

Increase the Medical Assistance reimbursement rates for mental healthcare

The citizens of Northwest Wisconsin request:

- **That the Department of Health Services increase the Medical Assistance Program rates for mental health services.**

Douglas County residents insured by Wisconsin Medical Assistance have great difficulty finding needed and appropriate mental health care due to the level of reimbursement. The low funding levels result in providers not locating, or limiting, services in Douglas County. For the few providers who do locate in Douglas County, it is difficult to recruit and retain staff at the salary level afforded because of the opportunity to receive better salaries across the state line in Minnesota. For example, a one hour appointment with a Psychiatrist is reimbursed at \$149.62 by Minnesota Medicaid, but only \$96.16 by Wisconsin Medicaid. A one hour appointment with a therapist is reimbursed at \$93.41 by Minnesota Medicaid, but only \$55.00 by Wisconsin Medicaid.

These disparities not only reduce the availability of services within Douglas County, but cause providers across the state line to avoid certification as Wisconsin providers in order to avoid serving that clientele. It also creates a certain stigma: no one welcomes the Wisconsin MA client. The impact on our citizens is the most crucial issue. We know that up to 20% of our citizens nationwide will be affected by mental health problems at some point in their lives, resulting in increased personal and family stress, reduction in productivity, increase in emergency room visits, and the ultimate cost: suicide as a result of untreated depression. Timely and appropriate treatment reduces the overall cost of health care and the negative impact on our families and communities.

For more information contact:

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