

1) SAN ANTONIO STATE HOSPITAL BED CAPACITY NEEDS TO BE EXPANDED

Thirty two (32) San Antonio State Hospital (SASH) beds were converted to forensic beds in May. There are only 64 general adult civil beds left to cover 55 counties. Currently, there is a 40 bed unit that is closed due to renovation/staffing needs. As more state hospital beds are diverted to forensic populations, fewer beds are left for people who have not committed crimes. The boarding of mental health patients in crowded emergency rooms increases as civil beds disappear. Eliminating civil beds contributes to cultural disparity because many of the indigent mentally ill are minorities.

- Restore 32-40 forensic beds to civil beds at SASH.
- Refurbish the 40 bed closed unit at SASH and fund staff so civil bed capacity is increased.

2) THE CENTER for HEALTH CARE SERVICES FUNDING IS LESS OTHER URBAN CITIES

Bexar County receives per capita funding is \$9.81 compared to the state average of \$10.40. Mental Health projections from the Hogg Foundation report that approximately 475,000 San Antonio residents live with a mental health diagnosis.

- Our local Mental Health Authority (Center for Health Care Services) is only funded to treat 2,700 individuals.
- Funding disparities across Texas should be eliminated and a new system based on severity of illness, poverty, access to care and treatment resources are considered.

3) SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SERVICES EXPANDED

Supportive housing is essential to a person's recovery and they need safe affordable housing that includes built in supports so that individuals can maintain stable lives. There is minimal supportive housing in our City.

- The supply of permanent supportive housing in the community should be increased and include rental assistance.

4) CARE SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO PEOPLE WHO ARE UNINSURED

Without insurance mental health treatment is not available to people living with a mental illness. Over 293,000 Texans are ineligible for both public and financial assistance for a mental health or a substance use disorder.

- Texas leaders should pursue a block grant to enable all Texans to receive access to medical and psychiatric care.

5) JAIL RELEASE & DIVERSION STRATEGIES SHOULD BE INCREASED

We want to reduce people returning to jail by providing resources that integrate them back into our community. In addition, people with a mental health diagnosis should be diverted to treatment instead of being incarcerated. The shortage our outpatient services including psychiatrist availability, affordable medications and intensive outpatient services in our community feeds the jail pipeline.

- Expanding jail diversion strategies across the state will greatly help to reduce the large population of individuals with mental health and substance use issues in Texas jails.

Who are we?

The National Alliance on Mental Illness is the nation's largest grass roots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI San Antonio is committed to improving the quality of life for all people affected by mental illness by providing support, education, referral sources and legislative advocacy.

Dear Senator/Representative _____,

One in five individuals lives with a mental illness. There are not enough mental health resources in Bexar County. I **(live with a mental health diagnosis or have a family member with a mental illness)** One of the most significant concerns I have about mental health care is:

- There is not enough hospital capacity for people living with a mental illness.
- Funding for Mental Health Authorities should take into account the severity of mental health illness and be the same across the state.
- Expansion of supportive housing & rental assistance should be increased.
- Access to care for individuals who do not have health insurance should be provided.
- Jail release and Diversion Strategies should be increased.

The lack of these services forces people to seek costly emergency room care or end up in the jail. Investing in the mental health care in Bexar County will reduce the staggering healthcare costs of the mental illness.

I am asking you to support legislation that will promote mental health access and treatment.

Thank you,

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

To find out the names of the senators and congressmen who represent you go to <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/Zip.aspx> and enter your zip code