



Georgia

Introductions

NAMI Georgia

- ▶ The mission of NAMI Georgia is to empower affiliates to create communities where all affected by mental illnesses find hope, help, and acceptance through SUPPORT, EDUCATION and ADVOCACY.

Kim Jones, NAMI GA Executive Director

- ▶ Mother of a child with a mental health condition.
- ▶ Kim Jones was appointed by the Speaker of the House, along with NAMI GA Board member Dr. Sarah Vinson appointed by the governor, to the Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission.



Mission :

2022 is the Year for Mental Health

Promote the *Unified Vision for Transforming Behavioral Health and Substance Use Care*

Action:

A united coalition, **Georgia Mental Health Policy Partnership (GMHPP)**, will speak in a UNIFIED voice to support policy, initiatives, and legislation recommended by the

Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission



Background on the Partnership

▶ **Georgia Mental Health Policy Partnership**

- ▶ Started by NAMI GA, Mental Health America GA, American Foundation Suicide Prevention GA in 2016
- ▶ Represents multiple MH and SUD advocate organizations

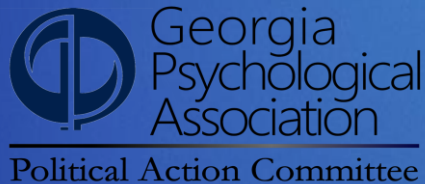
▶ **Unified Vision and Voice**

- ▶ National effort that was adopted at the local level
- ▶ Adopted by 14 plus mental health advocacy groups representing the largest constituency of Georgians, insured and uninsured, seeking mental health care.

Georgia Mental Health Policy Partnership Members



THE
CARTER CENTER



Background to the Unified Vision

In early 2020, the Georgia Mental Health Policy Partnership created a framework for a common understanding and action plan to address mental health and substance use care. The framework created by these organizations is the basis for the vision set out in the Unified Vision.

- ▶ Identifies Seven Foundational Elements for Transforming Health Care:
 - ▶ Parity
 - ▶ Workforce
 - ▶ Emergency Crisis & Response
 - ▶ Early Identification & Prevention
 - ▶ Integration
 - ▶ Equity
 - ▶ Standards

Unified Vision

Improve the lives of people with mental health and substance use disorders through a transformed system of

By:

- Eliminating the stigma around mental health and substance use disorder.
- Focusing on prevention, promotion, and recovery.
- Addressing vital conditions such as housing, transportation, and employment.
- Integrating care and ensure people receive the services and support they need, when and where they need them
- Revising policies, programs, and standards that value the critical importance of mental health
- Addressing discrimination that have created inequities in care and unacceptable disparities in outcomes.

Unified Priorities

Georgia Mental Health Policy Partnership

- ▶ **Enforce Parity**; transparency and accountability in mental health care coverage
- ▶ **Fully fund behavioral health care** including implementing 9-8-8 crisis line.
- ▶ Create a plan to confront Georgia's mental health **workforce crisis & improve access** to care for all Georgians.
- ▶ **Improve medicaid processes** and increase reimbursement rates for behavioral health care.

Enforcing Parity

Mental health parity describes the equal treatment of mental health conditions and substance use disorders in insurance plans.

In 2008, Congress passed the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) to ensure equal coverage of treatment for mental illness and addiction. In November 2013, the federal government released rules to implement the law. Before this law, mental health treatment was typically covered at far lower levels in health insurance policies than physical illness.

- > Establish one or more state bodies to ensure oversee parity compliance
- > Include ensuring compliance with federal and state legal parity obligations,
- > Fund to hire and train staff to provide parity transparency and accountability,
- > Establish a parity complaint portal for submission of complaints by Georgia consumers (including tracking of complaint processing) funding to implement a marketing campaign to educate Georgians on their parity rights.

Workforce & System Development

Some startling statistics....

- > 72% (114 of 159) of Georgia's counties are deemed mental health professional shortage areas.
- > 76 of Georgia's 159 counties do not have a licensed psychologist
- > 52 counties do not have a licensed social worker
- > 45 counties do not have a licensed psychologist OR a licensed social worker

What Georgia Can Do...

- > Provide loan forgiveness for those who work in areas impacted by workforce shortages, otherwise known as service deserts.
- > Increase the Medicaid reimbursement rate for mental health Services.
- > Fund a tax credit for mental health providers willing to serve as preceptors (mentor to medical students), particularly in underserved/low health access areas of Georgia.
- > Explore opportunities to develop and implement state loan repayment programs, like the Physicians and Dentists Rural Assistance Program, and Physician Assistant and Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Loan Repayment Programs.

Funding a Comprehensive Mental Health Care System

- > Fully fund a comprehensive behavioral health care system including funding for early intervention-including school-based behavioral health, effective crisis response. Including the new 9-8-8 crisis line, and the implementation of co-responders models of law enforcement working with clinicians and Certified Peer Specialists.
- > Approve specific mental health and substance use 1115 Waivers and IMD Exclusions for Medicaid funds to pay for mental health and substance use disorder Services.
- > Fund community-based behavioral health services such as supportive housing , supported employment, clubhouses,peer supports, respite centers, addiction recovery support centers.
- > Expand coverage to all Georgians who are otherwise uninsured and need behavioral health services.
- > Services that require expansion to adequately serve Georgian's include:
 - prevention
 - early intervention
 - mental health treatment
 - mental wellness care
 - substance use treatment
 - hotlines and warmlines
 - crisis intervention
 - overdose prevention



Decriminalize Mental Illnesses

help not handcuffs

- > Increase the number of accountability courts in Georgia.
- > Divert non-violent offenders with mental health concerns into treatment.
- > Invest in mental health services that keep people out of jail in the first place.
- > Continue Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training of police, corrections, and other first responders on safely and effectively responding to people with mental health concerns.
- > Assure the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) be exempt from state budget cuts.
- > Fund mental health training for all first responders, such as Emergency Medical Services, to reduce police engagement during a mental health crisis.
- > Fund mental health training for family members and caregivers to give an appropriate mental health response to a mental health crisis.
- > Fund the placement of a mental health professional trained by the Georgia Crisis and Access line to be on call in all 911 units.

Broadband



- > High-speed Internet access is crucial to Georgia's ability to address the state's lack of access to medical care for mental health and substance use and yet hundreds of thousands of Georgians, especially those in rural communities, do not have such access.
- > Enables telehealth and telehealth expands Georgian's access to mental health professionals by enabling virtual access when physical access to mental healthcare is not available.
- > Additional benefits of telehealth include enabling more access to specialized care, enhancing workforce efficiency (telehealth has fewer cancellations and no-shows, and facilitating early identification and prevention of mental health challenges.
- > Establish an open access, a fiber-to-the-home network where the same physical network infrastructure is utilized by multiple providers delivering services to subscribers in unserved and underserved areas.



Join us!
Mental Health Day at the Capitol

January 26th, 2022

Let's make 2022 the Year for Mental Health

**Email advocacy@namiga.org and ask for the
registration link to sign up**



nami

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Georgia

Questions?