

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2017

SENATE RESOLUTION

RESPECTFULLY ENCOURAGING THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (EOHHS) TO EXAMINE CURRENT POLICIES AND TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Senators Sheehan, Miller, Nesselbush, Crowley, and Goodwin

Date Introduced: February 16, 2017

Referred To: Senate Health & Human Services

1 WHEREAS, Mental health and substance use disorders can have a powerful effect on the  
2 health of individuals, their families, and their communities. These disorders can create various  
3 degrees of disability and carry a high burden of disease, resulting in significant costs to families,  
4 employers, and publicly funded health systems; and

5 WHEREAS, According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
6 Administration (SAMHSA), less than half of the approximately 175,000 Rhode Islanders with  
7 mental illness sought treatment in 2014; and

8 WHEREAS, In 2015, there were 125 suicides in Rhode Island. This represents an almost  
9 fifty percent increase in annual suicides in Rhode Island in the past decade; and

10 WHEREAS, Given the gravity of the problem, Rhode Island's vision is to ensure that all  
11 of its residents have the opportunity to achieve the best possible mental and behavioral health and  
12 well-being within healthy local communities that promote empowerment, inclusion, and shared  
13 responsibility; and

14 WHEREAS, A priority of the Rhode Island Senate has been to enhance the mental health  
15 service system in Rhode Island. These issues are complex and finding solutions requires creative  
16 and comprehensive approaches; and

17 WHEREAS, In the fall of 2016, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee held a  
18 series of five hearings to hear from stakeholders and to assess the status of mental health services

1 in Rhode Island; and

2 WHEREAS, Based on these hearings, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee  
3 identified issues and suggested recommendations for legislative action that are compiled in a  
4 report; now, therefore be it

5 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
6 hereby respectfully requests that Executive Offices of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)  
7 submit a status report on the following identified areas of mental health service needs:

- 8 • Identify relevant statutes and regulations that require physician level providers to  
9 make mental health treatment referrals, and update these statutes and regulations where  
10 appropriate to allow referrals from additional categories of mental health professionals;
- 11 • Streamline and clarify RIDOH provider license reciprocity regulations to address the  
12 shortage of mental health professionals;
- 13 • Disseminate clinical guidelines on best practices for clinicians who care for pregnant  
14 women to screen for maternal depression during and after pregnancy;
- 15 • Disseminate clinical guidelines for screening and treatment of depression and other  
16 mental health conditions across the lifespan, including children and the elderly;
- 17 • Utilize The Rhode Island Children's Cabinet to raise awareness of early childhood  
18 adversity, trauma, and toxic stress, and provide professional development opportunities on trauma  
19 and informed best practices for professionals in all disciplines who work with young children and  
20 their families;
- 21 • Propose potential solutions to improve the Integrated Health Home (IHH) and  
22 Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Medicaid managed care program reimbursement  
23 timeline for mental health providers;
- 24 • Support the development of a comprehensive and effective Olmstead plan for placing  
25 qualified people with mental disabilities in less restrictive settings;
- 26 • Work with the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC) to propose  
27 strategies to accomplish mental health payment reform and parity with an emphasis on exploring  
28 the impact of out of pocket costs on access to mental health services;
- 29 • Develop standards for the application of waivers for disqualifying information on  
30 background checks for peer specialists and recovery coaches;
- 31 • Support efforts to ensure that a portion of funds from 2016's \$50M Affordable  
32 Housing Bond is used to support housing for individuals with mental illness who do not have  
33 homes;

1           • Expand forensics capacity at Eleanor Slater Hospital to improve the treatment of  
2 inmates with serious mental illness;

3           • Develop a strategy to increase capacity and reduce obstacles to the use of Crisis  
4 Stabilization Units (or similar model) that serve as alternatives to unnecessary emergency  
5 department visits for mental health issues;

6           • Support the efforts of the Governor's Overdose Prevention and Intervention Task  
7 Force Emergency Department and Hospital Standards for Opioid Safety; develop a plan to  
8 expand the scope of this project to include standards for mental health care; and ensure that the  
9 proposed tiered emergency department standards include adequate safeguards for appropriate  
10 transfers of care;

11          • Encourage mental health professionals working at Federally Qualified Health Centers  
12 (FQHCs) to apply to the National Health Services Corps' (NHSC) student loan forgiveness  
13 program;

14          • Develop a plan to raise the entry level wages of BHDDH mental health and  
15 behavioral health direct care workers to a minimum of \$15 per hour by 2022; and

16          • Explore potential funding options for mobile outreach efforts which provide  
17 screening and access to services to persons living on the street; and be it further

18           RESOLVED, That this Senate hereby respectfully requests that the Secretary of the  
19 Executive Offices of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) provide recommendations and  
20 accompanying fiscal analysis; and be it further

21           RESOLVED, That this Senate hereby respectfully requests that the written  
22 recommendations be submitted to the Senate President and to the Chair of the Senate Committee  
23 on Health and Human Services within 60 days of the passage of this resolution; and be it further

24           RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
25 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Secretary of the Executive Offices of  
26 Health and Human Services (EOHHS).

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