



State of Wisconsin

Wisconsin Council on Mental Health

1 West Wilson Street, P.O. Box 7851
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7851

Date: January 7, 2014

From: Shel Gross, Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shel Gross".

To: Members of the Joint Committee on Finance

Re: Support for Mental Health Bills

The Wisconsin Council on Mental Health (WCMH) strongly urges the Joint Finance Committee to take this opportunity to continue the efforts to create a stronger "system" of care for children and adults experiencing mental health disorders; one which supports earlier intervention and recovery. The Committee has the opportunity to continue this Legislature's unprecedented support for expanding access to mental health treatment and intervention services. Please support the following bills:

- **Assembly Bill 450, Grants for Crisis Intervention Team Training:** Crisis Intervention Training has enhanced law enforcement's ability to respond more appropriately to individuals with mental illnesses enhancing the likelihood for a positive outcome. Law enforcement officers who have taken the training report that it has greatly benefited them in dealing with often challenging situations.
- **Assembly Bill 452, Child Psychiatry Consultation Program:** This bill is based on a program from Massachusetts which was shown to greatly increase the ability of pediatricians and primary care providers to work with youth with emotional disturbances. Given the serious shortage of child psychiatrists in most of Wisconsin this bill makes efficient use of existing resources to better meet the mental health needs of these young people.
- **Assembly Bill 454, Primary Care and Psychiatry Shortage Grant Program:** This bill will address the extreme shortage of psychiatry services in many areas of Wisconsin by creating residency opportunities.
- **Assembly Bill 455: Grants to Establish Peer-Run Respite Centers:** This bill will support the expansion of peer-run respite, a cost-effective alternative that can mitigate the need for emergency services.
- **Assembly Bill 457, Expansion of Treatment and Alternatives Diversion (TAD) Program for Individuals Diagnosed with Mental Illness:** The TAD program has been successful in diverting individuals

with substance abuse or co-occurring substance abuse/mental illness from the prison system, saving the state considerable costs of incarceration. However, the program is not available to individuals with only a mental health diagnosis. This bill will provide a less costly and more recovery oriented alternative to incarceration for individuals with mental illnesses who become involved with the criminal justice system but do not pose a public safety risk.

- ASA 1 to Assembly Bill 459, Individual Placement and Support Program: This bill will support expansion of an evidence-based program for employment of people with serious mental illnesses, which in turn will support the recovery of these individuals. People with mental illnesses want to work but often need specialized supports in order to begin this process.
- Assembly Bill 460, Grants for Mental Health Mobile Crisis Teams: This bill will support the development of mobile crisis in rural areas allowing a more effective intervention for someone in a mental health crisis, and often allowing for a response that does not involve incarceration.

The WCMH is the statutorily-mandated, Governor-appointed advisory council on mental health concerns. The WCMH includes representation from a broad group of mental health stakeholders including persons living with mental illness, family members of such persons, advocates, providers (both private and public) and representatives from state agencies that address the needs of individuals with mental illnesses.

Copies:

Members, Wisconsin Council on Mental Health

Kevin Moore, Deputy Secretary, Department of Health Services

Linda Harris, Administrator, Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Joyce Allen, Director, Bureau of Prevention, Treatment and Recovery