

Talking Points

The Need for Safe and Affordable Housing with Wrap-Around Services for People with Mental Illness:

- Safe and affordable housing programs which incorporate recovery oriented support services are crucial to successful recovery from a mental illness within the community setting.
- The lack of availability to housing remains a tremendous challenge for adults with serious mental health disorders, especially housing with recovery services.
- The reduction of Office of Mental Health hospital beds make community-based housing programs with wrap around support services all the more important.
- Funding for current housing resources such as Community Residences, Apartment Treatment Programs and Supportive Housing has remained flat for many years, while the need for resources to address the complex and increasing needs of the individuals served has grown.
- Because the funding has not kept up with increase in cost of living since 1990, programs are operating at 43% below where they should be today. To restore these crucial housing resources, 92.9 million dollars is needed to replace the funds lost to flat funding.
- To ensure continuity and quality of care it is essential that housing providers are able to properly compensate the employees who care for those in housing programs.

The Need to Re-Fund Kendra's Law and Make it Permanent

- The funding for *Kendra's Law*, New York State's Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) program is due to expire in June 2017.
- *Kendra's Law* aims to prevent some of the biggest concerns for individuals living with a mental illness and their families including long inpatient hospital stays, incarceration, homelessness and suicide.
- *Kendra's Law* helps ensure that those with the most serious and persistent types of mental illness have access to the limited psychiatric services available.
- Multiple studies have demonstrated Kendra's Law success in reducing hospitalizations, homelessness, suicide attempts, arrests and incarcerations.
- This is why we urge New York to not only re-fund this successful program but make it permanent.

Continued Reinvestment in Community Services

- The methods for delivering mental health services in New York State are changing as the number of hospital beds dedicated to treating psychiatric disorders is shrinking. NAMI-NYS has several concerns about this transition.
- Though NAMI-NYS does not want to see beds reduced, we strongly believe that the savings from this reduction be reinvested into services that would afford those living with a mental health disorder the best opportunity to advance their recovery in a community setting.
- NAMI-NYS firmly believes no one should have to travel more than an hour to access emergency and crisis psychiatric care.
- We want to see broad community services that include all the resources needed to advance recovery from all types of mental illness.
- We want to see continued investments in Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams and coordinated specialty care early-intervention programs such as the New York State's Office of Mental Health's OnTrackNY.

Improve the Criminal Justice – Mental Illness Interface

- One of the reasons NAMI-NYS is so concerned about the reduction of psychiatric hospital beds is that correctional institutions have replaced hospitals as the destination for too many people living with a serious and persistent mental illness. More than 60% of those incarcerated have a diagnosable mental illness. We must do better to divert people with mental illness from jails and into treatment and improve interactions between police and people with mental illness.
- NAMI-NYS supports the expansion of Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) which would save lives, reduce harm, and result in better outcomes for the individuals and the police.
- Mental Health Courts (as well as drug and veteran courts) are crucial in generating the most successful outcomes for people living with a mental illness. We must continue to expand the use of these courts.
- NAMI-NYS strongly supports reforming the use of solitary confinement capping the amount of time someone serves in solitary and restricting the use of solitary confinement for juveniles under the age of twenty-one and any person with a mental illness or a developmental disability.
- It's embarrassing that New York is one of two states in the country that still charges sixteen year olds as an adult. New York must raise the age of criminal responsibility.
- Since a large portion of the population of the correctional system has a mental illness it is of the utmost importance that we improve mental health treatment and family engagement in the correctional and forensic system.

Support the New York State Office of Mental Health's Research Institutes: New York State Psychiatric Institute and Nathan Kline Institute

- Research into finding the causes of devastating brain disorders--and eventually figuring out how to treat and prevent them--has always been a top priority of NAMI-NYS.

- According to the World Health Organization, four of the top ten causes of disability worldwide are severe mental illnesses. Major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and obsessive-compulsive disorder account for an estimated 20 percent of total disability resulting from all diseases and injuries.
- As most of the disease factors of causes of death are declining, suicide rates continue to climb. One of the main reasons for this is that investments in psychiatric disorders are not on par with other diseases.
- Based on the National Institute of Health's own estimates, for every research dollar spent, fifteen cents is allocated to AIDS, ten cents on cancer, two cents on heart disease, and less than one cent on schizophrenia and other severe mental illnesses.
- New York is fortunate to have two of the leading research institutes in the world right here in our own state and funded by the New York Office of Mental Health: New York State Psychiatric Institute (NYSPI) and Nathan Kline (NKI) Institute; we must continue to expand investments in these institutions which are dedicated to saving lives.

Support Veteran's Mental Health

- Supporting those who have served our country must be a top priority. We call on the State to assist veterans on all issues, but specifically those relating to mental health; our veterans deserve nothing less.
- NAMI-NYS wants to see continued funding to expand the Joseph O'Dwyer veteran peer-to-peer program.
- We must increase funding for mental health and medical treatment for veterans with serious mental illness. Ensure that monies designated for mental health and substance abuse treatment for veterans are allocated to Veterans Medical Centers, Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) and other programs serving veterans with mental illness and utilized for the treatment of these individuals.