



# IMPROVING ACCESS TO MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE FOR ALL IOWANS — ESPECIALLY CHILDREN

In Iowa, more than 120,000 people are living with a serious mental illness, and 80,000 youth in our state have been diagnosed with a severe emotional disorder. Schools are seeing staggering numbers of children with anxiety, depression, and behavior disorders. Iowa must invest in solutions now to ensure all our neighbors have equitable and fair access to quality mental health care.

At LSI, we support children and families affected by mental illness through our two residential treatment centers, community-based therapy, disability services, and our Psychiatric Medical Institute for Children (PMIC). We also wrap services around families through our in-home behavioral health services for youth and our support and training for foster parents who often accept children with significant mental health needs.

Providers like LSI must receive adequate reimbursement for mental health services. Currently, reimbursement for treatment is inconsistent, under-reimbursed, or often nonexistent. The state does not cover the true cost of care for people utilizing Medicaid for mental health care. Current reimbursement rates do not allow us to recruit and retain enough quality mental health care professionals — social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, therapists — to meet demand.

## Iowa Mental Health by the Numbers

**1 in 5**

teenagers in Iowa have a serious mental illness (NAMI)

**70%**

of youth in state or local juvenile justice systems have a mental illness (NAMI)

**882**

children are on the waiting list for the Children's Mental Health waiver

**56%**

of Iowa adults report at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) and

**56%**

report more than four ACEs.

People with four or more ACEs are

**2.5 times**

more likely to report limits in activities because of physical, mental, or emotional struggles (Central Iowa ACEs Coalition)

LSI supports the initial recommendations of the Children's System State Board, especially the effort to create — and adequately fund — a continuum of mental health services, from crisis response to community-based services, such as therapy and in-home behavioral health treatment.

No family should have to wait months or years for access to services. Iowa must work to eliminate the waiting list for the Children's Mental Health waiver. The CMH waiver creates access to services for children with a serious emotional or behavioral disturbance and helps to prevent out-of-home placement. But almost 900 kids are waiting to be assessed.

The Children's System State Board has recommended the wait list be eliminated by July 2020. This requires an investment. LSI urges you to fund this effort in order to take a critical first step toward addressing the children's mental health crisis in Iowa.



**LSI applauds Iowa's increased efforts to strengthen mental health systems and supports, particularly for children. However, as the need intensifies, funding must accompany good intentions in order to make an impact.**



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