



Houston Health Care Council Features Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute Chief Operating Officer

The Partnership's Health Care Council hosted Phil Ritter, Chief Operating Officer of the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute for Texas as a guest speaker on Tuesday, June 28. The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute for Texas is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that provides objective policy research and development to improve mental health services in Texas. As COO, Mr. Ritter discussed supporting the implementation of policies and programs that help Texans obtain effective and efficient mental health care.

The organization's vision is for Texas to become the national leader in treating people with mental health needs, similar to how MD Anderson has become the central system for cancer treatment. Mr. Ritter discussed current areas of focus for the Institute including children, veterans, and those in the criminal justice system. For the upcoming Texas legislative session, the Institute will focus on three policy issues: prevention and early intervention for children predisposed to enter the school to prison pipeline; creation of a treatment system outside the criminal justice system for superutilizers; and the role of Texas' academic medical institutions in the mental health space. At academic medical institutions, the Institute wishes to address the shortage in workforce to diagnose and treat mental issues and the need for increased public-private community partnerships. The discussion concluded with an introduction of [Okay to Say](#), a movement designed to destigmatize mental health, allowing Texans and their neighbors to openly talk about issues surrounding mental health and its importance in their lives.

Mr. Ritter earned an undergraduate degree with honors in Urban Studies and a Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Maryland, as well as a Master of Public Affairs from the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

For more information about the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, visit <http://texasstateofmind.org/>.