



THE GERIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH ALLIANCE OF NEW YORK
50 Broadway, 19th Floor, New York, NY 10004 212-614-5753 center@mhaofnyc.org
www.mha-nyc.org/gmhany

GMHA'S RESPONSE TO THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET

The Geriatric Mental Health Alliance (GMHA) of New York appreciates that New York State, like the rest of the nation, is confronting a severe economic downturn and that is why the Governor's Executive Budget of \$132.9 billion closes a \$10 billion budget gap with major proposed funding reductions in health care and education.

As evidenced by significant proposed cuts to aging service programs and other supports for older adults, the **Governor's Executive Budget fails to recognize the vital importance of various services to helping older adults maintain their mental health, well-being, and independence in the community.** These proposed cuts occur at a time when the demand for services is only increasing, not only due to the economic recession, but also because older New Yorkers are beginning to grow in number and percentage and will continue to increase significantly over the next decade.

NYS must make efforts now to prepare for the dramatic shift in the older adult population. Financial and programmatic investments in community-based services promote the overall dignity and quality of life of older adults while also reducing the utilization and cost of more expensive services.

We urge the legislature to **protect and restore necessary resources to support older adults with mental health needs to age in the community** and prevent the use of more costly institutional services.

Specifically, The GMHA calls for the legislature to:

- **Preserve funding for the geriatric mental health demonstration programs** which fund 10 innovative programs around the state that integrate health and mental health services or operate community gatekeeper projects
- **Support continuation of the Interagency Geriatric Mental Health and Chemical Dependence Planning Council** The Council was established pursuant to the Geriatric Mental Health Act and is conducting important long-term planning regarding the mental health needs of older new Yorkers.

The GMHA also calls on the Legislature to:

- **Urge the state to fully comply with the adult home federal court ruling** This ruling requires the state to provide adult home residents with the housing, rehabilitation, and supportive services they will need to make the transition to living more independently in community settings. The state must not delay or appeal its responsibility to help adult home residents with psychiatric disabilities to live in the community.

- **Restore funding for NY Connects Program (\$0.95 million)** NY Connects (NYS's Aging and Disability Resource Center) is a critical resource for older adults and their families looking to navigate the complex long-term care system.
- **Restore funding for various discrete programs (\$3.1 million)**
- **Restore Title XX funding for senior services (\$37 million)**
- **Restore legislative additions made last year for EISEP, CSE, and SNAP (\$5 million)**
- **Restore funding for wrap around coverage under EPIC (\$58.4 million)**

Also, **pending the recommendations of the Medicaid Redesign Team**, The GMHA calls for the legislature to:

- **Support effective integration of behavioral health into long-term care** Addressing the behavioral health needs of individuals at risk of placement in, or currently in, institutional settings and the needs of their family caregivers can significantly improve quality of life and reduce cost. *Medicaid long-term care restructuring cannot be effective without confronting these disorders.*
- **Support managed behavioral health plans for individuals with chronic long-term behavioral and physical health disorders** in order to better coordinate care, effectively promote their overall health and recovery, and reduce cost of inpatient care and emergency room visits.
- **Protect open access to psychiatric medications** When proper drug access is impaired, a patient's health and quality of life is placed at risk and ultimately results in increased costs to other parts of the system. Therefore, we urge the legislature to oppose proposals to limit access to medications, such as 'carving in' of mental health medications into managed care plans.