



FY2023 Legislative and Policy Priorities

Diverse Faces, Many Lives: New Jerseyans Deserve a Community-based Behavioral Health System that Will Allow Them to Thrive!

Now, more than ever, New Jersey must invest in a strong, sustainable community-based system of care to meet the needs of New Jersey's diverse children, youth and adults. Inadequate rates have crippled many programs since the transition to a fee-for-service reimbursement system in 2017 and made it nearly impossible for providers to be competitive in recruiting and retaining qualified staff. In addition to the welcome and appreciated new funds in the adult and children's behavioral health system in the FY2023 budget, significant further investment is needed to sustain quality care for the many diverse lives who stand to benefit and to then expand capacity to increase access to care for all New Jerseyans. Toward those ends, NJAMHAA calls on the Legislature and Administration to support the following:

Invest in the Behavioral Healthcare Workforce

- Invest \$25 million in rates and contracts to close the deficit gaps resulting from skyrocketing inflation, soaring wages, the ever-increasing cost of health insurance and other fiscal impacts.
- Invest in tuition reimbursement for behavioral health staff.
- Provide funding for recruitment and retention bonuses for behavioral health staff.
- Invest to erase the backlogs in program/facility and individual licensing.

Invest in Sustainability

- Pass S2792/A4223 to set Medicaid rates for primary care and mental health services equal to Medicare rates for the same services.
- Pass S2668/A508 to establish a formula for automatic upward rate and contract adjustments that is indexed to actual costs.
- Appropriate \$10 million for mental health providers to upgrade, implement and maintain interoperable electronic health record (EHR) systems.
- Pass S930/A1476 to reinstate the 70+ year exemption of vehicle registration fees for nonprofit organizations' vehicles that was reversed in 2017.
- Ensure adequate fee-for-service rates are set as a floor for any service carved into Medicaid managed care under the 1115 Waiver.

Invest in Accessibility and a Full Continuum of Care

- Invest \$10 million to expand the School Based Youth Services Program.
- Allow Psychiatric Advanced Practice Nurses to fill the role of Psychiatrists on Programs for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) teams.
- Appropriate \$10 million as an initial investment into facility resources for behavioral health providers to further develop integrated care.
- Provide funding for respite services.