

ECR Legislative Newsletter

February 24, 2022 | Issue No. 4

What is Funnel Week in Des Moines?

Two times during Iowa's annual legislative session, there are designated time periods called Funnel Weeks. Simply put, Funnel Week is a weeding-out process where only the bills with the most support get to "pass through the funnel", therefore keeping the legislative process moving forward and staying on track to finish by the end of the session, when legislators' per diems (payments) run out. There is usually a flurry of activity during each of our Funnel Weeks to gain support for bills that legislators hope to move forward.

Technically speaking, all bills must be voted out of their Senate and House committees and sent to the full chamber. Bills that don't make it out of committee are essentially dead, meaning lawmakers won't have an opportunity to vote on them. These are the ones that don't make it "through the funnel."

If a bill fails to move forward, it sometimes can reappear as an amendment to another bill. Or it can be found in the body of another bill. Nothing is final until the final gavel, which closes the legislative session. There are several exceptions to the process, however. Bills that deal with the state budget are exempt, as are bills in the Ways and Means, Appropriations or Government Oversight Committees. Lawmakers also have the option of marking a bill as "unfinished business," allowing them to continue work after the funnel. Legislative leaders also may sponsor bills that are exempt from the deadline.

Legislative Priorities of MH/DS of the East Central Region

As a reminder, here are our legislative priorities for 2022, all focused on workforce issues. *We want our legislators to understand the impact of their actions when they introduce, support and/or vote down bills that affect those in our nine-county region and the state as a whole.*

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. We want legislators to help remove various barriers and create better systems to encourage professionals to enter and stay in the social services field.

Priority 2: Direct the state's managed care organizations to develop more sustainable rates, a more streamlined billing process, and quicker certification of providers. Better (higher) rates for paying our providers for their work, faster processing of bills, and timelier payments to providers from DHS will help our providers. Their practices can function more smoothly, versus not being able to deliver services because of billing 'red tape'.

Priority 3: Allow the MH/DS Regions to sustain a fund balance of 10% for FY24 and beyond. With more timely payments to providers (from Priority 2), and by allowing more money in providers' long-term bank accounts, they can have more of a cushion to cover their bills if DHS payments are delayed.



Providing services for 9 Iowa counties:

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

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February 10, 2022 | Issue No. 3

Bills that Will Move Forward and Bills that Won't this year

Here are some important bills related to mental health/disability services that passed through the first funnel deadline in Des Moines on February 18. These will continue to be considered, debated and potentially voted on and signed into law. We are keeping our eye on these:

- **Senate File 2314 -- ECR Registration: For**

This bill increases the amount of monies a mental health and disability services (MHDS) regional combined account may have before payments to the MHDS region are reduced and an MHDS region is disqualified from receiving funding from an MHDS incentive fund from 5 percent to 10 percent. This is an ECR Legislative Priority (see above).

- **Senate File 2331 -- ECR Registration: For**

This bill requires DHS to implement tiered rate reimbursement methodology for psychiatric intensive inpatient care.

- **Senate File 2216 -- ECR Registration: For**

This bill increases the number of beds at the Mental Health Institutes.

- **House File 2157 -- ECR Registration: Undecided**

This bill requires the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC) to administer a state-funded psychiatric residency program in cooperation with the state mental health institutes at Independence and Cherokee and the Iowa Medical and Classification Center at Oakdale.

- **House File 2137 -- ECR Registration: Undecided**

This bill establishes a mental health practitioner loan repayment program and provides appropriation for the program.

And here are the bills we were watching that didn't make the funnel and are most likely* dead.

- SF 2066 would have implemented improvements to the Managed Care system in Iowa.
- SF 2197 would have increased some Medicaid rates.
- SF 2065 would have forced the Managed Care Organizations to pay interest on any claims they incorrectly denied to providers.

*Because Iowa has a biennial legislative calendar (meaning the session runs for two years), a bill which was seemingly dead after the funnels of the first year of session can resurface in the second year of that two-year session and be reconsidered for debate and voting. We are currently in the second year of that cycle. Nothing is ever 'really dead' unless there is an election, at which time those seemingly dead bills must be redrafted and can start over in a new biennial session.

(The ECR registers on various legislative bills as "For, Against, or Undecided". Generally, we register Undecided on a bill when it is introduced and initially considered by the legislature. This gives us more leverage to work with our legislators to constructively amend or change bills. Generally, it does not mean that we have no opinion on a bill -- but that we are waiting until the right time to take a definitive stand on the issue.)



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