



Connecting For Life

June 30, 2009

www.ohiospf.org

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There is no time like the present to make sure your voice is being heard regarding Ohio's Biennial Budget!

Dear Friends of the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation:

I **thank you** for all you are doing and I ask you to keep the pressure on. WE NEED TO MAKE A LAST ROUND OF CALLS TO LEGISLATORS AND THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE; attached are a list of Legislators that need to hear from you and the universal message is:

You must fully fund alcohol, drug addiction and mental health services in this biennial budget. If you do not, hundreds of Ohioans are in jeopardy of dying. Treatment will work, and people will recover as long as they have access to services. Please help save a life.

PHONE NUMBERS:

Governor Ted Strickland	614-466-3555
Senate President Bill Harris	614-466-8086
Senator Tom Niehaus	614-466-8082
Senator John Carey	614-466-8156
Senator Mark Wagoner	614-466-8060
Senator Dale Miller	614-466-5123
Speaker Armond Budish	614-466-5441
Representative Matt Szollosi	614-466-1418
Representative Jennifer Garrison	614-644-8728
Representative Jay Goyal	614-466-5802
Representative Vernon Sykes	614-466-3100
Representative Ron Amstutz	614-466-1474

Beside the names listed above, please see the attached list of Ohio Legislators and be in touch with your local legislator to make your voice heard.

Thank you for helping to restore hope and connecting to life.

Regards,

Carolyn Givens, Executive Director, Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation



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DON'T STOP NOW. LET THE FREEDOM TO RECOVER, RING!!

Advocates of mental health and alcohol and other drug services must continue to press home the point that Ohio citizens need the benefits of the behavioral health system fully funded at the House of Representatives level. To make that point, we are urging all advocates to Rally for Recovery at your 4th of July Parade!

On the 4th of July we celebrate our rights and freedoms as citizens of the greatest country on earth. This 4th of July, we ask you to bring your signs, your voices, and yourselves out to your community's parade to LET THE FREEDOM TO RECOVER, RING ACROSS OHIO!!

Here is what we want you to do:

Organize a group of recovery advocates to make signs to hold during the parade. Signs should say:

INVEST WISELY! Fund Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Services

\$1 Spent on Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Services Saves \$11 Tax Dollars

Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Services SAVE LIVES!!

Attend the parade and meet at a designated time and location.

Let people know you're there! Be loud and make sure any public officials, especially legislators, see your signs and hear your chants.

Have one of your group take video (AVI files or QuickTime for Macs) and/or photos (jpegs). Not a lot; just a couple minutes or 5-6 photos will do.

Get video of a couple people explaining why Ohio should fund Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Services and what will happen if the services are cut. Short "sound bite" comments are best.

Email the pictures and video to this email address: givens.62@osu.edu

NOTE: When possible, include people's names and hometowns in the email.

SPECIAL NOTE: We need the video and photos NO LATER THAN MONDAY, JULY 6th.

A compilation video and photo array will be uploaded to YouTube and posted to Coalition for Healthy Communities members' websites. The media and members of the Ohio General Assembly and the Governor's Office will be directed to look at the new footage, pictures, and quotes. We have to keep our issue in their minds!

This will work if we all work it together!!

Questions? Contact : Carolyn Givens at (614) 292-9268 or email—givens.62@osu.edu



Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation

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Letter to Governor Strickland:

June 24, 2009

Dear Governor Strickland,

On behalf of Ohioans in need of critical mental health and drug and alcohol addiction services, we were initially encouraged when we heard you say that we cannot eliminate essential safety net services to balance the budget. Yet you did. Either that or you do not consider behavioral health care an essential safety net service. **Make no mistake, Governor Strickland, under your proposal, people will die.**

Funding for behavioral health has historically been woefully inadequate in Ohio – in good economic times and in bad. State funding for community mental health and addiction recovery services were already below funding levels from ten years ago in the budget you introduced in February. The cuts you recommended in your framework last week will decimate Ohio's ability to provide treatment services to Ohioans with mental illness and addictive disorders.

The negative impact of insufficient access to behavioral healthcare during this economic downturn has already been grabbing headlines throughout Ohio. Our state has experienced 21 murder-suicide events from January through May of 2009 with 47 children and adults killed and 6 injured. In 2007, there were 10 such events in the same time period. Deaths due to overdoses, which now claim more lives than vehicle crash deaths, continue to climb. With appropriate access to treatment, lives can be saved.

It seems that policymakers have yet to grasp the sad fact that reducing funding to behavioral health services does not save taxpayer dollars. In fact, the opposite is true. People will still need access to behavioral healthcare - just like any other type of healthcare – whether it is funded or not. If they don't get it in the community, they'll get it elsewhere. The choice is simple. Ohio can invest an average \$7,400 per person on treatment for mental illness and \$1,600 for addiction treatment at the community level. Or we can spend \$25,000 per adult and \$79,000 per juvenile in our state correctional facilities, \$1,600 per day on avoidable emergency room visits, or \$18,000 a year for every child in foster care. Or we can add to the list of avoidable deaths.

People with serious behavioral health disorders, including children, the elderly, and veterans in need of help returning home already have to wait months just to see a treatment professional. In some areas, access to support services such as housing are non-existent. We cannot deny basic services such as medication, supportive housing, and treatment to these individuals and expect them to survive. If these are not essential safety net services for vulnerable Ohioans, we don't know what are.

Please, Governor Strickland, reconsider. And please, Members of the General Assembly do not accept for a minute that the Governor's framework protects the safety net. It absolutely does not. And for the rest of you who are reading this letter, please contact the Governor's Office (1-614-466-3555) and your representatives in the General Assembly (1-800-282-0253) and urge them to preserve funding for community alcohol, drug addiction and mental health services.

Sincerely,

The Members of the Coalition for Healthy Communities:

Mental Health Advocacy Coalition; Mental Health America of Ohio;

Multiethnic Advocates for Cultural Competence;

National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio (NAMI Ohio);

National Association of Social Workers–Ohio Chapter (NASW–Ohio Chapter);

Ohio Adult Care Facilities Association; Ohio Counseling Association;

Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities;

Ohio Association of Residential Recovery Services;

Ohio Citizen Advocates for Chemical Dependency Prevention and Treatment;

Ohio Council of Behavioral Health and Family Services Providers;

Ohio Federation for Children's Mental Health;

Ohio Psychiatric Physicians Association; Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation;

Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio (UHCAN Ohio)