



Comments to Senate Finance HHR Subcommittee
 Submitted by Mira Signer, Executive Director, NAMI Virginia
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Virginia needs to emphasize and invest in community services.

- Steady downsizing of state hospitals beginning in the 1970s. More recently, from 2000 to 2013, 456 beds in state hospitals have been lost due to down-sizing
- Addition of community services over time to prevent or lessen the impact of a mental health crisis and fill in the gaps due to decreased state and local psychiatric hospital beds
- Virginia ranks 37th in the nation on funding for community-based mental health services and 10th in the nation on funding for institutional care (National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors)
- Importance of investing in robust, comprehensive community services:
- Impact of inadequate community-service capacity and decreased hospital capacity
 - 2013 Virginia Compensation Board Report: 24% of Virginia's jail inmates have a mental illness with more than half being seriously mentally ill

Proposed Budget – Concerns and Recommendations

Programs of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT)

- An evidence-based program that keeps people in their homes and communities, out of the criminal justice system, and out of state hospitals
- Utilizes an interdisciplinary team that provides services to individuals at high-risk for hospitalization, emergency room intervention, and displacement from housing
- It emphasizes outreach, relationship-building, and individualized services
- PACT teams provide 75% or more of services outside a clinic office
- Over 85% of PACT clients have maintain stable housing and experience fewer or no readmissions to psychiatric hospitals, and over 90 percent have no arrests.
- Problem: There are only 16 PACT teams in Virginia. The proposed budget provides funding for 2 additional PACT teams.
- Recommendation: Add funding to proposed budget for at least 4 more PACT teams

Additional bed capacity for Eastern State Hospital

- Is this the appropriate direction? Will these beds soon be downsized anyway? This proposed item needs scrutiny and consideration.
- Barriers to accessing these and other state hospital beds
- Problem: Lack of community capacity means that some people can't be discharged when ready- this means the bed is unable to be used

- Recommendation: Add additional DAP funds to the budget to support reducing the EBL. But don't close the beds. They are needed as part of the safety net. ***Roughly 55 people discharged using the \$1.5 million in new DAP funding for FY 2014***

Services for transition-age youth

- There are critical needs facing this age group- and a grave lack of capacity
- This is an essential service provided for in the proposed budget – please support it

Jail diversion/assessment centers

- Funding proposed to increase the number of assessment center (“drop off”) sites in Virginia
- These centers--often co-located in emergency rooms—provide a triage point for law enforcement officers to take a person under an ECO or TDO
- A proper assessment is performed by clinicians, enabling law enforcement to return to their primary duty
- With the increase in CIT officers, assessment centers are an important part of the “jail diversion” continuum- please continue to support these efforts

Supportive housing—missing from proposed budget

- Housing is key to stability and long-term recovery
- Helps with overall goal of keeping people safe and stable in the community and reducing reliance on costlier services
- Recommendation: Virginia should authorize flexibility within its Auxiliary Grant program—make this a usable service
- ***\$2 million in savings from budget should be reprogrammed into the Auxiliary Grant program—not swept back into the General Funds***

Crisis response/crisis stabilization—missing from proposed budget

- Many areas still do not have this vital service
- What is it? Short-term residential, mobile crisis teams, or other forms of immediate crisis response that lessens the need for inpatient intervention.
- Recommendation: Crisis response/stabilization is needed for both adults and children.

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