



## Taking Action to Reverse Pennsylvania's Mental Health Crisis Increasing and Coordinating Resources for Better Outcomes

Due to years of underfunding, the commonwealth's mental health system is in crisis. Pennsylvania residents have waited long enough while the impacts of 15 years of not keeping pace with increases have unraveled the mental health system. It is a constant struggle to maintain community-based services such as outpatient treatment for adults and children, crisis intervention, school counselors, support for individuals leaving state facilities, treatment, community consultation and education, day services and prevention.

Yet increased support for the community mental health system improves outcomes for individuals, allowing for prevention and treatment where people need it most and helping prevent individuals from more significant impacts like having to turn to emergency departments, and helping to provide crucial support for children with complex behavioral health needs and begin to address the growing issue of county jails acting as de-facto mental health facilities. At the same time, improved care for Pennsylvania's residents can also provide for cost-savings in communities and to the commonwealth budget.

### URGENT ACTION NEEDED

#### The Ask

- Counties are calling for:
  - **A significant investment of \$150 million in the county mental health base for FY 2023-2024, in addition to the allocation of the \$100 million in federal ARPA dollars for adult mental health**, to begin the rebuilding process:
    - **\$50 million** base funding increase (\$20 million proposed by Gov. Shapiro + \$30 million)
    - Redirecting **\$100 million** in school mental health funding proposed in Gov. Shapiro's budget to county mental health base funds
    - **\$100 million** in federal ARPA funds per Behavioral Health Commission's Recommendations
  - **A long-term plan of further increases over the next five to ten years** that can develop a strong system to benefit all Pennsylvania.

#### Why Now?

- Counties have not seen an increase in mental health base funds since 2008.
- In FY 2012-2013, counties saw a 7.7% cut in base funds, which has not been restored, much less increased.
- At the same time, the need for community-based services has risen drastically each year, leaving counties to rely on a growing share of property taxes to support the system on behalf of the commonwealth.

## KEY POINTS

### **The community-based system is on the verge of collapse.**

- The mental health system is on the point of collapse, and after state funding for mental health services has lagged actual need for so many years, **more than \$1 billion in additional investments are now needed to fully support the community mental health system.**
- The number of inpatient beds in both private and state hospitals has decreased over the last 25 years, yet no new base dollars have been allocated to assist with the development of programs to care for individuals in the community.
- A strong state partnership now will demonstrate a commitment to funding that will fully meet the ever-increasing needs for these services and ultimately prevent more costly impacts long-term.

### **We need to foster collaboration between counties and schools with a strong mental health base as the foundation.**

- Counties agree we must be investing in the behavioral health needs of our children and youth – but providing money only to schools for mental health services, without coordinating with the broader community-based service spectrum, will not provide Pennsylvania's youth with the comprehensive mental health services they need after the bell rings.
- Focusing attention solely on schools and not the broader mental health base has the effect of undermining the entire community-based system.
- By redirecting and investing these funds in the county mental health base:
  - Counties can support a broad-spectrum approach to addressing this crisis as they coordinate care to meet the diverse needs of all our residents in our communities, rather than taking a piecemeal approach that will ultimately weaken the entire system.
  - We can improve outcomes and maximize the opportunities for long-term success of our community-based behavioral health system.

### **The message is clear – the time to act is NOW.**

- Pennsylvania residents have waited long enough while the impacts of at least 15 years of underfunding have unraveled the mental health system.
- Rebuilding this system will not happen overnight, but the time to act is **NOW**