

Policy Advancement: Minnesota Mental Health Action Group (MMHAG)

What is MMHAG?

MMHAG is a public-private partnership working for better mental health care in Minnesota. It is a broad-based coalition of consumers, advocacy organizations, mental health professionals, hospitals, clinics, health plans, local government agencies and officials, and the Minnesota Depts. of Human Services and Health. The Citizens League has convened MMHAG since 2003.

We were determined not to create “just another study,” but instead to focus on taking action. MMHAG reviewed past studies and worked with consumers, family members, and advocacy groups to identify problems in the mental health system and find out what proposed solutions had the broadest support.

The Major Problems in the Mental Health System

MMHAG’s first task was to review dozens of past mental health reports to avoid duplicating the work that has already been done. They found a surprising amount of agreement on the major problems with the mental health system. It was agreed that the mental health system is too complicated; that access to services is inadequate; that the mental health system lacks accountability of programs, agencies and providers; and that payment methods create problems for consumers and their families.

Accomplishments

Since its formation, MMHAG has been working steadily toward mental health reform in Minnesota. Its accomplishments include:

- The **Minnesota Department of Human Services reorganized state agency staff** so that all publicly funded mental health services will be better coordinated and easier for consumers and family members to understand and use.
- The 2006 Legislature accepted MMHAG’s recommendations for a **statewide quality information program** that will collect and report information on the quality of services across the state. Pilot projects are currently underway.

Based on the recommendations of MMHAG, the 2007 Legislature enacted the most comprehensive mental health legislation and funding package in decades, which:

- **Instituted a model benefit set and mental health parity.** All publicly funded health care programs now have a comprehensive mental health benefit set.
- **Established integrated mental health networks.** The networks will integrate and coordinate health care and social services for consumers.
- **Improved infrastructure** with approximately \$31 million in targeted investments to improve mental health services in the state.

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