

HOUSE BUDGET PROPOSAL TALKING POINTS
WHEN COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

INTRODUCTION

The House budget proposal seeks to restore the Governor's proposed cuts to education on the backs of vulnerable populations including individuals with mental illness and/or those facing challenges of addiction. The following cuts are included in the House budget proposal:

Behavioral Health Services Initiative (BHSI) was cut by \$4.3 million (8.26%). BHSI provides both mental health and drug and alcohol treatment for individuals with a low income who do not qualify for Medicaid. If the House proposal is implemented, the BHSI budget will have been cut by \$9.5 million since fiscal year 2007-2008, a 16.6% cut over four years.

In addition, the House proposal cuts \$4.322 million from the state mental health base dollars. While this cut is less than 1%, when combined with the BHSI decrease, the overall impact on community based services is significant – a loss of over \$8.5 million.

The House budget proposal cuts \$9.6 million (12.9%) from the Governor's proposed budget from Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP). Federal regulations require that the Medical Assistance Program assure that transportation is available for individuals to access needed services. Demand has continued to grow for the county based MATP program, which is crucial for many Pennsylvanians who have no other options to go to medical appointments.

The House proposal also makes cuts to Medicaid funding based on the supposition that a percentage of individuals currently receiving health care services are not financially eligible – a supposition that has no concrete facts to support it.

WHO ARE YOU – Briefly describe who you are and how the House proposed cuts will impact you

- I am a consumer who ...
- I am a certified peer specialist who ...
- I work at the Mental Health Association ...
- I am a PA Mental Health Consumers' Association member
- I am a NAMI member
- I am an advocate who ...
- I am a parent/family member of ...
- I volunteer at ...
- I work at ...

DISCUSSION POINTS -- Use the any of the following information in your communication with legislators to build a case for the need to restore funding for behavioral health services

- Individuals can and do recover from mental illness and/or addictions
- Recovery can lead to independence, employment, and participation as a vital member of the community
- Community services make recovery possible

When denied services that support recovery, individuals are far more likely to use other services that are more costly and less effective such as corrections, homeless shelters, and emergency rooms. Individuals seeking services for the first time will be turned away – community programs have documented an increased number of people seeking treatment because they are without insurance; are veterans of the recent wars; or are experiencing significant anxiety over economic instability.

WHAT ARE YOU ASKING LEGISLATORS TO DO

- Vote NO on the House Budget Proposal as currently written.
- Restore funding for BHSI, mental health base dollars, MATP, and Medicaid to the levels proposed by the Governor.
- Include a portion of the surplus dollars to achieve a budget that will not put vulnerable populations at risk.

Please Keep NAMI Southwestern PA Informed of Your Legislative Outreach!

Contact Sharon Miller at smiller@namiswpa.org or 1-888-264-7972 to share what you've accomplished.