



NAMI Tennessee

THE STATE'S VOICE ON MENTAL ILLNESS

ISSUE: 5% Increase for Community Behavioral Health Providers

BACKGROUND:

The TennCare Partners Program for behavioral health began in 1996. Since that time Department of Mental Health contracts with Community Mental Health Agencies (CMHA), the primary provider network for public mental health services, have had *no funding increases*¹.

This shortfall comes at a time when science has produced effective, evidence-based services that can restore people with severe mental illness or substance use disorders to recovery and full participation in the community. These funds underwrite cost-effective services such as peer services that reach persons with severe mental illness in their homes and other locations in the community. **We need to be able to bring science into service.**

- ◆ ***The cost of operating a CMHA has increased considerably since 1996.*** Medical inflation has skyrocketed by 44%. Increases such as insurance coverage, employee benefits, gasoline, utilities and wages far outstrip 1996 prices.
- ◆ ***The demand for behavioral health services in our state also continued to increase.*** Because of this funding shortfall, case loads are higher and clients receive less attention. Veterans and military families are projected to increase stresses on an already critically overwhelmed system.
- ◆ ***Recruiting and retaining and qualified staff is increasingly difficult.*** There are many situations where CMHA staff have taken on extra duties required by new programs such as TennCare Partners, Mental Health Safety Net and disaster response. CMHA positions are not as attractive as those available in the private sector.
- ◆ ***We strongly support the 5% budget improvement request*** (\$3.65 million) as requested by Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. How many businesses can operate in 2008 on 1996 income?

RECOMMENDATION:

Support the DMHDD request for a 5% increase to community behavioral health providers. It is absolutely necessary if the provider network is to remain competitive with wages and meet the requirements of TennCare while at the same time adequately serving people with mental illness or substance use disorders.

NAMI Tennessee: National Alliance on Mental Illness

Someone you love has a mental illness.
That's why there's NAMI.

www.namitn.org

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¹ Community Mental Health Service Providers received one 2.5% increase from TennCare in 2005. That increase did not affect contracts for support services that are critical to help persons with severe mental illness recover in the community.