

Mental Health Services in Tippecanoe County
Report of the League of Women Voters of Greater Lafayette
Mental Health Exploratory Committee
June 2016

Introduction

After hearing the concerns of its members, the board of directors of the League of Women Voters of Greater Lafayette initiated an exploratory committee on mental health issues in our community. The committee, led by Donna Giroux and members Jean Andres, Carol Gutridge and Walt Dalsimer, reviewed existing League positions at the local, state and national levels. Then it began a series of interviews with local service providers, advocates and elected officials to determine attitudes, identify any access and parity issues in mental health services, and explore opportunities for partnerships with citizens and agencies.

Perceptions and Mental Health service gaps in Tippecanoe County

We interviewed County Commissioner and former Sheriff Tracy Brown, Superior Court 3 Judge Faith Graham and representatives of Riggs Community Health Center, Lafayette Transitional Housing, Willowstone Family Services, Wabash Valley Alliance (WVA), Sycamore Springs Hospital, Tippecanoe School Corporation nursing, Franciscan St. Elizabeth Health, River Bend Hospital, Mental Health America (MHA), National Alliance for Mental Illness – West Central Indiana (NAMI), Lafayette Urban Ministry and IU Health Arnett.

Our interviewees consistently identified community needs as:

- psychiatrists and clinical nurse practitioners
- social workers with the clinical license to provide and be reimbursed for treatment
- specialists in addiction care
- support for families who don't qualify for Medicaid
- housing for recovering patients
- therapists and treatment facilities for children
- sufficient in-patient beds for necessary length of therapy
- cost of medications
- large percentage of care occurs in jail

Funding for mental health in Tippecanoe County

County money comes from property tax, not income tax. County Mental Health Funds go to Wabash Valley Alliance as the designated Community Mental Health Center and the Intellectual Disability Funds go to Wabash Center.

The Division of Mental Health and Addiction (DMHA), a division of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), provides policy oversight and sets quality standards for publicly funded mental health and addiction services. The DMHA provides funding to help support the delivery of services to individuals living at or below

200 percent of poverty or who are enrolled in Medicaid. It also administers federal funds earmarked for substance abuse prevention projects. State funds from the DMH go to WVA.

Advocacy possibilities under current positions

“The LWVUS believes that a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost should be available to all U.S. residents.....Every U.S. resident should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care, acute care, long-term care and mental health care.”

Current LWVUS position speaks to access to a basic level of health care as a right for all residents. Basic level care includes mental health. We support financing and administration of care by a combination of governmental and private providers.

According to League principles, advocacy is directed at the level of government at which it can affect change. Very few aspects of mental health care are affected at the local level. Most funding comes from the federal government, administered by the State within strict limits.

Further League Study

For Convention 2016 the LWVUS Board recommends a concurrence with the LWV Colorado position on Behavioral Health including amending the LWVUS Health Care position to include the following as the second sentence under Basic Level of Quality Care:

“Every U.S. resident should have access to affordable, quality in-and out-patient behavioral health care, including needed medications and supportive services that is integrated with and achieves parity with physical health care.”

If this concurrence is adopted by delegates to LWVUS Convention in June 2016, we recommend the LWVGL participate in process. Locally, outlook for work includes:

- research to quantify issues already noted by our interviewees
- meetings to educate local League members so they can effectively determine if we concur with the Colorado position
- outline the system of delivery and financing of mental health care in Tippecanoe County
- determine any issues of quality of care or lack of transparency

The League should continue to learn about mental health and substance abuse in our community, work with existing organizations to advocate for improvements and to educate its members and the public.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Giroux, Committee Chair