

# Request To Members of the General Assembly

## PRESERVE ACCESS TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Critical gaps exist in the continuum of care for Connecticut residents with behavioral health needs.**

Adults who qualify for publically funded services can access a wide range of prevention, treatment, and recovery supports such as case management, supportive housing, supported employment and education, peer support and engagement and transportation. But the system is underfunded, difficult to navigate, there are waiting lists for many of the services, there are not enough psychiatrists, and there are not enough step down options for people coming out of inpatient treatment. There has been a significant increase in people needing and qualifying for these services as a result of the economic downturn.

People who are able to access behavioral health services privately can seek out treaters who accept private insurance or payment. Sometimes the result is a greater choice of providers, but more often co-pays and cost caps are prohibitive, and insurance does not adequately cover needed treatment. Many providers do not accept insurance. **Recovery supports that are so effective for people served by public mental health system are not considered medically necessary and never covered by insurance.**

### We ask your support to:

- *Support increase in the DMHAS budget for caseload growth and COLA increase for non-profit providers*
- *Oppose budget cuts for critical services in the continuum of care for Connecticut residents with behavioral health needs*
- *Support funding in the FY 2014 budget for Health Homes*
- *Ensure that CT health insurance programs are compliant with parity laws and that program rules, such as prior authorizations, co-payments, and premiums do not impose barriers for accessing behavioral health care.*
- *Invest in proven approaches that engage individuals with behavioral health concerns in treatment and support services that promote recovery and wellness while honoring their full rights as citizens.*
- *Oppose measures that would further marginalize and discriminate against persons with behavioral health challenges.*

**For Additional Information please call us at 860-667-6388**

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## SERVICES RESPONSIVE TO A GROWING NUMBER OF YOUNG ADULTS

Continued investment is needed for increasing numbers of young adults needing treatment for behavioral health disorders. The needs of young adults transitioning from DCF are complex and their numbers continue to grow. However, only a portion of young adults are in DMHAS Young Adult Service (YAS) programs; over 5 times as many receive services from community providers without specialized YAS funding and still more are privately insured with no access to non-clinical recovery supports. Young people describe great difficulty with knowing where to go for resources, finding a point of entry, establishing eligibility, endless waiting lists, and outdated treatment modalities. These are the peak years when major mental illnesses develop and affect their future prospects for healthy, productive lives — critical years for completing education, preparing for the workforce, and living independently. Making right kinds of services available to them now is essential — for their future and ours.

- *Please support the proposed increase for FY 2014 for caseload growth and the expansion of services to young adults.*

## INVEST IN STABLE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

The lack of safe, affordable housing threatens recovery for individuals with behavioral health concerns and results in extra costs and gridlock for the service system. Investing in a combination of affordable housing and flexible support services is an essential first step for engaging people in treatment and promoting recovery. We need to reduce our reliance on emergency shelters, prisons, hospitals, and nursing homes as places where we send people to languish. The proposed 2014 budget provides for a significant investment in affordable and supportive housing. Coupled with funding in the DMHAS budget for discharge and diversion placements from institutional settings and supportive housing services for new tenants, we are in a position to offer greater safety, stability, and community life for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

- *Please support this investment in affordable and supportive housing as well as restore funds in the DMHAS budget for legal services that protect the rights of those still in DMHAS facilities or dealing with housing discrimination in our communities.*
- *Please support proposed SB 648 for supportive housing at Victory Gardens for Veterans and their families returning from active duty and making the difficult reintegration to civilian life.*

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