



Libraries for Health: Fact Sheet for Libraries

What is *Libraries for Health* (L4H)?

Libraries for Health is an innovative strategy that integrates mental health support into the work of libraries in rural Central Texas to bolster community mental wellness. Lay mental health workers, trained in evidence-based techniques, will screen, educate, and, when needed, refer adult patrons with mental health conditions to appropriate clinical care. Participating libraries will improve their organizational capacities to use evidence-based approaches that promote mental wellness. Additional library assets including their collections, services, programs, spaces, operations, and communications can also be better aligned to further support mental wellness.

Who is funding *Libraries for Health*?

St. David's Foundation is an Austin-based charitable organization with a mission to help improve the health and well-being of the most underserved Central Texas neighborhoods. It deploys resources to reduce health inequity, increase access to healthcare focusing on the whole person through integrated care, and support the communities in taking an active role in their health and healthcare needs. The libraries participating in *Libraries for Health* were competitively selected after submitting responses to a Request for Proposals issued by the St. David's Foundation in 2021.

What is RAND's role?

St. David's Foundation has partnered with the RAND Corporation to implement and evaluate *Libraries for Health*. The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that utilizes the very best analytic tools and methods to develop objective policy solutions by delivering fact-based, actionable solutions grounded in rigorous analysis.

What can the funds be used for?

The funds awarded by St. David's Foundation to libraries are intended to promote mental wellness in libraries. Your use of the award will likely include additional labor to cover time staff will spend participating in the *Libraries for Health* learning cohort (more below), developing your library's implementation plan, completing progress reports, and participating in the evaluation. Your awarded funds could also be used to enhance collections, technology, or program materials. Importantly, the funds awarded to your library are not intended to be spent on the lay mental health worker; that person's salary is covered by RAND. Funding should not be used to supplant existing government or public funds.

Who are the Lay Mental Health Workers?

RAND will work with the libraries individually to identify the backgrounds (e.g., cultural competency in working with veteran) and skills (e.g., Spanish-language skills) of the people who might best serve their communities. Once an individual is identified by RAND, they will meet your library staff to ensure that the person is a good fit with the library and community.

What will the Lay Mental Health Workers do?

The specific duties of lay mental health workers will depend on your library's setting and community needs. Activities may include setting up "office hours" to meet with adult patrons individually, attending existing library groups/activities to promote mental wellness (for example, providing breathing exercises during a book club), or offering mental wellness trainings to library staff and adult patrons.

How many hours will the Lay Mental Health Worker be at my library?

This will be up to the individual needs of each library, and something you will decide on as you work with RAND to craft your library's implementation plan. Likely, one mental health provider will split their time between 2-3 libraries.

Who will oversee the Lay Mental Health Workers?

RAND will work with one or more licensed mental health providers (e.g., psychiatrist, psychologist, or social worker) in the Austin area who will be responsible for managing and training the lay mental health workers. The provider is responsible for training the lay mental health workers and ensuring that the intervention is delivered consistently and to high professional standards.

What is the Learning Cohort?

All libraries awarded funding through *Libraries for Health* are part of a collaborative learning cohort. RAND will work with you and the other libraries to establish a regular schedule (e.g., monthly) of formal collaboration and learning (through workshops, speakers, discussion, etc.). Due to pandemic-related safety concerns, these convenings will be held virtually initially, though we look forward to in-person convenings as we monitor the COVID-19 pandemic. Our hope is that relationships between libraries will be strengthened through these cohort meetings and lead to collaborations outside of the regularly scheduled times.

What is the Community of Practice?

We plan to open some of the meetings of the Learning Cohort to library staff across the five county-region that are not part of *Libraries for Health*, as these libraries also serve communities with unmet mental health needs. Although not formally part of *Libraries for Health*, we hope that they too will learn from the initiative, and their interests sparked to incorporate mental health approaches more centrally into their strategies.

What will be required of libraries?

First and foremost, you will be expected to work with RAND to tailor the *Libraries for Health* initiative specifically to your community and library facility. We will do this through a series of open and informal meetings and RAND will provide libraries with materials to generate ideas prior to discussions. During these meetings RAND will also discuss with libraries the content and activities they are most interested in exploring as part of the learning cohort, as well as types of data that are feasible to collect to inform the evaluation. It is then expected that you and your staff welcome and are hospitable to the lay mental health workers, actively participate in the learning cohort, and provide data for the evaluation (e.g., library staff participate in interviews with RAND researchers). In addition, libraries are required to provide semi-annual progress reports to St. David's Foundation.

Can things be changed mid-course?

Having implemented similar initiatives in the past, RAND anticipates there will be adaptations as we encounter challenges and "learn by doing." For example, adult patrons may not be coming to see the lay mental health worker, or the community needs of the lay mental health worker may not be a good fit with the original plan. Or, the learning cohort may not be meeting frequently enough, or be meeting too frequently. We will adapt and change as the initiative moves forward. However, it's critical that RAND knows and documents these changes and why they were made to help inform other communities that may be looking to replicate the *Libraries for Health* model.

How will L4H be evaluated?

The goal of the evaluation is to understand how to make the *Libraries for Health* initiative work best in the library setting, with an ultimate goal of improving community mental wellness. RAND plans to collect data from libraries as part of the evaluation, which may include metrics (e.g., the number of attendees at library activities focused on mental wellness) and perceptions (e.g., interviews or questionnaires with library staff and/or adult patrons). The evaluation plan will be based on how the libraries plan to implement *Libraries for Health* in their setting and by understanding the types of data that will be feasible to collect. We will also be collecting feedback from you within the cohort setting to understand how this shared learning experience might be improved for others in the future.