

KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

.....*Speaking with one voice to meet the critical needs of people with mental illness*

Support the Governor's Recommendations for Behavioral Health

Statement/Position: The Coalition supports the Governor's Recommendations for Behavioral Health for the FY 22 Kansas Budget.

\$5.0 million for Statewide Mobile Response & Stabilization: Provides community-based interventions and individualized care planning for systemwide crisis response. This is major priority for both Mental Health Task Force Reports and a pillar for modernizing our behavioral health continuum of care. This is a key to reducing the burden on local law enforcement by providing an important answer to the needs for people in crisis with nowhere to go. This funding will support a modernized CMHC network, providing reimbursement for services required for the Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers (CCBHC) funded by current federal grants and proposed for statewide implementation under HB 2160.

The Governor's Budget
Recommendations include Mobile
Crisis Response

\$3.0 million for Family Crisis Response and Support: Provides any child/youth up to 18 in the community, or any young adult (ages 18 – 21) who is a foster care alum who is experiencing behavioral or psychiatric emergency with rapid, community-based crisis intervention services, regardless of health care insurance status. Whether inpatient or outpatient, Medicaid or private pay, parents must be able to access the services they need at times and locations that work for families. This is imperative to keep children at home and in school, which reduces the need for expensive out-of-home placements - but most importantly, keeps families together. When adults in the family access housing, employment, health and substance use treatment, children need fewer long-term interventions.

The effects on families from COVID-19 will be felt far into the future – open help lines for families could relieve pressure and link people to the assistance they need, whether it is financial assistance or counseling (see 988 below). We commend the agency's work to expand access to parent support and training, as well as adding capacity to the Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility network. The Family First program in the Dept. for Children and Families has also been a positive investment for improving access to needed services for many families.

\$0.6 million for Community Integration Housing First Program: KDADS is to be commended for obtaining federal emergency housing funds during the pandemic. A federal Housing First grant expired in 2019. Please support this enhancement to fill a gap in our current continuum of care. It is very important for people transitioning from hospitalization or nursing facilities as well as homeless shelters. In the past, the agency has utilized resources through grants and Medicaid

options using the principles of Housing First. These priorities were recommended by the Mental Health Task Force Report to maximize federal funding and alternative housing opportunities.

Housing First is a homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. This approach is guided by the belief that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as their own healthcare, getting a job, budgeting, or attending to substance use issues. It is a key component of many veteran's housing programs. Supportive housing is an evidence-based intervention that combines non-time-limited affordable housing assistance with wrap-around supportive services for people experiencing homelessness, as well as other people with disabilities. Stable housing helps vulnerable Kansans achieve recovery and avoid rehospitalization.

\$2.0 million for CMHC specialized services in Nursing Facilities for Mental Health: Both Mental Health Task Force Reports recommended funding services provided by community mental health centers for residents of nursing facilities for mental health to provide treatment and coordination of care. Current NFMH rates are not sufficient to provide mental health treatment and individuals need care coordination to facilitate improvement of their conditions and transition to the community. There are excellent examples of this work provided at a small scale, such as the work with Iroquois Center for Human Development (Greensburg CMHC) and their transitional living apartments – but we must fund broader access to these services to assure individuals are served in the least restrictive setting.

\$2.0 million for EHR Support and Maintenance: We continue to support the long past due investments in the electronic medical records systems for the agency and its facilities. Funding technical modernization rarely grabs headlines, but we know how important this is for maximizing care coordination, care quality oversight and billing from third parties.

Regional Bed Capacity Contracts: The Coalition commends the 2020 Plan to End the Moratorium on admissions at Osawatomie State Hospital and urges the agency to expedite the plan to increase in bed capacity through regional contracts. Funds are allocated to remodel portions of Osawatomie State Hospital and add beds, but this is on hold due to the current pandemic. If regional beds are not achievable through private partnerships, we encourage a strategy to establish the capacity with one or more additional state hospital patient units. Ultimately, the current plan is only an initial step toward making the improvements that are necessary in our state hospitals, including workforce investments and certifying all or most of the beds at OSH by upgrading the facilities.

The bottom line: Kansas has commissioned reports recommending strategies to improve behavioral health care in Kansas and must implement those recommendations if we are to see progress. The Governor's budget enhancement recommendations for FY 22 will help to achieve the goals of those reports.