

Sponsorship Request

Educating Policymakers About the Need for Increasing Treatment and Support Services for People with Serious Mental Illness in the Criminal Justice System

Background

The criminal justice system is the largest de facto provider of behavioral health and substance use treatment services in the United States. When individuals with serious mental illness encounter the criminal justice system, they frequently do not have access to appropriate, evidence-based treatment while incarcerated or consistent, timely access to services upon release, resulting in a cycle of re-arrest. With more than half of county jail inmates experiencing mental health disorders, solutions are needed to promote continuity of treatment for justice-involved populations. However, navigating the complexities of fragmented criminal justice and health care systems can be challenging for providers who treat justice-involved people living with mental health disorders. Policies at both the state and federal levels need to change their focus to diverting those with serious behavioral health needs into treatment to break the cycle of recidivism.

Many models exist today showing that partnerships between law enforcement, corrections, courts and community behavioral health providers can improve treatment outcomes, decrease local jail and prison populations and save money. One of those models, Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs), have shown how they are able to partner with local criminal justice systems to support crisis intervention, decrease incarceration rates and decrease recidivism through access to timely, evidence-based treatment in the community. Long-acting injectable medications (LAIs) are one of the evidence-based treatments that are designed to address barriers to continuity in treatment and improve patient experience.

The means exist to assure that serious mental illness is not a jail sentence. But more needs to be done to educate elected officials and candidates about the need for federal and state policies that help to provide a bridge between the criminal justice and behavioral healthcare systems and divert individuals in need of evidenced-based behavioral health treatment services from jails and prisons and increase the supports available to individuals once released from incarceration. The Behavioral Health and Economics Network (BHECON) provides a platform for stakeholders to discuss policy solutions supported by data that have the potential address this critical issue.

Proposed Activity

Candidate Forums. As a way of raising the profile of the prevalence of serious mental illness and the need for additional support and treatment, BHECON will sponsor town hall forums featuring candidates for elected office that will focus on the issue of improving treatment and support services for individuals with serious mental illness. These forums will be held in Iowa and New Hampshire and will engage candidates in meaningful, public dialogue by allowing individuals, families and parents of

those living with serious mental illness to share stories and experiences and advocate for the inclusion of this issue in the national debate on health care issues. The goal of the events will be to generate emotional energy and a groundswell of support from consumers and families, while also ensuring candidates are recognizing and including the issue in their platforms. In undertaking these events, BHECON will look to partner with other national organizations across the fields of behavioral health, health care and other relevant organizations. In addition, these events will be an opportunity to illustrate the injustice of high rates of incarceration of individuals with serious mental illness.

State Forums

In Iowa and New Hampshire, BHECON proposes to sponsor a public forum to educate candidates for elected office and the public about the need for evidenced-based behavioral health treatment services for those with serious mental illness involved in the criminal justice system and potential policy solutions.

Internal planning for the event. BHECON will lead in planning the event, including date of the event, identification and negotiation with the event site, preparing invitation list, coordinating registrations and other logistics that can be handed remotely.

Communications support. BHECON will provide communications support leading up to and following the event, such as drafting op-eds and letters to the editor for publication by local news outlets, pitching stories to local media, producing a whiteboard or video describing issues and possible policy solutions, developing infographics for use in advocacy and hosting live social media events such as “tweet chats.”

Event production. BHECON will retain a public relations firm to produce the forum, including handling arrangements with candidates and other speakers, event set-up and design, event promotion, event security and other on-the-ground logistics.

Sponsorship Opportunities

To support the state forums, BHECON is offering the following sponsorship opportunities to funders:

Leadership Level: For \$200,000, sponsorship at the Leadership level will provide support for forums in both Iowa and New Hampshire. A Leadership Sponsor will receive the highest possible visibility at these events and on related collateral. In return for being a sponsor at this level, a Leadership Sponsor will receive verbal and written **company acknowledgement** at the event and on promotional material as permissible, unlimited **complimentary attendance** for company representatives at the event, **display of the company logo** on all published materials related to the events as appropriate, written **weekly updates** on the progress of the events and a **final report** on the events.

Advocate Level: For \$100,000, sponsorship at the Advocate level will provide support for a forum in one state, either Iowa and New Hampshire. Sponsorship at the Advocate level would include **complimentary attendance** for one company representative at the event, **display of the company logo**

on all published materials related to the event as appropriate, written **weekly updates** on the event and a **final report** on the event.

Patron Level: For up to \$50,000, sponsorship at the Patron level will provide support for an earned media campaign in Iowa and New Hampshire on improving treatment and support services within the criminal justice system for people with serious mental illness, including evidence-based treatments such as LAIs. Sponsorship at this level would include written **weekly updates** on BHECON activities and a **final report** on the campaign.

About Us

The National Council for Behavioral Health is the unifying voice of America's health care organizations that deliver mental health and addictions treatment and services. Together with more than 3,000 member organizations serving 10 million adults, children and families living with mental illnesses and addictions, the National Council is committed to all Americans having access to comprehensive, high-quality care that affords every opportunity for recovery. The National Council introduced Mental Health First Aid to the USA and more than 1.5 million Americans have been trained. To learn more about the National Council, visit www.TheNationalCouncil.org.

Background and Expertise

The National Council for Behavioral Health is a respected and active participant in the policymaking and advocacy process. Over our decades of work in Washington, D.C., we have forged strong relationships with Republican and Democratic lawmakers, cultivating behavioral health champions within the halls of Congress and educating rank-and-file lawmakers about the importance of investing in community-based mental health and addiction care. Our approach to policymaking and advocacy positions the National Council as a bidirectional bridge between Congress and constituents. We update member organizations and frontline providers about recent developments inside the Beltway that affect their service delivery, while serving as a conduit of information from local and state advocates to inform federal policy decisions.

With our state-level behavioral health association partners, we mobilize advocates to effect policy change and play a convening role in unifying national groups around a common agenda. Since 2017, the National Council has sponsored the BHECON project and worked in nine states to successfully drive policy change related to the behavioral health workforce, access to evidence-based treatment of mental illness and diversion of people with mental health and substance use disorders from the criminal justice system into community-based treatment. The National Council's annual Public Policy Institute and Hill Day, held in partnership with 20 other national mental health and addiction organizations, regularly brings more than 600 providers, consumers, family members and other behavioral health stakeholders to Washington to directly connect with their elected officials around issues that affect their organizations or the people they serve.

The National Council has led numerous successful advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C., including passage of the Excellence in Mental Health Act demonstration in 2014, the successful fight to block

harmful restrictions to mental health medications in Medicare Part D in 2014, passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act in 2016 and the introduction of key line items in the Health and Human Services appropriations bill funding integrated health service delivery in community-based settings (now funded for 10 consecutive years) and Mental Health First Aid trainings (now funded for five consecutive years).

The National Council leads and is involved in numerous D.C.-based coalitions, including the Mental Health Liaison Group (whose Board of Directors is chaired by the National Council's Chuck Ingoglia), the Partnership for Medicaid, the Partnership for Part D Access, the Coalition for Whole Health, the Coalition for Health Funding, the Behavioral Health Information Technology Coalition and more. With input and collaboration from our state association partners, we also support state-level advocacy on key topics such as Mental Health First Aid. The members of our Policy and Advocacy team bring decades of experience in mental health and addiction delivery and policy, grassroots organizing and mobilization and bipartisan messaging and communications. With our reputation for constructive bipartisanship and history of close collaboration with state partners, we are uniquely positioned for successfully leveraging the activities of the Behavioral Health + Economics Network into concrete policy change.