



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.

Speak Out for Mental Health in the State Budget - May 2023

The state budget process is underway. Legislators will make decisions that will impact all of our lives. The budget is an opportunity to improve access to mental health services, substance user disorder services, special education, housing, and more. Increasing access to community services and treatment supports recovery and resilience and can reduce overuse of costly emergency, hospital and justice system resources. Investing in mental health is the right thing for people and the right thing for the budget.

This is an important time to share your priorities for mental health and other budget initiatives with your state legislators. Here are some tips for taking action!

Who to Contact

Contact your State Assembly Representative and your State Senator. Find contact information for your legislators at this link on the State Legislature home page:

- [Who Are My Legislators](#) – enter your home address in the “Find Your Legislator” box

The Joint Finance Committee plays a lead role in crafting the state budget. You can find information about the committee and the state budget on their web page:

- <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/committees/joint/2640>

How to Contact Legislators

There are several ways to share your state budget priorities:

- Call or email your state representative and state senator
- Ask to meet with your legislators in the district.
- Attend a listening session.
- Follow them on social media and share your ideas

Key Points for your message

- Introduce yourself. Share your name, where you live, and your job if relevant. Legislators like to hear from their constituents so be sure to include your home address.
- Introduce your issue and how it impacts you or your family. Share a brief story or example about how the issue impacts your life or the lives of people you care about. People remember stories!
- Make your ask: Explain what you think needs to be done to “fix” the problem. Share the budget proposals that matter to you and why. (see our list for ideas)
- Be sure to say thank you!

Examples of Mental Health Budget Proposals to Support

You may mention one or more of these proposals when you contact state legislators.

- Increase funding for Peer Recovery Centers and Peer Run Respite so more people can access peer delivered services
- Address the lack of equitable access to mental health services for people with hearing loss. Fund a new program to coordinate, training, and supporting MH/SU disorder service delivery for people with hearing loss.
- Support room & board expenses for Medicaid members seeking residential substance use disorder treatment.
- Fund the nonfederal share of the Medicaid Community Support Program (CSP) which is currently funded by counties to increase the quality of these programs and allow counties to invest in mental health services.
- Complete expansion of the Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS). OARS program to make program available in every county and expand capacity in those counties that have the highest need, especially those counties impacted most severely by racial inequities in access to criminal justice reentry support services.
- Fund regional crisis centers to allow individuals in crisis to be assessed and supported closer to their home and to their natural supports.
- Improve access to community-based youth justice services by increasing funding for local community prevention, early intervention and supervision, with a focus on keeping youth in their homes whenever possible.
- Provide additional funding for school mental health services and expand the scope of the programs to cover pupil services professionals besides social workers, including nurses, school psychologists and counselors.
- Provide funding to support Suicide Prevention efforts across the state, provide educational materials, and support public awareness campaigns.
- Increase funding for the specialized transportation and transit programs to meet the demand for rides for the growing population of non drivers.