



## **Virginia Has Slight Increase in Mental Health Funding for FY 2012, but a Long History of Underfunding Continues; Medicaid is Part of the Squeeze**

### **For Immediate Release**

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Virginia increased its spending slightly on mental health care for fiscal year (FY) 2012, according to a national report issued by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). But the \$8 million increase represents only a 0.2 percent increase over the previous year.

Unfortunately, an increase of less than one half of one percent isn't enough to make up for cuts in previous years.

From FY 2009 to FY 2012, Virginia cut an overall total of \$37.7 million or 8.9 percent from mental health care.

By comparison, North Dakota, provided the greatest increase proportionally among all the states in its mental health budget (48.1 percent) for the same four year period..

See the full report for [state by state data](#).

"We applaud the governor and state legislature for this year's increase," said NAMI Virginia Executive Director, Mira Signer. "It's not enough, but it does represent a small step forward."

"Unfortunately, people with serious mental illness still face a crisis when it comes to accessing the services that they need. Virginia still has to make up for lost ground, including decades of neglect to the mental health system, plus an increased need from people who are uninsured, underinsured, and facing economic hardship," stated Signer.

According to the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services' Draft Comprehensive State Plan for 2012 – 2018, 14,000 people are waiting to receive community-based services for mental health, intellectual disabilities, or substance use disorders, with nearly 6,000 of those waiting for mental health services. Additionally, Virginia still maintains a state mental hospital "ready for discharge" list, which includes people receiving services in state mental hospitals whose discharge to the community has been delayed, despite being "clinically ready" for discharge.

The national report highlights "streeting" in Virginia, a practice reported by the Inspector General for the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, in which people who pose a threat to themselves or others have been turned away from mental health treatment facilities because there were no beds available.

The NAMI report outlines Medicaid pressures that threaten mental health care nationwide. Following the loss in June 2011 of "enhanced" federal matching funds under Medicaid that were part of economic stimulus legislation, states have had to fill the shortfall. In Virginia the loss of enhanced funding has been an estimated \$293 million.

Some states are shifting mental health care dollars to Medicaid in order to receive more federal funds under the current Medicaid "match" formula. The more that mental health care is provided through

Medicaid, the greater the risk that uninsured or underinsured individuals living with serious mental illness will be left behind.

If the congressional "Super Committee" recommends cuts in Medicaid, later this month, additional pressures will come into play. Proposals for cuts in Medicaid range from \$75 billion to almost \$200 billion.

"Mental health care needs to be strengthened in Virginia to make sure that no one is abandoned for lack of the care that they need. It seems each year very small strides are made, but then are undermined by the economic climate or some other priority. We need to face the facts that the well-being of families and our communities hang in the balance when it comes to receiving timely and effective mental health care." Signer said.

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NAMI Virginia is the Virginia state office of NAMI (the National Alliance on Mental Illness). NAMI Virginia was created in 1984 to provide support, education, and advocacy for individuals and family members affected by mental illness. It is our mission to promote recovery and improve the lives of all those who are affected by mental illness through support, education, and advocacy.

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