

Speak Your Mind Texas aims to help communities treat at-risk youth

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Dr. Tim Bray of the University of Texas at Dallas Institute for Urban Policy Research, speaks in front of the packed crowd at a Speak Your Mind Texas event in Dallas. Gregory Castillo / Staff Photo

Speak Your Mind Texas, a community conversation event held at 16 locations across the state, hopes to better prepare those dealing with mental health issues and substance abuse among teens.

The Dallas meeting, held from 1:30 to 4 p.m. at the Dallas County Schools Training and Technology Center, brought together hundreds of parents, educators and members of the community. The packed room listened to an array of mental health professionals discuss ways to help at-risk teens with substance abuse and mental health issues.

“There’s 16 meetings like this held across the state,” said Dr. James Zoretic, regional medical director for the department of state health services. “The state legislature was given an extra \$300 million to address mental issues, some of the dollars are being used to get the message out to communities like these.

Attendees watched haunting video accounts of teens who dealt with thoughts of suicide and bullying.

For DeAnna Maxey-Tanner, 44, a victim of sexual abuse and former drug user, Speak Your Mind Texas is exactly the type of program that could have made a difference as an adolescent.

“We need to get more adolescents in programs like this,” said Maxey-Tanner. “If someone would’ve helped me I could have told them about the abuse I faced and maybe I could have gotten some help.”

Those looking for resources, more information or to get involved can visit: www.Speakyourmindtexas.org

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