



An Affiliate of the National Mental Health Association

Mental Health Association in Texas

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tuesday, February 8, 2005

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LANDMARK REPORT CALLS FOR REFORMS OF STATE'S MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

(AUSTIN) — The state's leading advocates for people with mental illness today released a landmark report documenting the economic and human costs of failing to prioritize mental health care and proposed a comprehensive agenda for improving the lives of the 4.2 million Texans who live with mental illness, the families who care for them, and the taxpayers who foot many of the bills.

"Texas is turning the corner, and we have it within our reach to combine our economic opportunity with our moral obligation," said Lynn Lasky Clark, President and CEO of the Mental Health Association in Texas, which commissioned the report. "Will we do the right thing? Or will we continue to leave Texans with mental illness behind?"

The report, *Turning the Corner: Toward Balance and Reform in Texas Mental Health Services*, provides the most detailed look at the Texas mental health system in a decade.

Among the report's major findings:

- Mental illness is costing the state up to \$16.6 billion per year in lost productivity and family revenue
- The additional burden on state and local taxpayers is at least \$1.5 billion per year
- Texas ranks 49th in per client spending on services for mental health care -- a precarious position threatened by recent state budget cuts

Clark said the message to state leaders is that reduced spending and chronic under-funding are making things worse for Texas taxpayers and those with mental illness.

"We are calling on lawmakers to resist, restore, and recognize," Clark said. "Resist more budget cuts, restore the cuts made last session, and recognize that a smart investment in mental health care will save money and help millions lead productive lives."

Turning the Corner lays out a comprehensive agenda for reform in the state's mental health system, including:

- Fully restoring the mental health benefits under the Children's Health Insurance program
- Improving public safety by diverting non-violent offenders with mental illness to treatment rather than jail
- Restoring "priority" population guidelines of who is served by mental health system
- Creating purchasing cooperatives for mental health services
- Boosting federal Medicaid funding of mental health services
- Removing restrictions on the use of cutting-edge psychotropic drugs

The Mental Health Association in Texas is the state's oldest and largest mental health non-profit education and advocacy organization in the state.

The full "Turning the Corner" report, an executive summary, and additional materials are available at <http://www.mhatexas.org> or by calling 512-454-3706.