



2018 Policy and Legislative Priorities

Increase Access to Community Based Mental Health Care

All Virginians with mental health issues deserve access to community-based care that is timely, appropriate, affordable, and delivered as early as possible.

- *Support the development of diverse community-based housing and residential services designed to enable Virginians with a wide-range of mental health needs to live as independently as possible in their home communities.*
- *Support the development of a mental health services funding model that results in increased equity of service quality and availability statewide.*
- *Support Community Services Boards to reduce waiting time for services by adopting “same day assessment” statewide, hiring more licensed mental health providers, and eliminating barriers to psychiatric services.*
- *Support the expansion of GAP insurance to cover all community-based mental health services, including PACT.*

Address the Needs of People with Mental Health Challenges in the Criminal Justice System

Many Virginians who need mental health services are instead arrested and incarcerated. All localities should screen for diversion at the earliest stage of the criminal justice process. For those who are confined, services must be timely, professional and based on individual needs.

- *Support the development of mental health dockets for misdemeanor and felony charges in more localities across the state. Remove the eligibility requirement that a formal clinical diagnosis of mental illness must have occurred prior to the date of the offense.*
- *Support the development of a transparent process of accountability for the treatment and care of all individuals with a mental illness while in the custody of the criminal justice or state hospital systems.*
- *Support appropriate use of the Not Guilty By Reason of Insanity defense.*
- *In capital cases when death or life in prison are the sentencing options, exclude from eligibility for the death penalty those who suffer from serious mental illness at the time of their crime.*

Expand Peer Support and Peer Run Programs Peer support is an evidence-based service that reduces crisis relapse and increases successful community engagement.

- *Encourage public and private agencies throughout the continuum of care to include peer support.*
- *Encourage expanded third-party reimbursement of services provided by Certified Peer Recovery Specialists in health care, supportive housing, employment, criminal justice and other settings.*