvaney, president and CEO of LifeNet Community Behavioral Healthcare, a mental health provider, said last week to the North Texas Behavioral Health Authority that LifeNet currently spends about \$300 a month per patient that is soon to be cut to \$140 per month. Mental Health America's public policy director, Janie Metzinger, noted the false economy of reducing services is a lack of treatment will cause more people to get sicker and end up in emergency psychiatric care costing taxpayers even more money down the road.

· Dallas Police Senior Cpl. Herbert Cotner, who has trained hundreds of officers on how to deal with people with mental illnesses, said mental health care should be treated and funded just as any high priority safety issue.