

**Background:** There are several different efforts to reform Virginia’s mental health care system including the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services’ System Transformation, Excellence and Performance in Virginia (STEP-VA) Initiative, and the work of the Joint Subcommittee to Study Mental Health Services in the Twenty-First Century. In addition, in December 2019, the Governor released his two-year state budget for Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022. This budget will be considered by Virginia lawmakers when the 2020 legislative session convenes in January. NAMI Virginia seeks to effectively represent our members’ viewpoints in pursuing public policy advocacy in service to our mission to improve the quality of life of individuals and families affected by mental illness. Below are findings from the 2019 survey of NAMI Virginia members.

### Survey Findings: Top Five Priorities to Receive Additional Funding

1. Permanent supportive housing.
  2. Integration of mental health care with primary care.
  3. Criminal justice diversion such as Crisis Intervention Training for police offices, assessment “drop off” centers, and specialty court dockets such as Mental Health Courts.
  4. Case management and care coordination.
  5. Psychiatric screening, assessment, and evaluation; Peer support services; Intensive community engagement services for people with serious and persistent mental illness (i.e. Programs of Assertive Community Treatment and other non-clinic-based services)\*
- \*all three of these options had equal number of votes.

*“If I could check permanent supportive housing a billion times, I would do it”*

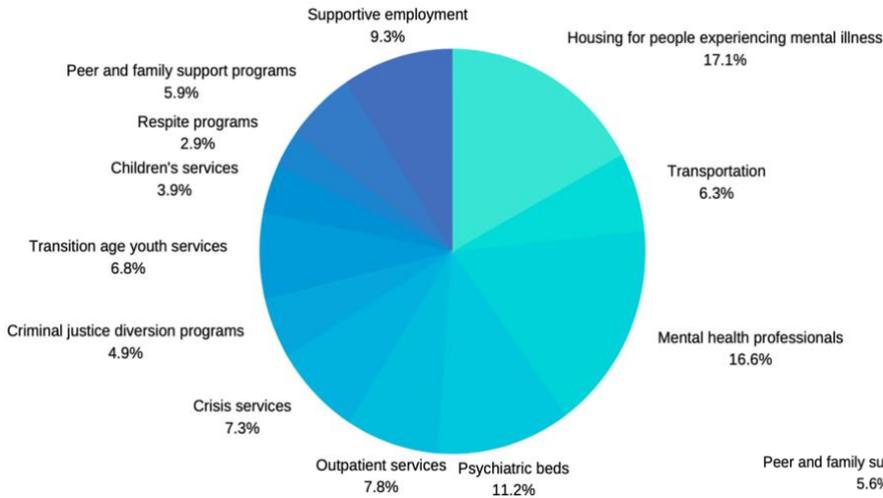
### Frequently Occurring Challenges to Accessing Services

The number one noted challenge, within service access, was long wait times for an initial appointment. This has, historically, been the most consistently noted challenge in this survey. Other frequently occurring challenges include lack of understanding on how to navigate the mental health care system, lack of mental health providers who are appropriate for specific needs, lack of beds when hospitalization is needed, and lack of permanent housing.

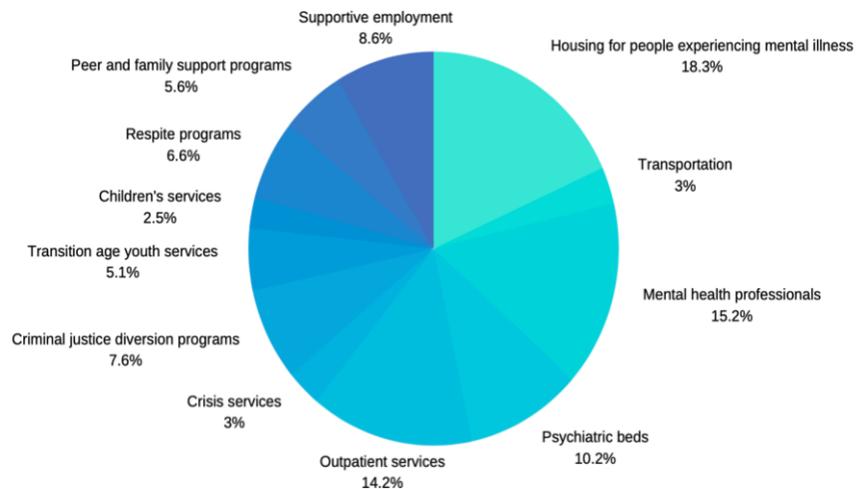
### Long- and Short-Term Needs in Communities

The survey asks participants what the most pressing short- and long- term needs are in their communities. 47.3% of participants said the most pressing short-term need is housing for people experiencing mental illness and 48.7% said housing is the most pressing long-term need. Other highly supported needs included mental health professionals, psychiatric beds, and outpatient services.

**Short Term**

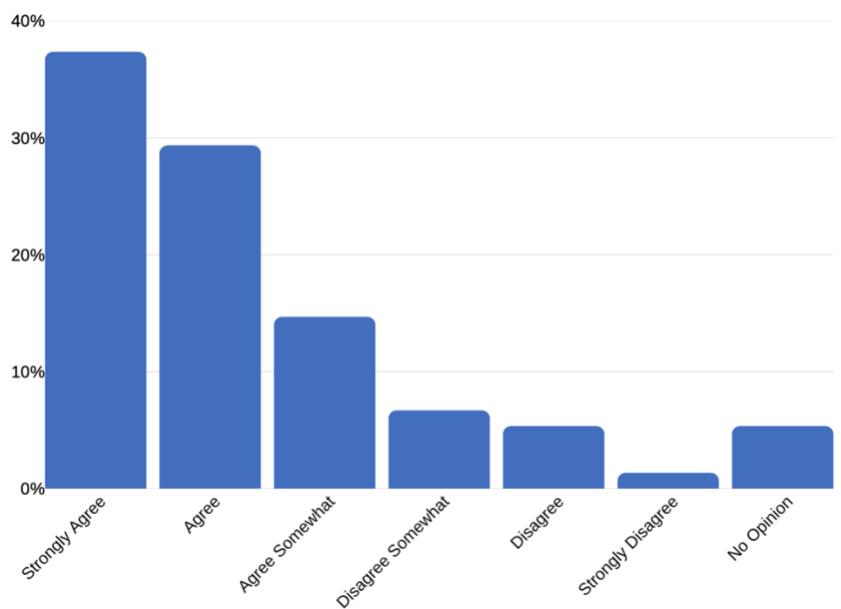


**Long Term**



**Increase of Psychiatric Beds**

This year, we asked members how much they agreed with the following statement: *“The addition of more local, private psychiatric beds would help ease concerns of downsizing or overcrowding of state psychiatric hospitals.”* Most participants, 37.3%, voted that they strongly agree with this statement.



*...the biggest problem is the shortage of beds. [...] The hope lies in recovery, rehabilitation and skill building. We've all experienced the hospital routines [...], but what next? We need long-term solutions for recovery that all can afford. Top notch programs that [are affordable and provide multiple] options for training, socialization, and community support to prevent isolation [so that those with mental illness would feel they had something to offer them a fresh start].”*