



*The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force is committed to being a leader in identifying issues faced by all people affected by mental illness, facilitating improvements in mental health services, giving consumers and families a strong voice, reducing stigma, and implementing recovery principles.*

**Action Alert – September 20, 2010**  
**Support Funding for Mental Health Services in the 2011 Milwaukee County Budget**

Planning is underway for the 2011 Milwaukee County Budget. The County Executive will present his proposed 2011 budget on September 30 and Milwaukee County Supervisors will deliberate on the budget and propose changes in the coming months. This is a key time for advocates to share their priorities with the County Executive and Milwaukee County Board and urge them to fully fund mental health services and increase funding for community services. Investing in the community will help to decrease the need for costly and often traumatizing crisis and inpatient services. **Call or email your County Supervisor and the County Executive today.** Be sure to include your name, home address, and phone number. See the back of this alert for Mental Health Task Force priorities for the budget.

<b>Milwaukee County Elected Officials – Contact Information</b>	
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Note: If you are not sure who your supervisor is, call the main number 278-4222.

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## **Our Vision for the Mental Health System in Milwaukee County – 9/15/10**

As we approach the 2011 Milwaukee County budget, the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force, a coalition of over 40 organizations, calls for a commitment to systemic positive change in our mental health system. The recent surveys and citations by the state and federal government have highlighted the need for a system that offers patient centered, recovered oriented, trauma informed care, with far more options for services and supports in the community which can provide better and less costly alternatives to expensive and often traumatizing crisis and inpatient care.

We commend the steps taken by the County Board and the County Executive to establish a Community Advisory Board to make recommendations about systemic change, and the County's participation in the Adult Mental Health Redesign initiative which will provide key recommendations for change. As supervisors and the County Executive move forward with the 2011 budget, and other proposals related to the Behavioral Health Division, we urge you to consider the following principles endorsed by the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force:

- Proposals for significant system or facility change should first consider and build on the findings of the Adult Mental Health Redesign Initiative which will be available in early October and will provide a comprehensive analysis of current service utilization, gaps, unmet needs, capacity, and recommendations for moving forward. The partners in this study include Milwaukee County BHD, the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership, the Medical Society of Milwaukee County, the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force, Greater Milwaukee Foundation and Faye McBeath Foundation, coordinated by the Public Policy Forum. The forum has contracted with a national consultant, Human Services Research Institute, to analyze resources in both the county and private healthcare systems, interview stakeholders, and identify best practices and opportunities for better meeting community needs with our limited funds.
  - Fact-There are over 12,000 visits to Milwaukee County's Psychiatric Emergency Room (PCS) annually and over 65% are brought in involuntarily, usually in the back of a police car in handcuffs.
  - Fact- The average cost of a day of inpatient service is over \$1,000.
  - Fact- The average cost for a day of service at the community based Crisis Resource Center (CRC) is approximately \$400.
  - Fact- Other communities utilize alternatives to large inpatient facilities, including models like the CRC, which are able to provide a more recovery oriented environment and obtain Medicaid reimbursement.
- The current system relies too heavily on emergency room and crisis services provided at great fiscal and human cost. Strategies must be developed that support an increased investment in community services. This investment will stop the tragic cycling of people through the Mental Health Complex through multiple admissions that currently result in discharge with limited planning and follow-up and a failure to connect many patients to essential community services for support after discharge. This model is not evidence based care or consistent with a recovery model of treatment. The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force believes it is essential that as a community, we increase the investment in community services and supports such as:
  - Outpatient services including individual and group therapy
  - Supportive Housing
  - Community placed Crisis Resource Centers
  - Peer Specialists throughout the continuum of care
  - Psycho-social rehab
  - Supported Employment
  - Community Support programs
- Increased use of these services and other proven evidence based practices would:
  - Promote recovery, enable people to remain independent in the community, and reduce the number of inpatient, emergency and crisis admissions currently occurring in Milwaukee County.
  - Ensure compliance with the law which requires that people are served in the least restrictive environment.
  - Support better outcomes for the system and the people it serves.
  - Shift the balance of spending from costly and sometime traumatizing inpatient to more recovery oriented support services.
  - Maximize the number of people able to receive services from a system that has limited resources.

We look forward to a continued partnership with elected officials and policy makers to work for positive change and better choices for people with mental illness.