



# Illinois First Lady co-hosts SAMHSA town hall on trauma-informed care for at-risk youth

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WASHINGTON – Illinois First Lady Diana Rauner takes her advocacy for the state’s most vulnerable children to Washington today as co-host of a National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day event focused on how community-based treatment can help young people who have experienced trauma.

Today’s event features a live-stream town hall discussion on the importance of adopting integrated health approaches to support the physical, medical, and mental needs of children and young adults who have experienced trauma. The First Lady will highlight *Better Care Illinois*, a new integrated care effort that Illinois will begin implementing in July, as a result of the federal approval of a \$2 billion Medicaid waiver earlier this week.

“The fact that nearly half of the nation’s youth report having experienced at least one traumatic event illustrates that it is imperative we incorporate evidence-based practices in the field of children’s mental health,” Rauner said. “We need to care for the whole child and use integrated case management to address all their needs. That way we can get the right care to the right child at the right time and in the right setting.”

“*Better Care Illinois* has tremendous implications for trauma-informed care for our at-risk youth,” Rauner said. “The initiative’s pilot programs will help identify, intervene and follow at-risk youth to safety; support employment services for teens, and provide Medicaid covered recovery services for youth addiction.”

The Mental Health Awareness Day event is being sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation.

U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Alex M. Azar II presented Rauner, 17 governors' spouses, and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) with a SAMHSA Special Recognition Award for their work to promote trauma-informed care.

Rauner, who is a nationally recognized expert on early childhood policy and holds a Ph. D. in developmental psychology from the University of Chicago, was recognized for her ongoing work and leadership in helping to increase understanding about the importance of trauma-informed care for children, youth and young adults and their families in Illinois.

Rauner currently serves as president of the Ounce of Prevention Fund, a public-private partnership that develops early learning programs for at-risk children and their families. She carries out her executive duties as a volunteer.

Her husband, Gov. Bruce Rauner, announced the \$2 billion behavioral health initiative earlier this week which is designed to deliver better outcomes for Medicaid beneficiaries suffering from mental health and substance use. Better Care Illinois is a collaboration of the Governor's Office, 13 state agencies, and hundreds of health advocacy organizations whose main focus is on improving mental health outcomes through community-based care programs directed at the whole person.

The live stream of the town hall can be seen [here](#) beginning at 7 p.m. Eastern time.