

How Do We Improve Mental Health Care in NM?

Pass the 2021 Health Security bill!

Many New Mexicans are unable to get the care they need for mental health issues and substance abuse problems. The **NM Health Security Plan** (HSP) will help to relieve the suffering and disability caused by untreated mental health problems in our state.

- **Coverage for all.** This Plan provides complete health coverage for most New Mexicans, but it will be especially helpful to those who have no health insurance and suffer from mental health issues and substance abuse problems. People who have severe mental illness in NM are about twice as likely to be uninsured as other New Mexicans.
- **More mental health care providers.** The HSP will help bring psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health care professionals to NM. How? First, the HSP will attract them with better pay, at rates comparable to other medical providers. Second, mental health professionals want to spend their time and energy meeting with patients and giving care – not pleading with insurance company representatives or jumping through time-wasting hoops to get paid for their services. The simpler HSP approach will be a relief to these providers, and the word will spread far outside NM.
- **Help for rural communities.** Mental health services are especially hard to get in our rural areas. To help solve this problem, the HSP calls for higher fees for mental health practitioners who work in rural (and urban) areas that are underserved.
- **Less expensive medications.** Psychiatric medications are often very expensive – a major problem for those who need them. Through bulk purchasing, the HSP will lower the cost of these essential medicines.
- **Strong mental health coverage.** In the past, treatment for mental health and substance abuse has often not been covered by insurance, or has been covered at a lower rate. The HSP requires that coverage for mental health be equal to coverage for other medical conditions.
- **Untreated mental health disorders and substance abuse issues affect all of us.** Families experience tremendous strain and heartache. Workers struggle to keep their jobs and their income. Employers find it difficult to hire dependable employees. Untreated substance abuse can also lead to illegal activity, with all its harm and financial burdens.

Drug abuse tops the NM Department of Health's list of diseases that cause death or disability in our state. Depression is #6. ***It's past time to change this.*** Making sure that everyone has affordable access to mental and behavior health care is a giant first step. And passing the 2021 NM Health Security bill is the way to make that happen. *For more information, go to www.nmhealthsecurity.org.*