



# ECR Legislative Newsletter

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## Legislative Priorities of MH/DS of the East Central Region

Welcome to the second issue of our legislative newsletter. With each issue, we will provide current information that is pertinent to MH/DS services in our nine-county area. The decisions made by our legislators in Des Moines will have a direct impact on you, those you serve and care for, and the general brain health of thousands of Iowans.

These priorities have been approved by the Regional Governing Board and will remain constant throughout the 2022 session, and we will work closely with our lobbyists to make certain that we are top-of-mind with legislators who are particularly good advocates for systemic, long-term change.

Workforce issues continue to be the biggest challenge in 2022 and beyond in making sure that quality mental health and disability services are available to all Iowans. All regions are facing increased challenges in supporting a workforce that can adequately meet the rising demands of Iowans facing brain health (mental health) and disability challenges. The following are priorities that we believe state legislators should address.

### Priority 1:

#### **Reduce barriers to availability of Direct Support Professionals and other mental health professionals.**

Iowa has a serious shortage of prescribing and direct care professionals, for a variety of reasons. We advocate for these recommendations:

- Adopt a system to set reimbursement rates that reflect the actual cost of providing services.
- Work with medical schools and nurse practitioner programs in Iowa to encourage them to offer more psychiatric residencies.
- Eliminate the use of non-compete agreements currently in use by state-funded schools.
- Adopt the practice of other states who add pharmacists to the list of prescribing professionals.

### Priority 2:

#### **Direct the state's managed care organizations to develop more sustainable rates, a more streamlined billing process, and quicker certification of providers.**

The state's contracted managed care organizations should be required to adopt a methodology that sets the reimbursements for services at the actual cost of service and streamline billing reimbursement and certification for providers. We advocate for these recommendations:

- Facilitate the development of sustainable rates and new codes in a timely way.
- Streamline the billing process and provide assistance.
- Require that payments become timelier to eliminate the need for bridge funding.

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### Priority 3:

#### Allow the MH/DS Regions to sustain a fund balance of 10% for FY24 and beyond.

Timely payments to providers are critical in helping to maintain an adequate level of service providers. Currently, SF 619 places a limit on fund balances at 5% by FY 2024.

We advocate to raise the limit on the fund balance to 10%.

- This would allow regions to maintain a one-month financial cushion to make certain that providers could be paid on time if DHS allocations would be delayed.

### Introduced Bills

As the session continues in Des Moines, we will share important bills that are introduced and their status in the legislative process. When possible, we'll share our registered stance on them (for, against or undecided) and what those bills could mean to us and other residents in our state. At this moment, so early in the session, there are a small handful of bills being introduced which pertain to brain health and disabilities. We will track them closely and report them to you as they develop.

### Supportive Legislators

We have supportive legislators who are champions in the brain (mental) health arena. Please contact them (listed below) with your concerns and voice your needs to them, as well as the legislators in your own communities. Stories of real people with real issues who are impacted by their decisions are those that get heard and acted upon.

- Representative Ann Meyer (R), Fort Dodge  
[ann.meyer@legis.iowa.gov](mailto:ann.meyer@legis.iowa.gov)
- Representative Joel Fry (R), Osceola  
[joel.fry@legis.iowa.gov](mailto:joel.fry@legis.iowa.gov)
- Senator Jeff Edler (R), State Center  
[jeff.edler@legis.iowa.gov](mailto:jeff.edler@legis.iowa.gov)

Thank you for your interest in the legislative process and our commitment to brain health and disability services in the East Central Region.



Providing services for 9 Iowa counties:

Benton, Bremer, Buchanan, Delaware, Dubuque, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn