

Workforce Crisis

Psychiatry, psychology, social work, psychiatric nursing and marriage and family counseling are often considered the “core” mental health professions. Currently, 70 of Minnesota’s 87 counties meet federal criteria as mental health professional shortage areas. Statewide, Minnesota has about 33 percent fewer psychiatrists per capita than the national average and shortages in rural areas are particularly critical. The shortage of child and adolescent psychiatrists is even greater with 4.6 child psychiatrists per 100,000 as compared to 6.7 nationally. Existing workforce data on the remaining core mental health professions, such as psychology and social work, is limited to licensing information collected by the state’s regulatory boards. These records also show disproportionate under-representation in rural counties.

Historically poor reimbursement rates in public mental health programs have been cited as contributing to the problems of attracting and retaining mental health professionals. The 2006 legislature passed a 23.7% rate increase to psychiatrists, advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) with a psychiatric specialty, and "Critical Access Providers" when they provide CTSS group skills training, psychotherapy, medication management, evaluation and management, diagnostic assessment, explanation of findings, psychological testing, neuropsychological services, direction of behavioral aides and inpatient consultation. The proposal did not include other community mental health services, adult day treatment, partial hospitalization, crisis response services, ARMHS, ACT, IRTS, Rule 5 or MH-Targeted Case Management. Expansion of services reimbursed at the higher rate will enhance the state’s community resources as well.

Improved payment to providers increases consumer purchasing power, attracts qualified professionals to public service and improves earlier access to treatment and supports.

The Mental Health Legislative Network Supports:

- Increasing rates to mental health providers and require an automatic cost of living increase (COLA) (SF 903/HF 922)
- Permitting licensed physicians, psychologists or advance practice nurses to act as an examiner for a MN residents who is in a mental health facility in a bordering state (SF 860/HF 576)
- Establishing a study of the inpatient bed crisis

All these provisions are also contained in HF 196 and SF 148.