



NEVER DOUBT  
THAT A SMALL GROUP  
OF THOUGHTFUL COMMITTED CITIZENS  
CAN CHANGE THE WORLD:  
INDEED IT'S THE ONLY THING  
THAT EVER HAS.

MARGARET MEAD



# Mental Health

## *Advisory Council*



## The “SPEAK UP” Mental Health Advocacy Session will soon begin

- While waiting, please ...
  - Enter your name & affiliation in the CHAT BOX
  - Please mute your microphone
- As you have questions, please enter them in the Q & A Box
  - The facilitator will ask your questions
- Today’s session is recorded. The recording and PowerPoint will be posted on the Beaverhead County’s Mental Health Local Advisory Council webpage @
  - <https://beaverheadcounty.org/departments/mental-health-local-advisory-committee/>

# **SPEAK UP!**

**Mental Health Advocacy in  
MONTANA**

**October 9, 2020**

**Sponsored by:**

**Beaverhead County Mental Health Local Advisory Council**

# Advocacy

We advocate for legislation and policies that will have an increasingly positive impact on the lives of people with mental health concerns.

## Why Advocate?

“Unless someone like you cares  
a whole awful lot, Nothing is  
going to get better. It's not.”  
- Dr. Seuss, The Lorax



# Advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves





# IMPACT TO MONTANA CITIZENS



- **Poor mental health affects thousands of Montanans**
  - One in ten Montana adults (nearly 84,000) report frequent mental distress with 14 or more days of poor mental or emotional health in the past month.
  - Suicide, a mental health crisis, continues to affect every Montana community. Suicide-related deaths in Montana are two times higher than the U.S.; from 2011 to 2015, an average of 240 suicide deaths occurred each year in Montana.
  - For 40 years, Montana is among the top five states in the nation with the highest suicide rate (#1 in 2018)
- **Nearly 64,000 Montana adults struggle with a substance use disorder (SUD).**
  - Alcohol is the most commonly abused substance in Montana, but use of illicit drugs like marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines continue to be a concern.
  - Among Montana youth, 2.2% of high school students reported having used methamphetamines during their lifetime.
  - Opioids are the leading cause of drug overdose deaths in Montana, accounting for 44% of all drug overdose deaths.

• SOURCE: MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



# Mental Health Budget 2017

## Regular Legislative and Special Sessions



Timing of the Cuts	Description	2019 Biennium General Fund
Cuts taken in 2017 Regular Legislative Session	DPHHS budget cuts (HB 2)	(\$12,017,536)
DPHHS additional vacancy savings (HB 2)	(\$3,354,337)	
Unfunded Medicaid caseload (HB 2, HB 639)	(\$13,375,257)	
Cuts enacted in August 2017	Cuts to Medicaid provider rates, targeted case management, unfunded state employee pay raises (SB 261)	(\$17,334,849)
Cuts enacted in November 2017 Special Session	DPHHS budget cuts (HB 2, special session)	(\$49,213,958)
	<b>TOTAL GENERAL FUND CUTS TO DPHHS</b>	<b>(\$95,295,937)</b>



# Mental Health Budget 2017 Special Legislative Session



## **\$110 million in cuts to DPHHS** during the November 2017 Special Legislative Session

- Nearly \$18 million in **targeted case management for children and adults with developmental disabilities and those experiencing mental health and substance use disorders**
- \$1.6 million in **chemical dependency treatment**.
- Reduction in grants to counties for **mental health crisis intervention**
- **Closure of 19 offices of public assistance** in rural Montana impacted many families' ability to access assistance and services including SNAP, Medicaid, Healthy Montana Kids, and TANF.
- **Decreased reimbursement rates**, in addition to \$14 M in rate cuts earlier in 2017, led non-profits and service providers to cut client services
- Loss of \$136 M in federal matching dollars



# Mental Health Budget 2019

## Regular Legislative Session



- **Medicaid Expansion Reauthorized**
  - Thousands of lower income Montanans now able to afford critical services: counseling, treatment for substance use disorders.
  - Sept 2020 enrollment: 87,991 adults - 8.4% of MT population
  - Boosts economy by about 5,000 jobs and \$280 M in personal income each year
- Increase of \$1.5 million in state funding for substance abuse treatment
- Increase of \$3.5 million for targeted case management
- Peer Support Specialists legislation
- **2020 COVID-19 response**
  - Additional \$20,000 to Montana Warm Line 1-877-688-3377 or <http://montanawarmline.org>.
  - Increased budget for THRIVE, online cognitive behavioral therapy

