

Projecting Behavioral Health Crisis Utilization across Louisiana Parishes Using Census Coverage Data.

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Background

Louisiana is expanding its behavioral health crisis response system (BHCRS) to improve access to community-based mental health services and reduce reliance on emergency departments and law enforcement. Planning these services requires an accurate prediction of potential demand across parishes with varying population sizes, demographics, and insurance coverage. However, parish-level information on crisis service utilization remains limited.

Objectives

This study estimated projected (BHCR) utilization across Louisiana Parishes by applying national utilization rates to parish-level demographic and insurance coverage data. It also evaluates differences in service demand between rural and urban communities to inform crisis response capacity and workforce planning.

Methods

Population estimates were obtained from the 2024 American Community Survey, including parish-level insurance coverage categories (Medicaid, private insurance, and the uninsured). Stratified age-related population counts were used to calculate utilization. Youth under Medicaid were projected using 5% annual crisis utilization estimates, while adults under Medicaid coverage, privately insured people, and the uninsured were estimated using 1% utilization rate.

Results

Projected crisis utilization varied considerably across parishes. Youth utilization was approximately 27 cases annually in Cameron and Tensas parishes, rising to over 2,600 in Baton Rouge parish, with similarly high projections in Jefferson and Orleans parishes. The Medicaid population accounted for the largest share of projected utilization. Rural parishes generally projected lower service demand, while urban parishes demonstrated substantially higher annual utilization.

Conclusion

BHCR demand is expected to vary across Louisiana parishes based on population size, demographics, and insurance coverage.

Recommendation

These findings suggest that crisis response may benefit from regionally specific implementation strategies that improve system planning, workforce allocation, and resource allocation in Louisiana.

Ethics

The LSUHSC- New Orleans IRB determined this study was non-human subjects research #7659