



EQUITABLE ACCESS TO MENTAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE FOR ALL IOWANS

In Iowa, more than 120,000 people are living with a serious mental illness, and 80,000 youth in our state have been diagnosed with a severe emotional disorder. Schools are seeing an increasing number of children with anxiety, depression, and behavior disorders. As one Iowa community, we must join together and ensure all our neighbors have equitable and fair access to quality mental health care.

At LSI, we lift up children and families affected by mental illness through our two residential treatment centers, community-based therapy, and our Psychiatric Medical Institute for Children (PMIC). We also wrap services around families through our in-home behavioral health services for youth and our support and training for foster parents who often accept children with significant mental health needs.

While LSI is a statewide organization with offices in more than 30 communities, we know mental health services are still not easily accessible to many families, including people with low incomes, those in rural areas, non-English speakers, and youth. Without services, families, schools, and communities suffer. Mental health is an issue that touches us all.

Iowa Mental Health by the Numbers

1 in 5 teenagers in Iowa have a serious mental illness (NAMI)

70% of youth in state or local juvenile justice systems have a mental illness (NAMI)

50% of students over age 14 with a mental illness drop out of high school

56% of Iowa adults report at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) and

56% report more than four ACEs and People with four or more ACEs are

2.5 times more likely to report limits in activities because of physical, mental, or emotional struggles. (Central Iowa ACEs Coalition)

Providers like LSI must receive adequate reimbursement for mental health services. Currently, reimbursement for treatment is inconsistent, under-reimbursed, or often nonexistent. The state does not cover the true cost of care for people utilizing Medicaid for mental health care.

Current reimbursement rates do not allow us to recruit and retain enough quality mental healthcare professionals — social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, therapists — to meet demand.

We must create a continuum of mental health services, from crisis response to placement options for people with chronic mental illness. Iowa's emergency rooms and jails are bearing the brunt of this work and they are ill-equipped to fully address the complexities of treatment.

Iowa must strengthen its community-based mental health networks by incentivizing providers to offer services in rural and other high-need areas, and to at-risk demographics.



LSI supports Iowa's increased efforts to strengthen mental health systems and supports for all Iowans. As the need intensifies, funding must accompany good intentions in order to make an impact.



Lutheran Services in Iowa

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