

MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT

INVEST IN MENTAL HEALTH. TREATMENT WORKS.

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FIXING THE MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

The Problem

The overarching problem facing persons with mental illnesses and their families and communities in Illinois is that no agency has responsibility for insuring that persons with mental illnesses get appropriate and timely care in a coordinated manner designed to maximize the possibility of recovery, employ resources effectively and minimize the need for expensive and often harmful institutionalization. As a result, every year thousands of people with serious mental illnesses are discharged from state mental hospitals, state prisons, private hospitals and county jails without:

- a realistic assessment of whether they need community mental health services and, if so, a realistic assessment of what services they need
- a discharge plan which is reasonably expected to insure that they remain engaged in treatment.

Although large numbers of persons with mental illnesses become disconnected from services, deteriorate and require additional expensive interventions, no one is responsible and no one is held accountable. Illinois has many talented and committed mental health providers and administrators both in government and in the private sector. We need to give them the organizational and financial support required to create a mental health *system of care* in Illinois.

A Plan for Change

1. Create/designate a mental health authority with power to:
 - a. Define and regulate mental health services across systems.
 - b. Monitor, fund and enforce continuity of care in state-funded mental health services.
 - c. Delegate authority to appropriate local agencies to coordinate and enforce continuity of care.
2. Mental health system funding and structure
 - a. Keep new federal Medicaid funds in the community mental health system
 - b. Spend designated funds from the Hospital Assessment Tax to improve community mental health services.
 - c. Keep funds saved from the closure/downsizing of state mental health facilities in mental health system
 - d. Move persons in Institutes for the Mentally Disabled (IMD) nursing homes to the community mental health system with funds following the person
 - e. Create system of care oriented around recovery, responsibility and engagement
 - f. Create a system of care consistent with the National Consensus Statement on Mental Health Recovery
 - g. Involve persons with mental illnesses and their families in every aspect of system design and service planning
 - h. Insure adequate rates for care of indigent persons in private inpatient mental health facilities
 - i. Insure adequate rates for community mental health providers

3. Access to medication
 - a. The Department of Human Services (DHS) should take the lead in creating a state-wide formulary based upon up-to-date research and realistic measurements of costs and benefits
 - b. Create mechanisms to insure continuity of medications as person move through the mental health system
 - c. Insure access to psychotropic medications in prisons and jails.

4. Persons with mental illnesses in the criminal justice system
 - a. Provide targeted funding to DHS to support community mental health services for persons in mental health court diversion projects
 - b. Give responsibility for mental health services in state prisons to DHS
 - c. Provide targeted funding to DHS to support CIT teams
 - d. Provide targeted funding to DHS to support diversion of persons with mental illnesses from county jails
 - e. Provide targeted funding to DHS to support community mental health services for persons with mental illnesses leaving state prisons and county jails.
 - f. Include persons with mental illnesses in the statewide prison “re-entry” planning process.

5. Children and Adolescents
 - a. Fund Children’s Mental Health Partnership priorities.

6. Housing
 - a. Increase supported and assisted housing to keep persons with mental illnesses out of institutions/
 - b. Create partnerships with housing agencies and homeless advocates to meet the housing needs of persons with mental illnesses.
 - c. Include persons with mental illnesses leaving prisons and jails in the statewide housing plan.

7. Employment
 - a. Work with state and local government to create supported employment for persons with mental illnesses.