

## MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET PRIORITIES

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### STATEMENT

Mental health is crucial to so much of life and ill health can result in serious repercussions for individuals, families and society as a whole. One in 5 Wisconsinites experience diagnosable symptoms in a year and more than 230,000 adults have a psychiatric disability, also called "serious mental illness."

- In Wisconsin over 700 people die by suicide each year – 60% of them had a depressed mood but only 52% of those who died had received mental health treatment at some point.
- Children with mental health conditions are less likely to graduate from high school than youth with other disabilities.
- These conditions tax criminal justice systems – 30% of men in prisons and upwards of 60% of those in county jails have diagnosable conditions.
- Over 50% of individuals in the long-term care system need services to address mental health or substance use conditions in addition to services for their other disabilities.
- Conditions cause more days of work loss and work impairment than many other chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma, and arthritis.
- Mental Health conditions often co-occur with other chronic health conditions, resulting in more sickness and death.
- Adults living with psychiatric disability die on average 25 years earlier than other Americans.

People do recover, even from the most serious conditions, when treatment and services are available.

### BACKGROUND

The Governor and Legislature made significant investments in mental health in the 2013-2105 biennium, recognizing the urgent need to expand access to community services and supports. While progress has been made, children and adults in Wisconsin still face many barriers to accessing community services and supports that promote recovery, and far more needs to be done to increase access and quality. It is a smart investment to fund a continuum of services including psycho social rehabilitation, housing, benefits counseling, and employment supports, because these help people maintain their independence and limit reliance on more costly and traumatizing crisis and inpatient services. This includes program models which support employment, peer-run respite services, reducing incarceration and improving the reintegration back to the community of adults and juveniles who are incarcerated. In addition, the Legislature has yet to significantly address the prejudice, discrimination and isolation that prevents recovery.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Survival Coalition recommends that DHS work with peers, advocates, providers, educators, and other stakeholders to develop a plan to address the shortage of mental health and substance use disorder professionals in Wisconsin. People with mental illness face significant challenges to receiving the mental health services they need because there are too few of mental health professionals in the state. **49** of Wisconsin's **72** counties are designated as "Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas".
- Survival Coalition recommends that DHS enhance the effectiveness of the Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) employment training programs by funding technical assistance and support to the counties running these programs. Increase the responsiveness of IPS programs to the employment training needs of individuals moving to work under the Medical Assistance Purchase Program (MAPP).
- Survival Coalition recommends to the Interagency Council on Homelessness (?) funding two Housing First pilots; one in South East Wisconsin and one in a less populated area of the state to encourage capacity-building of affordable, accessible housing for low-income individuals, many of whom are people with mental illness.
- Survival Coalition recommends that DHS create a state funded program to ensure access to mental health and substance use services in the language of Deaf Wisconsinites and which includes a statewide mental health coordinator, peer specialist program and clinical training and supervision.
- Survival Coalition recommends that DHS increase opportunities for paid in-home respite for families who have a child with a serious emotional condition.
- Survival Coalition recommends continued expansion of Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS) to additional regions of the state. OARS has been an effective means of reintegrating inmates needing services back into the community and reducing recidivism.

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