

Sample Op-Ed NAMI State Advocacy 2011

Submitted by:

NAME]
[NAMI title]
[NAMI State or City]
[Mailing Address]
[Day and Evening Phone Numbers]
[E-mail address]

The High Cost of Cutting Mental Health

Tough times require tough choices.

We hear this phrase a lot during the state's budget debate, but legislators need to be reminded that budget cuts can sometimes be penny-wise but pound foolish.

For example, we know there is a high cost to cutting mental health.

When mental health is cut, burdens only gets shifted elsewhere—to emergency rooms, schools, police and local courts. Businesses lose productivity. Families are broken. People end up living on the street or dead.

When economic distress began in 2008, the need for mental health services increased, but the state cut them by \$ _____. Now the governor and legislators want to cut them even more.

It's time to tell them to stop cutting. Protect and strengthen mental health care instead.

Mental illness does not discriminate. It can affect anyone at anytime, including Democrats, Independents and Republicans.

Three quarters of people living with mental illness had it appear by age 24.

In [STATE], approximately [\[state number\]](#) adults live with serious mental illness, such as major depression, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. The number of children and teenagers is about [\[state number\]](#). In fact, suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 15 to 24.

These numbers represent family members, friends, neighbors and co-workers. They represent voters. Everyone knows someone who is affected.

Treatment works, there is often a delay of about 10 years before people get the help they need, especially for young people. When state mental health care is cut, appointments may not be available for months—assuming that there is still a local clinic orl qualified mental health professionals still available..

..

None of us would tolerate a system that abandons people who suffer heart attacks or epileptic seizures—or simply tells them to take a number and come back in three months when they are in crisis. Yet too often, mental illness is overlooked, marginalized, trivialized or stigmatized

For mental health concerns, we need to make sure that the right care is provided at the right time in the right place. This includes integrating mental health care with primary health care and providing an adequate, qualified work force to provide community-based services.

[Insert a personal story or local facts about mental illness and recovery. Op-ed submissions should be about 600 words in length. This example is about 400].

Please, no more mental health cuts. Tell the governor and the legislature: It's time to protect and strengthen mental health care.

###