

## Behavioral Health: Community Mental Health/Behavioral Health Services

### Position Statement approved by One Voice: November 14, 2008

**Issue/Concern:** State policies and funding levels limit the availability, level of care and duration of behavioral health services (mental health and substance abuse treatment). For adults with mental illness, statewide funding levels are insufficient to meet the needs of even the "priority population," which includes those with the "Big 3" diagnoses of schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, or major depression. Inadequate support services, such as substance abuse treatment and housing, support an infrastructure built upon a crisis care model rather than a prevention and early intervention model.

The disconnection between the level of funding that a community receives and its need for services is most pronounced in the state's urban centers. The disconcerting outcomes come with a high price -- the Harris County Jail and Juvenile Probation Department have become the safety net providers of care for many adults and children with mental health and substance abuse disorders..

### Specific Policy Recommendation(s):

- ★ Increase funding for mental health services for adults and children and revise allocation formula based upon the demand for services to expand the availability and scope of community mental health services and the levels of care with more flexible policies;
- ★ Increase access to community-based substance abuse treatment services, including those to people with a primary diagnosis of mental illness;
- ★ Provide local flexibility and additional resources for on-going and support services (such as substance abuse treatment and housing) and after-care services that enable persons with mental health and substance abuse disorders to live in the least restrictive environment that is appropriate to their needs.

**How does this issue/recommendation relate to prevention and early intervention or maximizing federal funds for health and human services?** Investing in pre-crisis, ongoing community mental health and substance abuse services helps to keep people stable and prevent them from deteriorating and utilizing far more costly and less efficient crisis care. Expansion of the adult mental health benefit and/or implementation of the new state option of home and community-based services for certain persons with mental illness may draw federal Medicaid match for state General Revenue, such as Crisis Care funding, that is not currently matched by federal funds.

### Supporting Facts/Research/Resources:

- ★ Harris County spends about \$10.40 per person for publicly funded outpatient mental health services. The national average in 2003 was \$62.89 per person for similar outpatient mental health services. (HCMHMRA, 2008.) With the largest population and number of uninsured persons of any county in Texas, Harris County still receives among the lowest per capita rates of state community mental health funding.
- ★ To support the position that the Harris County Jail has become the provider of last resort for many who cannot access services in the community, a report of inmates in the Harris County Jail on April 25, 2008 found that **25 percent of all inmates at the Harris County Jail were identified as having a mental illness (compared to 10.2 percent of the general population in Texas (SAMHSA, 2006.)**
- ★ Even though last session the Legislature increased funding for substance abuse treatment in the criminal justice system, it reduced funding for substance abuse treatment in the community.

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