



*The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force is the voice of the community on issues related to the quality and responsiveness of mental health and substance use disorder services.*

## **Background & Questions Provided to Mayoral Candidates for March 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

Thank you for agreeing to speak to the [Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force](#) at our March meeting, this Tuesday, March 8 via Zoom. You have up to 20 minutes to speak. If time permits we can share a few questions from the audience but our primary focus is on the questions we are providing you here.

The [Mental Health Task Force was established in 2004](#) and works collaboratively to identify issues faced by people affected by mental illness and by substance use disorders, facilitate improvements in services, give consumers and families a strong voice, reduce stigma, and implement recovery principles. Our coalition of over 40 organizations includes peers, advocates, service providers, and family members.

### **Topic and Questions for you to Address**

As stated in our invitation, this is an opportunity to offer your vision for issues that are a priority for people who live with a mental illness or substance use disorder including the following:

- Provide trauma informed crisis response for youth and adults experiencing a crisis due to mental illness or substance use disorder
- Increase access to treatment and supports for mental health needs and substance use disorders
- Reduce the number of people with mental illness in the criminal justice system
- Increase access to safe affordable housing

**Questions.** As part of your comments on these general topics, we ask you to address the following questions:

1. Law enforcement are often the first responders for persons experiencing a mental health crisis. These interactions have the potential for misunderstanding - both on the part of law enforcement and the person in crisis – which can result in tragedy. What is your plan to provide oversight and accountability regarding crisis response and to offer alternative approaches? How will you work with MPD and others to reduce the number youth and adults with mental illness in the criminal justice system and connect them with services and supports.
2. In December 2021, U.S. Surgeon General issued a new [Surgeon General's Advisory](#) to highlight the urgent need to address the nation's youth mental health crisis. In Milwaukee, access to mental health services for our youth is inadequate. There are long wait lists of up to two-years, lack of access to care without involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, or services only available when a youth has declined to the point of a severe emotional disturbance. What is your plan to address the clinical and emotional needs for youth in our community across the continuum of care from prevention, early intervention, and treatment access?

3. How will you address the record drug overdose deaths? Do you have any strategies that could improve access to Narcan to make it more widely available?
4. What will you do to increase access to safe affordable housing including emergency housing for people with a mental illness or substance use disorder? Access to safe, stable affordable housing is essential for recovery from mental illness or substance use disorders.