



NCACC Brief Mental Health Funding

NC counties urge legislators to support increasing state funding and legislation to enhance behavioral health services and facilities.

Counties are often the first point of contact for individuals with behavioral health needs. Counties need more resources for community paramedicine projects, inpatient crisis beds, substance use disorders, specialty courts, individuals with mental health issues in county jails, and single stream funding for area authorities.

At-A-Glance

- One in five adults experiences mental health issues in North Carolina.
- The need for behavioral health treatment is increasing due to the COVID-19 public health pandemic.
- Mental Health America reports mental illness is increasing, youth mental health is worsening, and the resulting crisis may be long-lasting.
- Counties are frequently the initial contact for individuals with behavioral health needs, through public safety, the county jail system and recovery courts, or coordination with a Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO).
- Counties frequently must fund these desperately needed programs when state or federal funding is not adequate.

Background

- One-quarter of North Carolina's counties have a community paramedicine program, which better aligns health care needs with appropriate care and reduces emergency room trips for non-emergency cases. While these programs are more successful in providing behavioral health and other services, thereby keeping patients out of the ER or county jail, they are not eligible for traditional Medicaid reimbursement.
- Approximately one-quarter of counties also operate a specialty recovery court, such as drug treatment or veterans, to assist offenders with substance dependencies and reduce recidivism. These diversion and recovery programs offer dedicated help and reduce the strain on the criminal justice system. State funding for drug treatment courts was eliminated 10 years ago, and counties now fund these vital programs.
- LME/MCOs provide mental health, developmental disability, and substance use treatment and care to individuals across the state. When state funding for LME/MCOs is reduced, county governments are required to fund an increasing share of these essential services.

County Efforts & Recommendation

- The need for adequate behavioral health services is constant and growing, particularly with mental health issues like depression and opioid overdoses intensified by the pandemic.
- Counties continue to assist individuals in accessing and paying for important behavioral health services across the state.
- Counties assume requirements mandated by the state to assist individuals access and pay for important behavioral health services. Recent legislation requires counties to adopt plans to transport involuntary commitment patients, but the custody and transportation of involuntary commitment patients are the county's responsibility.
- Counties need dedicated resources and state investment to help fund these critical services like community paramedicine programs, inpatient crisis beds, substance use disorders, specialty treatment courts, mental health treatment in county jails, and funding for area authorities.

Act Now

Support increased funding for community-based behavioral health care in order to decrease prevalence of mental health issues throughout the state.

For More Information

www.ncacc.org/advocacyhub

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