

MARCH 2015

MENTAL HEALTH

ISSUE:

Mental illnesses are treatable and people do recover, even from serious mental disorders. But untreated and undertreated mental illnesses result in serious repercussions for individuals, families and society as a whole. In Wisconsin mental illness impacts the number of people who die by suicide each year, graduate from high school, and fill our prisons and jails. It results in more lost work days than many chronic health conditions, adds cost to the long-term care system, and when it co-occurs with other chronic health conditions significantly increases mortality. Wisconsin must continue to develop its community-based, recovery-oriented, trauma-informed system of care which integrates mental health, substance use and primary care to ensure early identification and intervention.

BACKGROUND:

2014 saw unprecedented activity in the expansion of mental health services and supports in Wisconsin. However, additional investment is needed to ensure that we can achieve these goals and adequately evaluate success. Wisconsin should also expand successful program models for reducing incarceration and improving community reentry for people with mental illness. Stigma and discrimination that leads individuals to avoid treatment and support must also be addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increase in certified mental health peer specialists and parent peer specialists resulting in employment of people with mental illness and improvement in our care system.
- Extend Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) employment training for individuals with mental illness beyond the one year in the last budget.
- Expand Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS) to more regions of the state.
- Revise eligibility criteria for the Treatment Alternatives and Diversion Program (TAD) to allow it to also serve individuals with only mental illness.
- Fund evidence-based programs to reduce discrimination and stigma.
- Eliminate the requirement that parents of children with serious emotional disorders pay child support for out-of-home treatment.

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