Proposed Cuts to Behavioral Health Services Will Impact Four Illinois Counties

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Governor Rauner has proposed numerous cuts in his FY 2016 budget, including well over $94 million from behavioral health care, treatment, and services throughout the state. For those who receive services at WellSpring Resources (WR), the proposed cuts will be a hard blow to bear.

WR Interim Chief Executive Officer Jennifer Craig says the proposed cuts could cost the agency more than $1.8 million in community services funds. That could mean nearly 4,000 children, adults and senior citizens would not receive the mental health or substance abuse services that they need to help them live healthy and productive lives.

The proposed cuts are in addition to looming deficits for the remainder of the current fiscal year, and in addition to other state cuts experienced by WellSpring since 2009. From 2009 to 2011Illinois cut almost $114 million in general revenue funding for mental health and was fourth among all states for total cuts. This represents 31.7% of

total Illinois MH funding. Over the same period of time emergency room admissions climbed by 20% and the number of persons with mental illness living in jails and prisons increased by nearly 50%

“The reality is that state-funded behavioral health services actually save taxpayers money by reducing emergency room use and by helping keep people out of the justice system,” Craig said. “Last year, WR spent an average of $1,300 per person served. Compare that to the average cost of one year in prison which is estimated at $31,000. More than just saving dollars though, the impact of these cuts on the lives of children and families will be unimaginable.”



Budget cuts at the state-level would affect many of WellSpring Resources’ programs and services, provided in Madison, Jersey, Calhoun and Greene Counties. Proposed cuts include programs like Crisis Services. WR offers a 24 hour crisis line to residents of Jersey, Calhoun and Madison Counties. Cuts to Crisis could mean that individuals experiencing mental health crises and at risk of suicide may not have an adequate lifeline, and the responsibility to deal with these situations could fall on police officers and emergency room staff.

WellSpring Resources' Supervised Residential Services and Supported Residential Services could be among the hardest hit programs if the FY 2016 state budget proceeds as proposed. These programs provide housing and intensive supportive services for people with serious mental health conditions and those who are experiencing homelessness.

"People suffering from serious mental health conditions often need to develop skills so they can live independently, and that is what we do. Group homes assist people in learning skills so they don't have to live in a nursing home or psychiatric facility," Craig said. WR has four group homes to help people with serious mental health conditions regain their independence. Another program specializes in helping people who have been homeless get on their feet and rebuild their lives. "These programs are crucial," continues Craig.

School-based Services provided by WellSpring Resources would also face drastic cuts. The agency has partnered with four school districts to provide on-site services,. In the Alton, Jerseyville and Roxana School Districts WR provides counseling and crisis intervention services to students at school or in their homes. Craig said that approximately 250 children and families would be affected by the proposed budget cuts.

"Roxana is committed to addressing the well-being of the whole child. Our partnership with WellSpring Resources allows the needs of our students and families to be met within our community," Laura Ballard, Director of Special Education Services for the Roxana School District, said.

Other WellSpring programs could also be affected by the cuts, including Open Door Services, and Psychiatric and Medical Services.

"To ensure that no one in Madison County goes without the mental health treatment or medications that they need, we ask that the state budget be shaped to ensure that behavioral health services remain as intact as possible," Craig said.

Founded in 1959, WellSpring Resources is a total mental wellness resource serving Madison, Greene, Jersey, and Calhoun counties. With offices in Alton and Jerseyville WellSpring's compassionate professionals work with children, adults and families to inspire hope and personal growth. Last year, over 7,600 people sought to change their lives for the better through WellSpring's mental health and substance abuse services. Visit www.wellspringresources.co for more information.

Senior Services, Counseling Services, Case Management Services, Mental Health Court, Family Services, Wellness and Recovery Services, psychiatric services and provider WellSpring Resources are funded by the Madison County Mental Health Board.

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