2019 - 2021 Legislative Platform
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Increase Access to Effective Mental Health Care

- Illinois must invest in mental health services and fund improved access to an extensive array of mental health treatment and supports.
- Illinois must address the need for community-based residential services.
- Illinois must provide sufficient acute care mental health inpatient beds.
- Reimbursement rates must be high enough to ensure both quality and quantity of mental health services.
- Illinois must create a revenue system sufficient to fund mental health programs without reducing funding levels for existing services. The best opportunity at this time is passage of the proposed Fair Tax Amendment on the ballot in November 2020.
- Illinois must expand outreach to disadvantaged individuals to ensure maximum participation in benefit programs to which they are entitled.
- Illinois must implement an effective system of tele-psychiatry and other mental health services.
- All mental health programs must be delivered without regard to a person’s race, ethnicity, religion, economic status, gender or gender identity.
- Illinois must create a single prior authorization form for psychiatric services for use by private insurance carriers, Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) and Medicaid fee-for-service providers.
- Illinois must create an “every door is the right door” system so that every mental health agency is able to provide information for all mental health services, public and private, in the state.

Medicaid

- Coordinated care programs developed as a result of Medicaid reform must provide a comprehensive array of effective mental health services that promote recovery and community inclusion and which are based on individual needs.
- Illinois must raise Medicaid reimbursement rates enough to significantly increase the number of psychiatrists and other mental health professionals who will treat people with mental illnesses.
• Illinois must raise Medicaid reimbursement rates enough and take other measures to insure that all public and private psychiatric hospital accept Medicaid for all their mental health programs.

• Illinois must ensure that Medicaid fully pays for all the medications prescribed for patients with mental illnesses.

• Illinois must restore Psychiatric Leadership Grants for Community Mental Health Centers or provide equivalent funding through other means.

• Medicaid reimbursement rates for psychiatric services must at least be equal to the reimbursement rates for those same services at Federally Qualified Healthcare Centers.

**Community Mental Health Programs**

• Illinois must ensure adequate and stable funding to meet community needs for public mental health services, including acute care inpatient, longer-term care, and psychosocial rehabilitation - especially for those who are homeless and who are not enrolled in Medicaid.

• Illinois must create a *statewide* system of 24-hour crisis centers so that first responders have an alternative to taking a person in mental health crisis to an emergency room or jail.

**Private Insurance**

• Illinois must ensure full implementation of and compliance with mental health and substance abuse parity legislation at the state and federal levels.

• Private health care plans must provide a readily available array of effective, evidence-based mental health services.

**Medications**

• Illinois must ensure flexible and timely access to a comprehensive array of mental health medications based on individual need in all health plans and community mental health programs.

• Illinois must end step or “fail first” requirements for prescription medications.

**Promote an Integrated Delivery System**

• Integration of expert mental health, addictions primary care and other medical services must be the norm in all health care settings.

• The integrated delivery system must address the individual’s social determinants of health.

• The integrated delivery system must include changes in Illinois statutes to allow for increased participation by family members and other caregivers who are supporting a person living with a mental illness.
Maximize Federal Financial Support for Mental Health Care

- Illinois must aggressively pursue federal funding opportunities and revenue.
- Illinois must pursue the best in mental health service delivery, for example – development of the Section 1115 Waiver and implementation of evidence-based practices.

Strengthen the Mental Health Workforce

- Illinois must actively recruit and train psychiatrists and all other healthcare professionals in effective and culturally competent treatment interventions for children and adults with serious mental illness.
- Illinois must ensure that primary care physicians and their staff understand and recognize mental illnesses well enough to make appropriate referrals.
- Illinois needs a strategic plan to significantly increase the number of mental health professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, advance practice nurses and others, so that adequate mental health services are available in all areas of the state.
- This strategic plan should include such things as strengthening and increasing the capacity of training and education programs leading to licensure in these areas, tuition support and loan forgiveness for persons enrolling in these programs, improving licensure reciprocity with other states, and other similar measures.
- Illinois must increase the number and placement of, and financial support for Consumer Recovery Support Specialists, and work with other states to provide licensure reciprocity for persons with this license.

