



Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc.

534 S. Kansas, Suite 330, Topeka, KS 66603
Telephone (785) 234-477 Fax (785) 234-3189
www.acmhck.org

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STATEMENT

For further information:

Contact: Kyle Kessler
(785) 234-4773 or
(785) 608-3254
kkessler@acmhck.org

Community Mental Health Centers Announces Mental Health 2020 Proposal

Citing strong concerns about funding cuts to the community mental health system and the need for other system enhancements, the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas is proposing to state policy makers an initiative that will be known as **Mental Health 2020**.

Kansas has long depended on the Community Mental Health Center (CMHC) system to treat patients with the severest mental illnesses. Locally operated and administered CMHCs covering all 105 counties provide an array of community-based mental health services. The State once supported the mental health safety net at a much higher level that has eroded significantly over the last decade.

The collaboration of CMHCs with other systems of care is crucial to the health and welfare of Kansans. CMHCs are at the intersection of community hospitals, physicians' clinics, and other health and human services providers but also work with local law enforcement, community corrections, and schools. Whether responding to natural disasters such as tornadoes or workplace violence, CMHCs are integral to community care and treatment.

The Association of Community Mental Health Centers is proposing The Mental Health 2020 Initiative. The initiative will restore funding balance to the CMHC System as well as a workforce development program to increase the number of psychiatrists who will be trained and incentivized to stay in Kansas. Lastly, the Association requests funding for the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) to invest in community-based crisis stabilization and treatment services similar to the successful programs commenced in Kansas City with Rainbow Services, Inc. and in Wichita with the Community Crisis Center.

“Our system of care has been neglected for far too long and we are looking for our state leaders to have implemented great vision by 2020,” said David Elsbury, President of the Association of Community Mental Health Centers and CEO of KANZA Mental Health and Guidance, Inc.

The Association proposes a total of \$20 million, with \$11 million in FY 2018 and an additional \$9 million in FY 2019, to restore the safety net grants program back to the FY 2007 level. Mental Health Reform funding that was implemented in coordination with the closure of hundreds of state mental health hospital beds has eroded significantly over time. When the State originally cut funding, it was in combination with an increase in Medicaid services. The State cuts have gradually reduced services to the point CMHCs lost the flexibility to serve other patients adequately. As a result, the restoration of the State’s original commitment to Mental Health Reform is essential.

“Mental health is about brain health and emotional health, as a part of overall individual and population health. Our work helps to sustain families, the Kansas workforce, and Kansas communities” said Jessie Kaye, President and CEO of Prairie View, Inc.

The Association proposes funding for enhancing the psychiatric residency training program in the Department of Psychiatry in the School of Medicine at the University of Kansas Medical Center. The addition of new psychiatrists each year by 2020 would place an emphasis on rotations at state mental health hospitals and CMHCs. Kansas will gain a head start in retaining these vital treatment providers in our state. In the first year, \$550,000 in funding for an additional four residents for FY 2018 will gradually increase to the proposed resident and funding levels by FY 2020.

Lastly, the Association proposes funding for FY 2018 to sustain the current crisis stabilization programs in the Kansas City Metro and Wichita areas and also establish other regional community-based programs. The current programs have been successful in creating a “port of calm” for persons who have had an interaction with law enforcement as a result of mental illness and substance or alcohol abuse. As a result, hospital admissions have been reduced and referral to appropriate community-based services have occurred.

Kyle Kessler, Executive Director for the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, said, “At a time when the need for mental health treatment is increasing, the system in Kansas must keep pace with funding for services, the psychiatry workforce, and the newly formed Kansas solution of creating crisis stabilization centers for intermediate inpatient care to supplement the work done at state mental health hospitals.”

The Association believes that the CMHCs’ commitment to indefinite sustainability needs to be met by its partners in state government. The recognition that CMHCs are the safety net for persons with mental health needs is underscored by preventing unnecessary emergency room visits and admissions to higher cost inpatient settings such as community hospitals and state mental health hospitals as well as other high cost alternatives including incarceration and engagement with the child welfare system.

“Mental Health 2020 is a health and human services initiative that will improve the lives of families and the quality of the Kansas work force. Our goal is to have the best mental health treatment system in the United States and that goal is unwavering,” said Elsbury.