



Question for Statewide Candidates

**If elected, what will
you do to support our
mental health system to be
as responsive as possible to
adults, children and families
in Mississippi who are
affected by mental illness?**

Response from Candidate for Secretary of State Johnny Dupree

Inclusion is a key reason I've devoted my life to public service. As a teenage father who grew up in a single parent home, I know what it feels like to be counted out and it's not a good feeling; discouraging at times, quite honestly. However, my circumstances challenged me to determine at an early age if I would concede to others perception of me or define my own voice. I chose to have a voice, and as Mayor of Hattiesburg, I vowed to ensure the voices of fellow Mississippians were heard too, especially our most vulnerable community members.

Hattiesburg would not have become the first city in Mississippi to create a behavioral health court; the first to implement a program to end Veteran homelessness; and the only city in Mississippi to hire a homeless coordinator had we refused to engage the very people we were trying to help and invite them to be a part of the policy-making process from the beginning. How can you help someone, if you don't have a clear understanding of what they are up against?



As Secretary of State, I will continue to forge strong partnerships with mental health agencies statewide to not only protect the voting rights of those battling mental illnesses, but increase their access to the polls, and strengthen measures to protect their privacy. We have to remember, we are all in this together. Under my leadership, everyone will be encouraged to help create and implement policies that would design a better future for the current generation and the generations to come.