Eliminate Disparities in Mental Health Care

- Illinois must continue to incorporate cultural and linguistic competence standards in requirements for mental health funding, with a focus on reducing geographic and other disparities among racial and ethnic groups.
- Illinois must begin to collect and share standardized statewide data collection and public posting of meaningful performance, process and outcome measures, including data by race and ethnicity and geographic regions.
- Illinois must continue to promote data sharing across related systems to improve the continuity of services as well as examining the effectiveness of interventions and programs.

Improve the Mental Health of Children and Youth

- Elementary and secondary teachers must receive training such as “Ending the Silence” or “Mental Health First Aid” or take coursework in mental health awareness to better recognize, understand and teach students with mental illness or serious emotional disturbance.
- Screening, assessment and early intervention of mental health conditions for children and youth must be an integral part of health care delivery systems.
• Illinois must cover treatment of first episode psychosis through Medicaid and Medicare and require private insurers to cover it as well. Illinois must successfully implement the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act (PA 101-251) and the Children and Young Adult Mental Health Crisis Act (PA 101-0461)

• Illinois must provide effective home and community-based services that help children and youth succeed at home, in school and in their communities.

• Illinois must successfully implement the Custody Relinquishment Prevention Act to end the practice of forcing parents to relinquish custody in exchange for treatment. If the legislation does not eliminate the practice completely, the law must be amended and strengthened.

• Illinois must identify and divert youth with serious mental health conditions from detention to appropriate community treatment.

Provide Housing for People Living with Mental Illness

• Illinois must significantly expand and consistently fund affordable permanent supportive housing for people living with serious mental illness to meet the preexisting demand and the additional demand created by settlement of Illinois Court Cases.

• Illinois must provide a dedicated source of funding for affordable housing and individualized supportive services to deflect or discharge people with mental illness from institutional placement who do not need that level of care.

• Given that an estimate of 35-50% of homeless individuals have a mental illness, Illinois must fund homeless assistance programs that can help adults stabilize in community settings.

• It is estimated that 15% of individuals leaving jails and prisons have a severe mental illness. In order to avoid repeated hospitalization and/or corrections involvement, these individuals must have adequate wrap around services.

• The supply of permanent supportive housing must be sufficient to meet the needs of all age groups, including seniors fully funded.

Facilitate Employment for People Living with Mental Illness

• Illinois’ evidenced-based, recovery-oriented Individual Placement and Support program must be fully funded.

• There must be sufficient supportive employment program (such as IPS) capacity to meet the need in all areas of the state.
End the Criminalization of Mental Illness

- Illinois must divert people with serious mental illness from the criminal justice system to appropriate community treatment and supportive housing. Appropriate treatment coupled with supportive housing reduces incarceration and recidivism.

- Illinois must expand mental health courts to jurisdictions that do not have them and ensure that each mental health court has sufficient capacity so that all defendants with a mental illness can be adjudicated in a mental health court in the person’s local court jurisdiction.

- Illinois must enact legislation to expand mental health court reciprocity across jurisdictions.

- Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for police officers must become community norms. Illinois must assume more of the financial burdens local police departments face when sending officers to CIT training.

- The curriculum at the Illinois Police Academy must be expanded to include the full CIT curriculum.

- The treatment resources available to mental health courts and other jail diversion programs must be sufficient to meet the treatment objectives specified by the court.

- Local institutions, governmental entities and community stakeholders should work together for community-based problem solving.

- Illinois must expedite the transfer of NGRI (not guilty by reason of insanity) and UST (unfit to stand trial) individuals to appropriate treatment.

- Illinois must ensure enrollment (or automatic re-enrollment) in federal SSI/SSDI, Medicaid and other benefits upon release from jail or prison for eligible individuals with serious mental illness.

- Processes to do this should begin prior to release.

- Illinois must ensure that all persons in jail or prison receive adequate mental health services to ensure recovery.

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