

Access to Behavioral Health Care in Iowa for Children and Adults

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IOWA HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION

We care about Iowa's health

Hospitals see the need for mental health services every day in their communities. From emergency rooms to inpatient psychiatric units, hospitals are often unable to find appropriate care for patients needing assistance for transitional care. Iowans of all ages need behavioral health resources.

Iowa's General Assembly took significant steps in the last two years and passed legislation to create and grow a continuum of services and supports for those in need of assistance – for both children and adults. These services are vital to ensuring access to needed services and supports. Legislators must continue to make progress in addressing mental health.

The General Assembly is urged to identify and enact sustainable funding for the adult and child behavioral health system to ensure the growth and development of services and supports passed in recent legislation.

Issue Background - Talking Points

- Mental illness and substance use disorder impacts a large and growing portion of Iowa's population.
- Adult Impact: Nearly one in five adult Iowans face mental illness. Of these adults, less than half receive treatment. Only 7% to 13% of Iowans needing substance abuse assistance receive treatment.
- Child Impact: Approximately one in five children ages 13-18 have or will have a serious mental illness. Suicide is the third leading cause of death in youth ages 10 – 24.
- Hospitals have struggled to ensure mental health care for their communities, but often lack adequate and appropriate services to ensure patients receive the services and supports they need.
- Patients present at rural hospitals and are left in emergency rooms while hospitals desperately try to identify open psychiatric beds or appropriate levels of care. If a patient is ultimately admitted to an inpatient psychiatric unit, there are limited resources available to assist in transitioning back to the community or locating long-term care.

Recent Policy Changes

- In 2018, the General Assembly passed, and the Governor signed, House File 2456. This legislation created a continuum of services and supports for an adult behavioral health system that include access centers, subacute care, and intensive residential service homes for long-term treatment, along with other vital types of services and supports. These services and supports are precisely the types of care that patients need to access appropriate levels of care in their communities.
- In 2019, the General Assembly passed, and the Governor signed, House File 690. This legislation created the infrastructure to begin to develop a children's mental health system in Iowa based largely upon the current adult system.
- IHA applauds the passage of these vital pieces of legislation that will advance our state and ensure all Iowans have access to sound mental health services and supports.
- Unfortunately, sustainable funding for these services and supports have not been identified. Until funding is identified and enacted, Iowans and their providers will continue to struggle to provide appropriate care.

Legislative Request

- The General Assembly is urged to identify and enact sustainable funding for the adult and child behavioral health system to ensure the growth and development of services and supports passed in recent legislation.
- The General Assembly should continue to support policies that bolster access to mental health services, including funding for psychiatric intensive care and easing administrative burdens for Iowa's commitment process.

The Iowa General Assembly has enacted legislation that could change mental health care in Iowa. However, sustainable funding must be identified to ensure these services become reality.