

Investing In Improving Mental Health

(NAPSA)—According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about one in every four American adults has a mental illness of some kind. Now there could be good news for them and the people who care for them.

What's Being Done

Two federal agencies are implementing the Excellence in Mental Health Act—a demonstration project and the single largest federal investment in mental health and addiction services in more than 50 years.

“For too long, we have failed to provide the federal infrastructure and support needed to sustain a strong behavioral health safety net,” said Linda Rosenberg, president and CEO of the National Council for Behavioral Health—the unifying voice of America’s community mental health and addiction treatment organizations. “With the Excellence Act, that all changes.”

How It Works

To improve the quality of care nationwide, the Act establishes federal status and criteria for Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers (CCBHCs) that provide comprehensive mental health and addiction outpatient services.

These CCBHCs are responsible for basic primary care screenings and services to address the chronic conditions that drive high costs and poor health outcomes among people with behavioral health disorders. Crisis services play a critical role in de-escalating mental health crises and diverting individuals into care. The criteria also emphasize the special requirements of populations such as veterans, whose health needs, Rosenberg says, the United States has failed to meet.

Additionally, the CCBHCs will break through barriers to work with a variety of health system partners, including primary care, hospitals, VA centers and more.

Because many state systems can’t support the kind of comprehensive, coordinated care necessitated by the CCBHC criteria, the Excellence Act requires the states to establish a payment system based on actual costs. That is expected to bring about increased



The government is taking what may be the biggest step in half a century toward helping people with mental health and addiction issues.

funding for historically underfunded community mental health and addiction services. Also, a system of bundled payments will either require or incentivize value-based payments so providers can share in the cost savings their clinical care produces.

“The bottom line is that when people walk through a CCBHC’s door, they know they will be linked to the services they need in the broader health care system,” said Rosenberg. “They know they will receive better care coordination from a trained, competent team of providers.”

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration will award planning grants of up to \$2 million to help states create their certification processes and develop their payment methods.

“It is so important for organizations to make the case to their state about why it should apply to participate,” said Rosenberg.

Planning grant applications are due by August 5; grants will be awarded in October 2015.

What You Can Do

Meanwhile, if you or someone you care about is in crisis, seek help immediately. The CDC recommends three steps:

- Call 911.
- Visit a nearby emergency department or your health care provider’s office.
- Call the toll-free, 24-hour hotline of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-TALK ((800) 273-8255); TTY: (800) 799-4TTY (4889) to talk to a trained counselor.

Learn More

For further facts, visit www.TheNationalCouncil.org.