

Talking Points on Grading the States

WHAT:

- NAMI conducted a comprehensive study of the state mental health systems across the country. In this report card, each state was scored on 39 criteria. The national overall average was a D.

WHY:

- Mental illnesses cause more disability than any other class of medical illness in America. Treatment can work, but only if you can get it. The problem is that Americans with serious mental illnesses do not necessarily have access to the treatment they need.

HOW:

- This report card is based on four principle sources:
 1. Written responses to questionnaires from state mental health agencies
 2. Public information
 3. Interviews with consumers and family advocates
 4. And the 4th is actually unique. We asked *consumers* to test information accessibility by getting on websites and making phone calls and to monitor their results with a scoring system. This Consumer Test Drive allowed us to see how easily one could obtain basic information.
- (other) More than 40 states scored less than 50% of the total points in the Consumer Test Drive. In one case an agency employee told a consumer: “I will not help you.”
- (other) The states that received excellent Test Drive scores were: Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, South Carolina and Tennessee. Those that received the lowest were Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri, New Mexico and South Dakota.

RESULTS:

{SEE YOUR REPORT AND PULL YOUR RESULTS PREFERENCES}

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- NAMI intends for the report to be a consumers’ guide to public services for adults with serious mental illness. We hope it will provide policy makers with a specific agenda for action. We want to promote a dialogue among everyone about what is and what is NOT working in the mental health system.
- Based on our study, these are NAMI’s policy recommendations:
{See report and be prepared to articulate}
- There are also a number of innovations underway in several states which demonstrate that states can learn from one another. For example:
{See report and be prepared to articulate}

OTHER:

- This is the first comprehensive survey conducted in 16 years. On a state-by-state basis, the 250 page report confirms for the first time in detail what a presidential commission has called a “system in shambles.”
- The national overall average was a D. Detailed information about the results and an overview of the state are available in the report.
- It’s relevant for news stories looking at the impact of state budget cuts and increasing state restrictions on Medicaid.
- It’s also relevant to stories on states with budget surpluses and choices in priorities, such as Virginia’s proposed \$460 million investment out of a \$1 billion surplus to rebuild its mental healthcare system.
- We can arrange interviews for you with state advocates, families, or consumers who are directly affected by the consequences outlined in the report.