
# SMI Allies

## The Evolving Role of Family Care Partners

Texas JCMH Summit
October 7-8, 2025

Jerri Clark
Resource and Advocacy Manager

# Who is here today?

- Judges
- Prosecutors
- Defense attorneys
- Other court staff

- Treatment providers
- Law enforcement
- Social workers

- Family members
- Others?

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# Families can help fix the system

## Underappreciated resource:

- In this for life.
- Work hard for free!
- Anticipate what's coming.
- Hold the hope.

## Barriers to family engagement

- Misunderstandings have led to blame.
- HIPAA is poorly understood.
- Help often comes after family tragedy.
- SMI symptoms cause confusion.

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# What family means

Parents
Siblings
Spouses
Adult children
Partners
Significant others
Close friends

Family may be by origin
or by choice!

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# Poor parenting doesn't cause SMI


**Causes of brain-based illnesses are largely unknown but correlated to:**

- Neurotransmitters
- Genetics
- Inflammatory conditions
- Infections
- Brain injury
- Substance use
  (often alcohol and/or cannabis)

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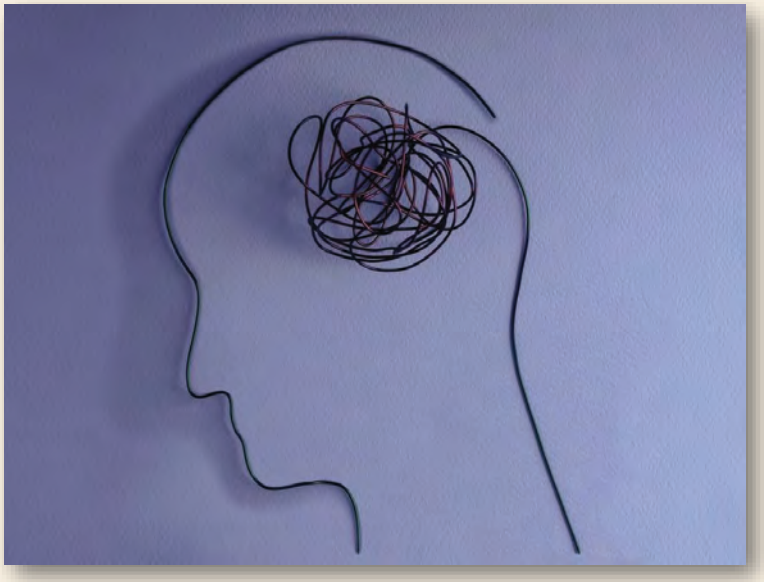
# What is SMI?

**Severe mental illness**

- Schizophrenia spectrum disorders
- Bipolar 1 disorder
- Severe depression
- Illnesses with psychotic elements



At least 25 percent of people with SMI have a co-occurring substance use disorder.

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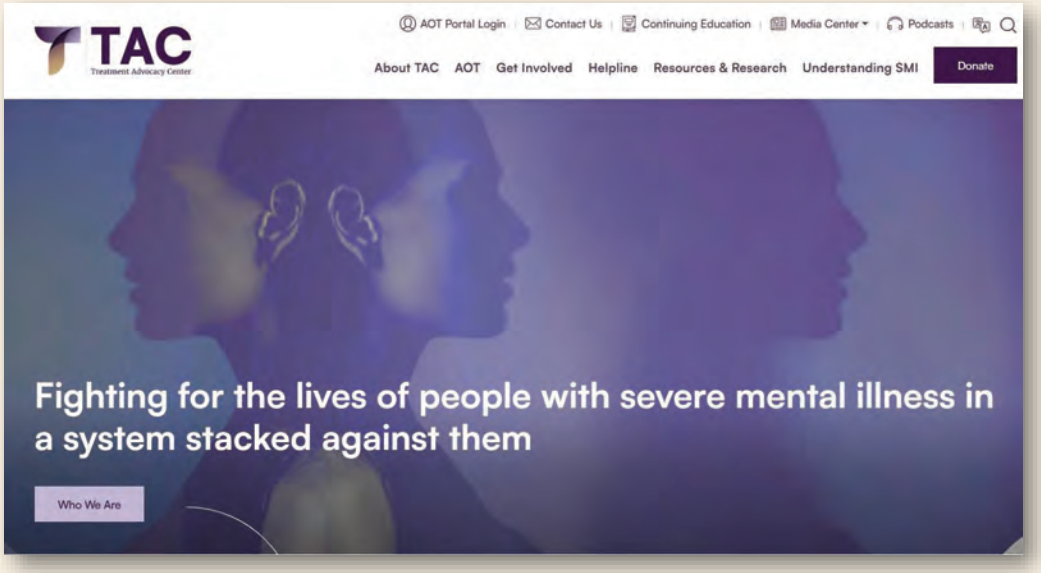


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# At TAC:

We believe in the right to treatment for those with SMI...

