

Improve Assistance Programs for Persons with Mental Illness

Assistance programs, including supportive housing, for persons with mental illness and substance abuse disorder **need to be improved through policy and funding changes.**

Florida is ranked 48th in per capita spending on mental health services and 35th in per capita spending on substance abuse programs (NAMI Florida).

The lack of reasonable and affordable housing contributes to the plight of the members of our society with mental illness or substance abuse disorders.

Many people with mental illness live on disability income or work in low income jobs and **can not sustain housing at fair market rates.**

The **lack of affordable housing prevents** individuals with special needs from **exiting costly facility programs** and living independently in the community.

Prisons, jails and juvenile justice detention centers are being used as **inadequate substitutes for treatment** due to the lack of resources, including housing, for both mental health and substance abuse treatment services.

Providing services in an affordable home or apartment (supportive housing) rather than a facility has a **50% greater success rate** and is **less expensive.**

Physical and mental illness, and substance abuse disorder are **major contributors to homelessness** in Florida.

Failure to provide effective community-based treatment for substance abuse, mental health and co-occurring disorders **results in unnecessary deep-end treatment costs**, incarceration and significant long-term **adverse economic and social consequences**

It is time for Florida to **implement cost effective solutions** to the substance abuse and mental health crisis by:

1. **Redirecting spending focus on the front end** of the system through diversion, prevention and early intervention services that are less costly and avoids the more expensive incarceration option.
2. **Properly funding community mental health, substance abuse treatment services and supportive housing** to avoid the more costly state-funded residential juvenile commitment and adult prison beds.

Information obtained from: NAMI Florida, Florida Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation

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