

Mental Health America of California Public Policy Priorities 2018

Highlighted items indicated strategic focus areas.

Improve Stakeholder Process

1. Promote the recommendations of the Stakeholder Coalition
2. Develop and disseminate recommendations to improve the functioning of local mental health boards/commissions and make recommendations for board membership.
3. Advocate for increased outreach, involvement, collaboration, and coordination of stakeholders at State level meetings and forums including, but not limited to, the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC), the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), County Behavioral Health Directors Association (CBHDA), California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA), etc.

Support Behavioral Wellness in Diverse Communities

1. Support legislation that positively impacts and/or supports diverse communities, including immigrant and undocumented communities.
2. Promote the use of community health workers in behavioral health settings (Alameda County Model).
3. Support legislation and initiatives intended to disaggregate racial/ethnic data.
4. Engage existing LGBTQ groups to become more involved in statewide mental health discussions.
5. Support funding additional Strategic Planning Workgroups (SPWs) for the California Reducing Disparities Project including Middle Eastern communities Arabic-speaking communities, and Slavic/Russian-speaking communities.
6. Advocate for DHCS to release the new County Cultural Competence Plan requirements.

Support Military and Veteran Behavioral Health

1. Support legislation that positively impacts and/or supports military and veteran mental health.
2. Support legislation and initiatives intended to collect and report data related to behavioral health and the military.
3. Collaborate with existing military and veterans groups to become more involved in statewide policy discussions.
4. Support legislation and other policy initiatives that promote “No Wrong Door” policies and payment linkages between State, county and VA systems.

Decrease the Number of Individuals that are Homeless and Living with Mental Illnesses

1. Support legislation that support the housing first approach and that provide comprehensive services along with housing.
2. Promote existing jail diversion and release programs that provide housing and supports/services.

3. Advocate for the use of homeless outreach programs in every county.
4. Engage in “No Place Like Home” implementation.

Support Youth Mental Health

1. Support the California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN) in the following efforts:
 - a. Support legislation that promotes mentally healthy environments and practices for youth;
 - b. Begin the process of requiring mental health education to be included in school curriculum every year in every school; and
 - c. Begin process to require at least one mental health professional on all school campuses.
2. Advocate for early mental health screenings for all students. Similar to standard school hearing tests.

Restorative Justice and Juvenile Justice – Ending the Criminalization of Mental Illness

1. Support legislation and initiatives that increase the use of pre-booking diversion programs.
2. Begin the process of advocating for more effective and culturally competent DUI courses that include mental health screening and appropriate follow up support.
3. Explore partnership with the ACLU on legislation that would require peer support specialist or a community health worker be assigned to each person being released from prisons or jails.

Promotion of Prevention and Early Intervention – B4Stage4¹ Policies and Activities

1. Support legislation and other initiatives that increase the use of B4Stage4 approaches.
2. Support strategies to increase awareness and help-seeking actions among people aged 15-26.
3. Participate in the expansion and evaluation of multi-tiered school programs to:
 - a. Ensure they appropriately address cultural and ethnic disparities;
 - b. Include training on cultural competency’ and
 - c. Involve community members in developing the programs.
4. Support legislation and other initiatives to ensure everyone entering the public or private health care systems are screened for behavioral health conditions. For those who screen positive, advocate for access to co-located behavioral health evaluation and follow up, or a telehealth evaluation and follow up.

¹ When we think about cancer, heart disease, or diabetes, we don’t wait years to treat them. We start way before Stage 4. We begin with prevention. And when people are in the first stage of those diseases, and have a persistent cough, high blood pressure, or high blood sugar, we try immediately to reverse these symptoms. This is what we should be doing when people have serious mental illnesses, too. When they first begin to experience symptoms such as loss of sleep, feeling tired for no reason, feeling low, feeling anxious, or hearing voices, we should act.

5. Support policy initiatives and legislation that promote psychologically healthy and safe environments.

Insurance

Advocate for and monitor the implementation of parity including the enforcement of parity regulations.

Increase Access to Behavioral Health Supports, Services and Treatment

In partnership with the Connection Coalition, engage in various legislative and educational initiatives that increase access to timely and appropriate behavioral health services, supports, and treatment, including state level workforce development efforts.