



New York

In 2006, New York chose not to provide survey information on its mental health system, receiving a “U” grade for “unresponsive.”

Three years later, the state receives a B. Despite this high grade, all is not perfect. New York has many strengths, but it also has many problems.

In recent years, the Office of Mental Health (OMH) has emphasized support for evidence-based practices. Seventy-seven Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams exist throughout the state. OMH also funds supported employment, peer counseling, peer education, and consumer-run programs.

Placement of large numbers of consumers in sub-standard adult care homes has been the subject of ongoing litigation. OMH is working to assist adult home residents to move into community-based housing linked with supportive services.

New York is also investing in housing. A recently signed agreement between New York City and the state, “New York/New York III,” commits combined state and city resources to develop 9,000 housing units over 10 years. The Pathways to Housing “Housing First” model has become internationally recognized. Despite these initiatives, lack of housing is still a very serious problem.

In 2007, New York finally enacted “Timothy’s Law,” after a hard fought battle to achieve mental health insurance parity. Efforts are underway to expand it to include coverage of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Ironically, the state’s program for the uninsured called “Healthy New York” excludes mental health services.

In 2008, another important development was the enactment of a law to limit segregation of prisoners with serious mental illnesses and instead provide them with treatment. The law should be replicated in every state.

Although still controversial among some advocates, “Kendra’s Law,” which authorizes involuntary assisted outpatient treatment, has resulted in fewer hospitalizations and arrests, as well as new investments in mental health services and supports.

Deficiencies exist, including severe shortages of acute care psychiatric beds and crisis stabilization programs. Confronted with dual problems of inadequate reimbursement rates and staff shortages, a number of community hospitals have recently downsized or closed psychiatric treatment units. Predictably, emergency rooms

Innovations

- Progress on evidence-based practices
- Mental health parity
- “Housing First” model

Urgent Needs

- Acute care and crisis beds
- Housing
- CIT programs

Consumer and Family Comments

- *“Emergency rooms at hospitals . . . It’s like a nightmare and ignorance prevails with staff . . .”*
- *“No help from law enforcement agency or mental health system unless something bad happens.”*
- *“Most of the providers are dedicated and very caring.”*
- *“We need more housing that is safe and where they dispense the medication.”*

are overwhelmed with individuals in crisis with no available treatment beds.

In 2008, New York’s bed crisis rose to national notoriety through a shocking video showing the death of a woman in a waiting room in Brooklyn’s Kings County Hospital after waiting 24 hours for emergency psychiatric care. While lack of monitoring, failure to train staff, and lack of compassion contributed to her death, so did the lack of available psychiatric beds.

New York is surprisingly far behind many other states in developing partnerships between law enforcement and the mental health system. Only two police Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) programs currently exist.

In 2009, New York’s economic challenges cloud the horizon. Financial collapse on Wall Street and the recession have resulted in a \$15.4 billion deficit, the largest in the state’s history. Many consumers and families fear the economic squeeze could negate progress made in recent years.

New York has potential to become one of the national leaders in public mental health care. However, budget cuts, retreats, or delays in improving services will signal a faltering commitment to evidence-based, cost-effective transformation, and recovery. The next few years will be vital in setting the state’s course for the future.