



Mental Health & Mental Illness: A State Legislator's Role



Mental Health Fast Facts: General

- According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one in four adults, approximately 57.7 million Americans, experience some form of mental health disorder in a given year.
- One in 17 Americans live with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, major depression, or bipolar disorder, and about one in 10 children live with a serious mental or emotional disorder.¹
- Suicide is the eleventh-leading cause of death in the U.S. and the third-leading cause of death for people ages 10-24 years. More than 90 percent of those who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental disorder.²

General Fast Facts: Continued

- Treatments for serious mental illnesses today are highly effective. These illnesses can be managed, just like other conditions.
- With a combination of pharmacological and psychosocial treatments and supports, between 70 and 90 percent of individuals have significant reduction of symptoms and improved quality of life. ³
- One-half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14, three-quarters by the age of 24. Despite effective treatments, there are often long delays – sometimes decades – between the first onset of symptoms and when people seek and receive treatment. ⁴



Fast Facts: Vulnerable Populations

- The U.S. Surgeon General reports that 10 percent of children and adolescents in the U.S. suffer from serious emotional and mental disorders, which cause significant functional impairment in their day-to-day lives at home, in school, and with peers.⁵
- An estimated 5.2 million adults have co-occurring mental health and addiction disorders. Of adults using homeless services, 31 percent reported having a combination of these conditions.⁶
- Only 13 percent of children from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds receive mental health services, compared to 31 percent of Caucasian children who receive mental health services.⁷
- Twenty-one percent of low-income children and youths ages six through 17 have mental health problems that go untreated.⁸

Economic Costs of Mental Health

- In 2006, healthcare costs reached 16 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product; mental disorders contributed an estimated 6.2 percent of these healthcare costs.⁹
- According to the American Journal of Psychiatry, serious mental illnesses (SMIs), which afflict six percent of American adults, cost society \$193.2 billion in lost earnings each year.
- The consequences of untreated mental illness for the individual and society are staggering: unnecessary disability; unemployment; substance abuse; homelessness; inappropriate incarceration; suicide; and wasted lives. The economic cost of untreated mental illness is more than \$100 billion each year in the U.S.¹⁰



Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008

- According to the Department of Health and Human Services, the *Mental Health Parity and Addiction Act of 2008*:
 - ▣ Is a federal law that requires group health plans and health insurance issuers to ensure that financial requirements and treatment limitations applied to mental health or substance abuse disorder benefits are not more restrictive than the majority of requirements or limitations applied to all other medical or surgical benefits.
 - ▣ Does not apply to businesses that employ between two and 50 employees in a calendar year under any group health plan or insurance coverage.
 - ▣ Requires states to implement the requirements of this *Act* and any other future changes to the *Act* through legislation or regulations.



Actions for Legislators

- Demonstrate through support and action that there is no “health” without mental health, and recovery is the expected outcome for all individuals.
- Support statewide awareness campaigns and peer education and support programs.
- Support a comprehensive mental health benefit set, including evidence-based treatment interventions for mental health and co-occurring disorders, in private and public health plans.

Actions for Legislators: Continued

- Invest in data collection systems that allow for greater transparency and public accountability for meaningful outcomes.
- Provide incentives for behavioral health workforce development, including practicing in rural or underserved areas.
- Protect funding for mental health services and preventative programs to help improve access to quality mental health services for low-income, adults, families, and children who are in need of care.



Mental Health: Sample Legislation

- ❑ **Connecticut Public Act 99-284 (2002)** –Provides for equivalent coverage of mental illness in individual and group health plans
- ❑ **Florida House Bill 1477 (2007)** – Criminal Justice, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Reinvestment Grant Program to provide funding for mental health courts, diversion programs and reentry services for persons with mental illness



Sample Legislation: Continued

- **New Hampshire House Bill 1493 (2010)** – Establishes a committee to study comprehensive mental health and substance use disorders parity. The study would include a review of the cost and benefits associated with the possible expansion of mental health and substance use disorders coverage to citizens of New Hampshire.
- **New Jersey Senate 2583 (2005)** – Establishes the Special Needs Housing Trust Fund to finance special needs housing projects through bond proceeds issued by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority



Mental Health: Sample Legislation

- **New York Assembly Bill 5659 (2010)** – Directs the commissioner of mental health to prepare a report on the effectiveness of mental health parity.
- **North Carolina House Bill 1183 (2009)** – Requires group health plans that cover both medical and surgical benefits and mental health benefits to comply with the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008.



Sample Legislation: Continued

- ❑ **Virginia Senate Bill 706 (2010)** – Expands coverage for mental health and substance abuse services. Requires that group health insurance coverage issued to large employers provide mental health and substance use disorder benefits in parity with the medical and surgical benefits contained in the coverage, in accordance with the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008.
- ❑ **Washington House Bill 1088 (2007)** – Establishes comprehensive children’s mental health services with an emphasis on evidence-based practices



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