

## **Addressing Rural Mental Health Disparities Through the Delphi Method: A Community-Engaged Approach**

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### **Abstract**

Rural communities often face persistent challenges in accessing adequate mental health care due to service shortages and societal stigma. This presentation explores the Delphi Method as a structured research approach to engage community stakeholders in identifying and prioritizing mental health needs. Based on a rural community needs assessment conducted across five South Texas counties, this study highlights the Delphi Method's effectiveness in fostering consensus among community members to drive ethical and impactful solutions. Participants will gain insight into the unique mental health barriers in rural areas, including provider shortages, geographic isolation, and stigma. They will also examine how the Delphi Method facilitates meaningful community engagement, ensuring that solutions align with local needs and values. At the end of the session, attendees will understand how to apply this approach to support rural mental health initiatives and enhance service accessibility.