

# 2020 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING



*PCA Iowa asks the Iowa legislature and governor to establish adequate, equitable, and sustainable funding for mental health services for both children and adults.*

We have a mental health crisis in our schools, homes, communities and medical system. Access to providers is limited, and many providers don't accept Medicaid. There are limited beds available for in-patient services. The need for mental health services, for both children and adults, is on the rise. Iowa's future depends upon a strong, fully funded intervention and research-based system.

Mental illnesses can affect persons of any age, race, religion, or income. Mental illnesses are not the result of personal weaknesses, lack of character, or poor upbringing. Mental illnesses are treatable. Most people diagnosed with a serious mental illness can experience relief from their symptoms by actively participating in an individual treatment plan. For the vast majority, recovery is possible.

Living in a poor or low-income household has an impact on a child's health and increases a child's risk for mental health problems. In just five years, the number of children in Iowa eligible for free and reduced lunch has increased by two percent, or 10,000 students<sup>1</sup>. And, because they live in poverty, they are less likely to receive quality mental health services. The state already experiences a severe shortage of psychiatrists – reduced even more by those who won't accept Medicaid.

- Ensure those who are working with children or adults have the skills they need to identify and intervene when their clients are exhibiting symptoms which indicate mental health services may be necessary.
- Ensure that the current Medicaid system, from counseling to prescriptions to hospitalization, continues to cover appropriate mental and behavioral health services for those insured. Also, add new services where there are gaps in either the children's or adult's system.
- Ensure implementation of recommendation from the children's mental health task force.

<sup>1</sup> Iowa Department of Education Statistics ([educateiowa.gov/data-and-reporting/education-statistics](http://educateiowa.gov/data-and-reporting/education-statistics))

**Prevent Child Abuse Iowa empowers community prevention efforts to provide safe and happy childhoods through collaboration with diverse partners, leading to a better future for Iowa.**