



Invest in New Jersey's Well-being:

Adequately Support the Community-based Behavioral Health System!

New Jersey's community-based behavioral health system is highly effective in improving the quality of life, and often saving the lives, of children and adults throughout New Jersey who have mental illnesses, substance use disorders, intellectual/developmental disabilities and co-occurring disorders.

New Jersey must invest in community-based behavioral health services to ensure the sustainability of a system that is weakening under intense pressure. Community-based services are cost-effective. They are significantly less expensive than institutional care and prevent the need for such care. Investing sufficiently in community-based services is the right thing to do for the state's fiscal viability, as well as the health and well-being of New Jersey residents. Toward that end, NJAMHAA calls on the Legislature and Administration to do the following:

Budget Priorities

Improve capacity and sustainability for adult and children's services:

- Support the \$25 million supplemental funding proposed by the Legislature as a safety net for FY2019 (S2935/A4336), and include \$25 million in the FY2021 budget.
- Appropriate \$10 million as an initial investment into facility and staffing resources for behavioral health providers to further develop integrated care.
- Appropriate \$10 million for mental health providers and renew the \$6 million appropriation for substance use treatment providers to upgrade, implement and maintain interoperable EHRs.
- Increase the rate for Children's Psychiatric Assessment to equal the adult rate.

Other Budget Recommendations

Ensure access to vital adult services and strengthen the Children's System of Care:

- Plan rate increases to cover the increased costs under new minimum wage requirements as they are implemented taking into consideration the need to prevent the compression of wage scales.
- Initiate an independent review of the adequacy of all Children's System of Care rates.
- Pass legislation to expand Early Intervention Support Services (EISS) (A2391/S1635) and Screening Services (A2389/S1032).
- Pass S2559/A3965 to reinstate the 70+ year exemption of vehicle registration fees for nonprofit organizations' vehicles that was reversed in 2017.
- Increase the rates for Board Certified Behavior Analysts to the same level as those of other credentialed professionals.
- Allow Intensive In-Home Behavioral and Family Support Services staff to be compensated for time and travel costs for team meetings, as well as other travel and training costs.
- Establish a sustainability and expansion plan for New Jersey's Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs).

Other Legislative Recommendations

- Pass legislation that would allow Advanced Practice Nurses to sign screening certificates.
- When the independent studies of rates for adult and children's rates are concluded, provide for increases to fee-for-service reimbursement rates to cover the actual costs of care.
- Establish a formula for upward adjustment of rates and contracts.
- Establish an ombudsman position in the Department of Banking and Insurance that would be dedicated to behavioral health services.