



## **Women In Government Mental Health Task Force Policy Recommendations**

*The following policy recommendations were developed by Women In Government's Mental Health Task Force and approved by the Board of Directors. The Task Force was formed in 2008, will meet annually, and consists of a national, bipartisan group of state legislators and state agency representatives.*

### **Task Force Mission Statement**

The Mental Health Task Force aims to promote recovery and resiliency through access to and the integration of primary and mental healthcare services, eliminating stigma and enhancing the quality of life for persons with mental illness across their lifespan. The Task Force supports an innovative approach by educating policymakers, the public, and other stakeholders, implementing evidence-based and early intervention and prevention strategies, enabling effective state policies and advocating for sound federal policies.

### **Statement Re: Access To & Acceptability of Mental Health Services**

States should create a roadmap for integrated mental health services that includes the removal of financial and healthcare barriers, educating the medical community, developing incentives for providers in rural and underserved areas, increasing utilization of school-based professionals to help address the needs of youth, diversifying service settings that promote access and acceptability, creating public/private partnerships, and providing housing and employment support.

### **Statement Re: Education & Awareness**

Mental illness is like any other disease—it is treatable, manageable, and recovery is possible. States should educate the public about mental illnesses to reduce stigma, by developing public awareness campaigns with the media, employers and in schools. States should educate policymakers that mental health services save lives and dollars.

### **Statement Re: Collaboration of Stakeholders**

A comprehensive approach to expand evidence-based mental health services includes the collaboration of federal, state, and local agencies and policymakers, and the involvement of the entire community to support persons living with mental illness. A myriad of stakeholders should be included in outreach efforts such as consumers and their families, faith-based institutions, the private sector, universities and students, the criminal justice system, health providers, seniors and veterans organizations.

### **Statement Re: Funding for Mental Health Services**

States should take innovative approaches to funding mental health programs that do not compromise the quality of services, such as applying for federal funding and other grant opportunities, strengthening workforce development, ensuring health insurance, Medicaid and Medicare coverage, and educating policymakers on the cost effectiveness and therapeutic value of mental health parity.

*For more information, please visit [www.womeningovernment.org](http://www.womeningovernment.org).*