

2011-12 Legislative Session Wrap up

May 3, 2011

It appears that all of our calls and emails may have been successful in advocating for no cuts to mental health and substance abuse funding! This morning, the Senate and House agreed to fully fund adult substance abuse and mental health services. According to our sources, this means that there will be no cuts in FY 2011-2012. This is a stunning outcome considering that they were threatening to eliminate all outpatient mental health and substance abuse funding for adults.

Thanks to all of you who wrote or called. And we should all thank Representative Denise Grimsley for her efforts, which have led directly to this positive outcome. Her email is denise.grimsley@myfloridahouse.gov.

2011 Health and Human Services Legislative Priorities

In late 2010, members of the Health and Human Services Coalition of Palm Beach County Advocacy Initiative met to discuss the needs of the community and to establish priorities for the next legislative session. The priorities listed below were voted on and accepted for inclusion in the Health & Human Services Legislative Priorities Notebook (the "Green Book"). They were then presented to legislators and others at the Legislative Summit held on December 1, 2010. The Green Book contains priority issues related to Children and Families, Disabilities, Elder, Homeless/Hunger/Housing, and Mental Health/Substance Abuse.

Reversal of 2010 cuts in funding for mental health/substance abuse services

- Ensure a dedicated source of funding for mental health and substance abuse programs
- Early mental health screening for children
- Medicaid reimbursement for Certified Peer Mentors
- Ensure that FL Insurance Commissioner has the power to enforce Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
- Medicaid reform proposal relating to behavioral health
- Institution of evidence-based youth mentoring programs dealing with alcohol abuse

In 2010 the Legislature cut Millions of Dollars from the mental health and substance abuse services and now they are threatening to eliminate millions more. In 2010, the Legislature cut adult community mental health funding (\$6.3 million), children's mental health funding (\$3 million), and adult substance abuse services (\$9.4 million). The Legislature also shifted \$24.7 million of

community mental health and \$14 million of community substance recurring general revenue to non-recurring general revenue.

We are now learning from credible sources that our Florida elected officials are proposing further devastating cuts in funding for FY 2011-12 for mental health and substance abuse services. Please join other advocates and community members who are working to prevent further cuts to essential community services.

Policymakers don't turn their backs on people with cancer or diabetes, so why are people with mental illness and addiction different? They have organic brain diseases and deserve the same respect (and funding) as any other condition. Please contact your legislators to prevent major cuts in mental health and substance abuse services in our community! **Find your Senators and Legislators [HERE](#).**

The situation as we understand it:

The Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee has just proposed to:

- eliminate all non-Medicaid funding for mental health and substance abuse services. This proposal would eliminate all Department of Children and Families funding in crucial and essential community mental health and substance abuse services for children and adults.
- eliminate Baker Act funding (which hospitalizes and assesses people with serious mental illness who are a danger to themselves or others),
- eliminate state funded beds, and all state mobile crisis response services—affecting thousands of people needing emergency crisis care.
- eliminate millions of dollars for our residential and the outpatient system of care including medications.

The potential costs to our community of inadequately treated behavioral health conditions are huge:

- Increased costs of emergency rooms, general hospitals, county jails, the courts and other aspects of the criminal justice system.
- More people will need to be hospitalized and many are uninsured. Emergency room costs will result in \$millions in uncompensated care. Untreated behavioral health problems will lead to increased length of stay at hospitals.
- More people with untreated behavioral health problems will be incarcerated and/or homeless at huge cost to the taxpayer (Average jail cost \$86 to \$114 per day).
- Untreated and undertreated mental illness costs the United States \$105 billion in lost productivity and \$8 billion in crime and welfare expenditures each year. (National Mental Health Association, 2001).

It is essential that funding for community mental health and substance abuse not be further eroded and that last year's cuts be restored.

The Mental Health Association of Palm Beach County as a member of the Health and Human Services Coalition supports proposed new legislation in the 'Green Book' that would fully fund these services.

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Please stay tuned for more information about the progress of our advocacy efforts and write to you lawmaker expressing your concerns. **Please contact your legislators to prevent major cuts in mental health and substance abuse services in our community! Find your Senators and Legislators [HERE](#).**

When you write to you Senator and Legislators, here are some more relevant facts supporting our NO-CUTS position (from the 'Green Book'):

Funding for mental health and substance abuse community treatment services is cost-effective. Cutting funding for these services does not decrease state costs but simply shifts costs to other sectors of state and local government.

- Florida already ranks 49th lowest in the nation in per capita spending for mental health services and 35th in the nation in per capita spending for substance abuse services. (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010; NASMHPD, 2006).
- Florida is only meeting 57% of the need for mental health services for adults with a severe mental illness under 200% of poverty (\$21,660) and only 63% of the need for children with a serious emotional disturbance or those at risk for ED. (Department of Children & Families, 2010).
- Florida is only meeting 28.5% of the service need for adults with a substance abuse disorder and 40% of the needs to children for substance abuse care. (Department of Children & Families, 2010).
- When adjusted for inflation, the value of mental health and substance abuse funding is 48% less than 10 years ago.
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- DCF has requested restoration of the cuts and recurring general revenue in its LBR recognizing the need for these vital services.
- Research shows that lack of community mental health and substance abuse services increases demands on families, law enforcement, adult and juvenile criminal justice systems, emergency and other nonpsychiatric health care systems, school systems, the child welfare system, county social services, and other health and human service programs.
- The cost-benefit ratio for substance abuse treatment is 7:1. One dollar invested in treatment saves taxpayers \$7.14 in other related costs. (Department of Children & Families, 2004).
- Children whose parents abuse drugs and alcohol are almost three times more likely to be abused and four times more likely to be neglected than are children whose parents are not substance abusers. (Child Welfare League of America, 2009).

- Fifty percent of children and youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems have mental health problems. (Urban Institute, 2004).
- Over 10% of high school dropouts are attributable to mental health disorders (Breslau, 2008), placing long term financial burdens on society for their health care, income subsidy, and loss of taxable income.
- More than 50% of individuals in jails or prisons have a mental health disorder; 74% of these meet the criteria for substance dependence or abuse; 21% of persons in hospital beds are there because of mental illness, and 25% of homeless people suffer from a serious mental illness. (Department of Justice, 2006, NIMH, 2008). People with co-occurring disorders are 20 times more likely to be hospitalized and use emergency services if not treated for their behavioral health conditions. (Department of Human Services, 2000).
- Adult consumers with serious mental illness die 20-25 years younger than other Americans.
- Examination of the causes of death show that about 15-20 years of the disparity can be attributed to chronic diseases, such as cancer, heart and circulatory disorders, respiratory diseases, diabetes, or other long-term diseases prevalent in elderly Americans. (Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General, 2007).
- Treatment success rates for schizophrenia (60%), depression (greater than 80%) and panic disorder (70% to 90%) surpass those of other medical conditions such as heart disease (45% to 50%) and other chronic diseases. (National Institute of Mental Health, 2002).

These are important issues affecting everyone in our community. Please take action by contacting your legislators to let them know that you support these priorities. Find their contact information [HERE](#).

State of Florida Legislative Contacts

[Florida State Senate Budget Subcommittee on Health and Human Services Appropriations](#)

[Florida House of Representatives Health Care Appropriations Sub-Committee](#)