



NEWS RELEASE

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Amid a Funding Crisis, County Leaders and Partners Speak Out During Mental Health Awareness Month

As Mental Health Awareness Month gets underway in May, counties are once again sounding the alarm about the shortcomings of the crumbling mental health system in Pennsylvania and the steps needed to assure appropriate funding and resources are available to support those in need of these important services.

State funding for mental health services has lagged behind actual need for years, negatively impacting crucial community-based mental health services provided by counties, such as crisis intervention, support for individuals leaving state facilities, treatment, community consultation and education, day services and prevention. Without a strong partnership from the state to provide the funding to meet the ever-increasing needs for these services, the additional costs will ultimately be incurred by county property taxpayers.

“Counties bear the primary responsibility to plan, provide, and contract these essential services. But for years, there has been a shortfall of state funding for county programs even while we have seen ever-increasing needs in our communities,” said Daryl Miller, [CCAP](#) President and Bradford County Commissioner. “If we continue down this same road, we are looking at potentially devastating consequences for all citizens who are affected by mental health issues.”

County leaders chose increased funding for Pennsylvania’s mental health system as their top legislative priority in 2022, calling for additional investments to ensure that the existing safety net of services is fortified and sustainable, prior to adding programs and services.

In addition to county leaders, partners across the Commonwealth are using Mental Health Awareness Month to spotlight the stress that is being thrust upon the mental health system and the importance of increased funding.

Ron Bunce, LMSW, President and CEO at [Children's Home of York](#)

"As the cost of providing mental health care for our communities most vulnerable has risen exponentially while reimbursement rates have remained stagnant for a decade or more, increased funding is essential to continue to meet the complex needs of the children and families we serve."

Andy Carter, [HAP](#) President and CEO

"Pennsylvania hospitals recognize that expanding access to behavioral health care means increasing the availability of services throughout all care settings. HAP supports increasing funding for county mental health programs to help Pennsylvanians access behavioral health care when and where they need it."

Ruthie Davis, President and Chief Operating Officer at [Pennsylvania Counseling Services](#)

"The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed Pennsylvania's mental health safety net to the breaking point, and without real, meaningful support from our state lawmakers, our most vulnerable residents are experiencing unacceptable consequences. More people are suffering with anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts due to the pandemic. Across southcentral Pennsylvania, our agency is witnessing an unprecedented spike in the need for virtually all services we provide to adults and children who are grappling with mental health challenges."

Julie Cousler Emig, Executive Director of the [PA School-Based Health Alliance](#)

"Medical providers across the board have seen a sharp rise in mental health distress and symptoms over the last two years, and that's especially true in the school-based health centers across the state. School nurses and administrators are turning to their school-based health center partners and school mental health programs, yet they are overwhelmed too. We've got to invest more next year if we want our students to recover and thrive from this pandemic."

Michael Slack, President and CEO of [KidsPeace](#)

"Statistics confirm a mental health crisis among the children and youth of our country. Sadly, years of underfunding service providers has caught up with us just when needed most. It is not an exaggeration to say there will be loss of life and traumatic incidences in our communities and schools if we do not address this critical situation now, and aggressively."

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County governments are responsible for a wide variety of critical services, including provision of human services (mental health, intellectual disabilities, juvenile justice, children and youth, long-term care, drug and alcohol services, housing) to people in need in our communities. In addition, counties are responsible for emergency management and 911 services, administration of the courts and corrections system, elections, maintenance of county bridges, and the

county property assessment rolls, and also are involved in environmental and land use planning, protection of open space and community and economic development.

The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) is the voice of county government - a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan association representing all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. CCAP members include county commissioners, their equivalents in home rule counties, council members, county executives, administrators, chief clerks and solicitors of all counties. CCAP strengthens the counties' abilities to govern their own affairs and improve the well-being and quality of life for every Pennsylvania resident. It advocates for favorable state and federal legislation, programs and policies on behalf of counties. CCAP is committed to service excellence through education, information, insurance, technology and other programs that support effective county government. Founded in 1886, CCAP is an affiliate of the National Association of Counties. For more information about Pennsylvania counties and CCAP, log on to www.pacounties.org and follow @PACountiesGR on Twitter.