



Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc.

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STATEMENT

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Community Mental Health Centers Express Concerns

Citing strong concerns about funding cuts to the community mental health system, the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas is asking policy makers at the state and local levels to explore the ramifications of the reductions in their communities.

“The Community Mental Health Centers have taken one devastating hit after another over the last year,” said Kyle Kessler, Executive Director of the Association.

The Association estimates that the statewide hole left in mental health funding for the next budget year is approximately \$30 million. This is a result of the elimination of the health homes program which helped coordinate and provide care and the elimination of the Medicaid mental health screening program that helped provide timely intervention and diversion from inpatient care to community-based outpatient services provided locally. The four percent Medicaid reimbursement rate reduction, which hit not only Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) but health care providers across the state, is the most recent budget cut.

The Association contends that the reduction in treatment and staff will result in more state mental health hospital admissions, emergency room visits, and quite likely in more interaction

with law enforcement. The state has committed to re-establishing the Medicaid mental health screens program, but it remains to be seen when that will occur and how it will operate.

“The message that people need to hear is that budget and policy decisions have consequences. We need to look at restoring some of the cuts to mental health centers that have taken place over the last decade, whether that is restoring mental health reform contract funding or expanding treatment to persons through expanding Medicaid,” said Mike Garrett, CEO of Horizons Mental Health Center. “The alteration, reduction, or elimination of treatment services will impact communities beyond just their local mental health center and the children and families they serve,” Garrett added.

Kessler commented that, “Community Mental Health Centers have great appreciation for our other community partners in health care and law enforcement as well as partners in education and child welfare. The question is no longer, ‘Where is mental health?’ The question is, ‘Where isn't it?’ One of the encouraging signs across the state during this ongoing budget crisis has been the lack of finger pointing among community partners and in many cases, the re-establishment of community partnerships and relationships.”

The Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc. (ACMHCK) advances the interests of Community Mental Health Centers and the individuals they serve. Towards this end, the Association offers leadership and professional education, highlights model practices and programs, provides legislative representation, and identifies resources for addressing the challenges faced by local mental health authorities.

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