# Montana's Mental Health Advocates

## **Jeremy Alvarez, Assistant Chief of Police**

City of Dillon Police Department

## **Zoe Barnard, Administrator**

Addictive & Mental Disorders Division/Department of Public Health & Human Services

## **Mary Windecker, Executive Director**

Behavioral Health Alliance of Montana

## **Matt Kuntz, Executive Director**

National Association of Mental Illness, NAMI – MT Chapter

**Facilitators:** Heidi Peterson & Katherine Buckley-Patton

Beaverhead Mental Health Local Advisory Council

# Panelist Comments/Discussion



# Beaverhead County's Response

## 2017 state budget cuts still impacting rural mental health services

- In Dillon, several human service agencies closed their offices
  - Western Montana Mental Health Center: medication management, residential services, primary care provision, behavioral health therapy
  - Beaverhead Office of Public Assistance: Medicaid eligibility, answered questions, Medicaid transport, other resource referral
  - Southwest Montana Chemical Dependency Center
- Developed Resource Assistance Center (RAC) in response to closures after community survey, meetings, and community leaders' strategy meeting.
  - **Partnered** with: Co Commissioners for office space
  - **Partnered** with : DPHHS for eligibility specialists to return to Dillon one day/week for face to face visits with clients.
- Created online county-wide behavioral health service providers' web page which lists all therapists', specialties, credentials, contact information, types of health coverage accepted, typical wait list, etc.
  - **Partnered** with Community Support Center to post it on their website and update monthly.
    - <https://www.cscfswmt.org/dillon-area-resources.html>

# Beaverhead County's Response

- **Partnerships with:**

- Barrett Hospital and Health Care, a Critical Access Hospital
  - Received a Montana HealthCare Foundation grant to further integrate behavioral health into primary care and emergency practices.
  - Addition of second LCSW staff member, and graduate level student in Behavioral Health Department, and Behavior Health Services supervisor certified in "Daring Way Facilitator"
  - Collaboration with Western Montana Mental Health Crisis Response Team members and regional hospitals
  - Collaboration with Resource Assistance Center and RAC Board member
- Southwest Montana Community Health Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center
  - Enrollment Outreach events at their facility
  - Variety of behavioral health services to adults and children
  - Collaboration with Resource Assistance Center and RAC Board member
- University of Montana, Western
  - Implemented universal screening for depression at the Student Health Center
  - Collaboration with Resource Assistance Center and RAC Board member

# ADVOCACY

**VOICE FOR THE COMMUNITY**



# Mental Health *Advisory Council*

What will you do to support and advocate for improved mental health services in Montana?

- Montana Legislative Session begins, Monday, January 4, 2021
  - January through April, 2021
  
- Know your legislators in the House and Senate
  - <https://leg.mt.gov/legislator-information/>
  
- Be a knowledgeable resource/Reach out
  - Tips for effectively contacting a legislator
  - [https://leg.mt.gov/legislator-lookup/contacting-legislators/#:~:text=Regular%20office%20hours%20during%20the,\(406\)%20444%2D4800.](https://leg.mt.gov/legislator-lookup/contacting-legislators/#:~:text=Regular%20office%20hours%20during%20the,(406)%20444%2D4800.)



# Mental Health *Advisory Council*

What will you do to support and advocate for improved mental health services in Montana?

- Track legislative bills and hearings on mental health services (LAWS)
  - <https://leg.mt.gov/bill-info/>
  
- Testify before one of the Legislative standing committees
  - <https://leg.mt.gov/committees/session-committees/>
  - (2019 Committees currently listed - 2021 Committees website will soon be “live”)
  
- Support a mental health consumer to testify
  - Telling “their story” is a powerful form of advocacy
  - [https://leg.mt.gov/legislator-lookup/contacting-legislators/#:~:text=Regular%20office%20hours%20during%20the,\(406\)%20444%2D4800.](https://leg.mt.gov/legislator-lookup/contacting-legislators/#:~:text=Regular%20office%20hours%20during%20the,(406)%20444%2D4800.)



# Mental Health *Advisory Council*

What will you do to support and advocate for improved mental health services in Montana?

- View a legislative committee hearing over the internet
  - <https://leg.mt.gov/content/AV/SliqHarmonyQuickStartGuide.pdf>
  
- Learn more about the 2021 Legislative Session
  - <https://leg.mt.gov/>
  
- Join your county's Local Advisory Council and/or Regional Service Center
  - <https://dphhs.mt.gov/Portals/85/amdd/documents/SAALACMap.pdf>
  - <https://dphhs.mt.gov/amdd/mentalhealthservices/localadvisory>

Can't be said often enough...it's up to  
**YOU!**



# Contact Information

## **Jeremy Alvarez, Assistant Chief of Police**

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