

ENHANCING OUR Community Mental Health SYSTEM



MENTAL HEALTH LISTENING TOUR
MICHIGAN HOUSE DEMOCRATS

Overview

Between September and December 2021, Michigan House Democrats held over 15 Mental Health Listening Tour stops throughout Michigan. The goal of these tours was to facilitate a guided discussion among local mental health practitioners, consumers, and their families on the current state of our Community Mental Health (CMH) system in Michigan. The tour was meant to ensure that any changes to our CMH system were consumer-centered. Consumers and families need to be actively involved in the planning and delivery of services at all levels of the system.

Through these listening tours, we were able to learn about the great work being done locally throughout our CMH system as well as identify areas for improvement. Issues such as access, workforce recruitment and retention, and funding were all common challenges across the state. Michiganders deserve and expect a strong public mental health system. By implementing key policy changes and making targeted investments, Michigan can continue to enhance the system it has built over the past 50 years and create a system that is accessible, person-centered, and community-driven.

Key Takeaways

- 1. Keeping Community Mental Health in the Community:** Consumers and mental health practitioners alike support a community-based approach. Most people do not want to see services and decision-making taken out of the local setting. There are countless local partnerships that are working well and should not be disrupted. In fact, many argued that it is through local partnerships that consumers are able to get appropriate services.
- 2. Elevating the CCBHC Model:** Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) are a new provider type in Medicaid that must directly provide (or contract to provide) nine types of services. They emphasize 24-hour crisis care and integration with physical health care. CCBHCs are available to any individual in need of care, which is crucial in helping improve access to care for our mild-to-moderate population. Supporting the implementation of CCBHCs in the initial pilot sites (there are currently 36 sites in Michigan) and continuing to scale up statewide is imperative in improving access to care for all Michiganders.
- 3. Constant Efforts to Restructure Creates Instability Within the System:** There have been numerous proposals over the years that would drastically alter how behavioral health care is delivered in Michigan. From drastic funding cuts to complete system overhauls, each measure (real or perceived) destabilizes the system and directly impacts consumers, their families, and workforce recruitment and retention.



15 Listening
Tour Sessions

88 Panelists

30+ Hours Spent
Listening

38 Survey
Responses

450 Attendees

Report prepared by

State Representative Felicia Brabec
101st Legislature • December 2021

Key Takeaways (continued)

- 4. Improving Workforce Recruitment and Retention:** The pandemic has only exacerbated already existing workforce issues. Across the state, we are seeing challenges in recruiting and maintaining a qualified workforce. Commonly cited challenges include low wages and benefits, overly burdensome documentation, increased workload, need for child care, lack of training reciprocity, and lack of professionalization of career paths – particularly for our direct care workers.
- 5. Adopting a New Funding Strategy:** Over the years, a number of financing decisions have systematically restricted the ability of Michigan’s public mental health system to meet the needs of Michiganders. Funding is far below what is needed to meet growing demand. General Fund cuts, the inability of the public system to retain savings, and insufficient Medicaid reimbursement rates are all issues that need to be addressed.
- 6. Relieving Administrative Burdens:** In the behavioral health system, there is a tremendous amount of duplication and redundancy in the way the state reviews and audits. There needs to be oversight of the system, but we need to eliminate the duplication and non-value added requirements. These administrative burdens often take away time from helping consumers, and can create significant hurdles for those seeking care.
- 7. Addressing Barriers to Access:** There are still barriers to access for consumers for a multitude of reasons. We need to continue to support the work of the system in coordinating the network of services necessary to address the range of social determinants of health: housing, employment, food access, transportation, family support, child care, etc. The shortage of acute and residential psychiatric beds and broadband capacity to access telehealth are also key to addressing access.
- 8. Improving Stigma and Public Awareness:** Many people stressed the importance of destigmatization, education, and outreach. More needs to be done to lessen the impact stigma can have on seeking care. Similarly, there needs to be greater clarity in describing available services so that people know where the “front door” is.

Conclusion

There are many aspects of the Community Mental Health system that are working well for consumers and should be celebrated. The system has demonstrated strong performance in providing a wide range of services to multiple populations in the community setting. Much of these successes can be attributed to local partnerships, a person-centered approach to care, and the system’s proven ability to control costs.

These successes prove the system is working. However, it is equally important for us to recognize areas in which the system can be enhanced. Through thoughtful, responsive legislation, we can work to address barriers to access, issues with workforce recruitment and retention, better address social determinants of health, and improve funding. We can also work to revise departmental policies to reduce duplication and redundancy within the system. There is much work to be done, but we are committed to offering changes in a way that actively involves consumers and their families.



MENTAL HEALTH LISTENING TOUR
MICHIGAN HOUSE DEMOCRATS