Mental Health
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Illinois has a woeful record on mental health issues. The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) gave our State a “D” in its 2009 report for its lack of funding to ensure access to community mental health services. The report says that Illinois has cut $187 million from its mental health budget from 2009- through 2012 budget year.

In the late 60s, some counties and townships, with League advocacy, created local mental health boards (underlined in the Mental Health Position). According to the President’s New Freedom Commission Report of 2003, monumental systems change is more likely to come from grassroots efforts at the local level, underlining the critical role of local mental health authorities for providing a safety net in the current mental health system and for facilitating those system changes. In 2011, Governor Quinn signed PA 97-0439 the purpose of this amendment to the Community Mental Health Act (405 ILCS20), is to mandate counties and Cook County townships, with no local mental health authorities, to form mental health advisory committees comprised of seven community stakeholders. The mental health advisory committee is charged with identifying and assessing current mental health services, monitoring the expansion or contraction of those services, and, if necessary, recommending any additional services. There are around 50 counties and townships that do not have a local Mental Health Advisory Committee in Illinois.

In the fall of 2011 and summer of 2012 the LWVIL and local Leagues spoke out against the sudden closure of a state mental health facility in Tinley Park and Singer Mental Health Center. The closure was attributed to lack of funding but the greater concern was lack of provisions to provide alternative services for clients. The main concern is that the Department of Human Services (DHS) has announced that it does not intend to use the money appropriated in Public Act 97-0730 either to keep the nine state-operated mental health facilities open or for transitional services in the community.

League Activity Outlook: One of the jobs of the LWVIL Mental Health Issue specialist is to send Action Alerts which address the concerns based on the League’s Mental Health position to grassroots advocates who wish to contact their elected officials regarding current legislation. The issue Specialist also acts as a liaison for local Leagues that have questions or need information on taking action based on the State’s position at the local level. Issues of importance in the next year.

- Local funding issues- Support local Leagues, that do not have mandated voluntary mental health advisory Committees, and help educate the public of the need for behavioral health local funding.
- State funding issues- advocating the legislators and Governor to spend the money that was appropriated and comply with the Funding Reinvestment Statute with the closing of Tinley Park and Singer Mental Health Centers.
- Support the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Act of 2003 PA 93-0495. The act contains short-term and long-term recommendations for comprehensive, coordinated mental health prevention, early intervention and treatment services for children from birth to 18, and youth ages 19-21 who are transitioning out of key programs.