...in a system poorly built to serve their needs.

# Biggest barrier: anosognosia

- Brain-based, neurological symptom.
- ***Not*** a willful denial of illness.
- Self-awareness is damaged.
- **Treatment system wasn't built to account for this complication.**

TAC provides two videos, one with Texas sources.

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HOUSTON CHRONICLE

SALE! 3 Months for 25¢ Sign in

LOCAL // HOUSING

## Texas adds reason people can be detained for mental illness as Trump urges action on homelessness

By R.A. Schuetz, *Staff Writer*
Aug 18, 2025

On Sept. 1, 2025, Texas adopted a new law (SB 1164) that recognizes **anosognosia** as a reason to evaluate someone for involuntary care.

Can this reduce homelessness? Perhaps, if quality treatment is made more accessible and families stay intact.

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**Becoming homeless in Seattle helped him find psychiatric help. His mom says it shouldn't have taken that long.**

July 25, 2021 at 6:00 am | *Updated Sep. 1, 2021 at 4:32 pm*

1 of 6 | Jerri Clark sits in Calvin's childhood room, decorated with speech and debate awards and surfing decor, in Vancouver, Washington. She holds his hat that he wore often while homeless in Seattle. (Amanda Snyder / The Seattle Times)

My son was homeless because his illness was poorly managed, not because of housing prices or shortages. Treating SMI well and promptly can reduce our homelessness problem.

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# Advocacy department programs

Direct personal support:

- Nationwide Helpline
- Advocacy Navigator training
- Ambiguous Loss training

Grassroots advocacy support:

- Advocacy Bootcamp training

TAC Advocacy Bootcamp

TAC Advocacy Navigator

Ambiguous Loss

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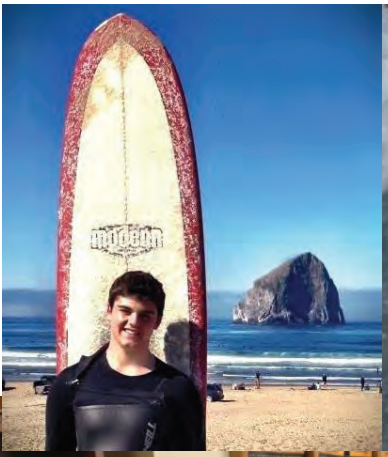
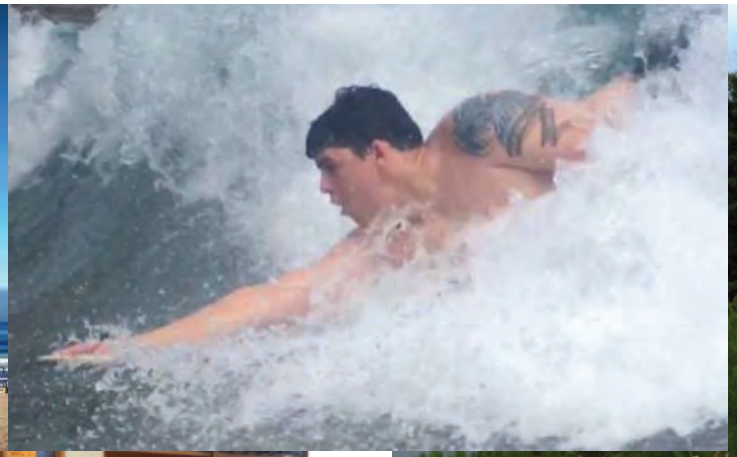
# Advocacy department values

Our community stands for the right to timely, compassionate, and evidence-based treatment for severe mental illness (SMI). We believe that well-informed and empowered families are key to motivating change. Our advocacy work seeks to turn suffering and hardship towards action and healing. **We bravely speak truth about the realities for those impacted as we push for needed system change.**






Calvin Clark
1995-2019

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# Manifestations of “mom shaming”

- Schizophrenogenic mother theory
- Refrigerator mother
- Helicopter mother
- Overprotective mother
- Enabling mother
- Overbearing mother

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# Case study: prison in lieu of care

- First psychotic break as a teen.
- Incarcerated adolescence-20s.
- **Family gets no guidance.**
- After years, tenuous stability.
- Provider changes meds.
- New symptoms, crisis, re-arrest.
- Faces 10 years in prison.
- Unstable, confused, terrified.
- What was the plan for this man?
- **Will mom pick up the pieces?**