

The Needs

1. **Develop a Plan to bring Georgia's per capita spending on Mental Health up to the national average.**

Georgia is currently rated 45th in per capita spending on mental health care, as compared to being rated 28th in per capita spending on general health care. Current expenditure levels keep Georgia's mental health delivery system in crisis mode, and prevent Georgians from even receiving adequate basic services. This in turn overburdens the state hospitals, prisons, and jails. *"Organizational change can not solve systemic problems or inefficient processes. As Susan Robinson, author of the NCLS report noted in testimony addressing California's reorganization effort, "The deep-seated problems of state human services systems and the long-term consequences to vulnerable citizens and taxpayers cannot be solved by rearranging organizational structures alone."* Georgia's Health and Human Services Task Force - Interim Report, August 2008

2. **Create a Single Mental Health Collaborative & Department of Mental Health and Addictive Diseases.**

With multiple agencies providing pieces of care, the mental health system in Georgia is complex and fragmented. A single mental health collaborative is needed to bring agencies together to develop a comprehensive and effective mental health system with ease of access, clear standards of care, successful transitions, and excellent outcomes. Remove Mental Health and Addictive Diseases from DHR and form the Department of Addictive Diseases and Mental Health.

3. **Fund and Fulfill the Office of the Mental Health Ombudsman**

The important creation of a mental health ombudsman office in 2008 should be followed by a budget of more than \$500,000 to allow additional capacity to investigate deaths, abuse and neglect in our mental health system and to provide critical information to legislators and state officials about systemic problems and barriers to safe and effective care for persons with mental illness.

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The Facts

1. *"In the State of Georgia alone, approximately 350,000 individuals have a severe mental illness. In 2006, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) gave Georgia a grade of "D" for its mental health system. Sadly, "D" was the average grade for the country. Many individuals with mental illness are homeless, living on the streets, or are incarcerated in jails. While improvements in medications and other methods of treatment over the years are significant, community services are largely inadequate and a lack of understanding about mental illnesses and other brain disorders dramatically reduce the availability and acceptance of treatment services."* Georgia Chief Justice-Led Task Force to Promote Criminal Justice/Mental Health Collaboration Final Report; pg 7; November 7, 2008.
2. Georgia Ranks 45th in per capita funding for mental health.
 - a. Georgia spends about \$50 per capita today.
 - b. National average is \$100 per capita.National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) Research Institute, Inc. website.
3. As Georgia's population grows, so does the number of individuals in need of mental health services. However, funding over the past decade has not grown in conjunction with increased demand for community services. 2004 Georgia Mental Health Gap Analysis

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