



STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH
and Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health

September 3, 2020

Commissioner Jodi Harpstead
Minnesota Department of Human Services
PO Box 64998
St. Paul, MN 55164-0998

Dear Commissioner Harpstead,

We are writing to you today on behalf of the State Advisory Council on Mental Health and Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health. We recognize that Minnesota is facing very difficult decisions about budgetary changes due to the overwhelming deficit in our state. It is for that reason we are asking you to engage with us about any decisions that will impact mental health funding.

Amongst our duties outlined in [Minnesota Statute 245.697](#), the Council and Subcommittee are charged with:

- Advising the commissioner of human services on all phases of the development of mental health aspects of the biennial budget
- Reviewing and commenting on all grants dealing with mental health and on the development and implementation of state and local mental health plans

We are currently finalizing our recommendations to the Governor and Legislature that will be published in October. Due to the current financial situation in Minnesota, we feel it necessary to reach out to you now to share our top priority: ***no funding cuts to Minnesota's Mental Health system***. This includes substance use disorder programming as well due to the number of individuals who have co-occurring conditions and the negative impact the pandemic has had on them.

Minnesota's mental health system was underfunded and underdeveloped before the COVID-19 Pandemic began. We understand that many desperately needed investments to the mental health system will have to wait for a better financial outlook for Minnesota's budget; however, this does not mean that leaders should look to the mental health system for cost savings. Cutting funding for mental health services will not reduce the need for mental health care. On the contrary, it will create more disparities in accessing services and place greater burden on individuals and families in need of vital mental health services. When folks fall through the cracks, they will likely require more expensive treatment in a hospital or state-operated program, placing even greater burden on the system.

The COVID-19 Pandemic continues to increase the demands upon a mental health system that is already overextended. Medical Assistance rates are not sufficient to sustain our



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community mental health programs, while private payers are still not adequately following mental health parity regulations. Mental Health Grant programs are currently underfunded though they support highly effective programs including school-linked mental health, mobile crisis services, Targeted Case Management, and programs that support people transitioning out of very expensive care at state-operated programs to community settings.

The State Advisory Council on Mental Health and Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health urge you and other leaders across Minnesota's Government to look elsewhere as cuts to government prove to be necessary. Please do not make any budgetary cuts to our already overburdened mental health system and please engage with us in your decision making process.

Sincerely,

Michelle Schmid-Egleston, MA, LP
Co-Chair
Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health

Dave Lee, MA, LP, LMFT, LICSW
Chair
State Advisory Council on Mental Health

Jeffrey Lind
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Governor Tim Walz

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Governor's Children's Cabinet