



The Council of State Governments

CSG Healthy States National Task Force Human Health Subcommittee

Summary of Meeting Two, Dec. 1 - 2, 2021

The second meeting of The Council of State Governments Healthy States National Task Force – Human Health Subcommittee took place during the 2021 CSG National Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on Wednesday, Dec. 1 and Thursday, Dec. 2, 2021. The subcommittee explored issues related to **mental health** including **insurance parity**, **social determinants** and **social isolation and loneliness**.

“Making Mental Health a Priority” – Wednesday, Dec. 1

During the Human Health Subcommittee’s conference session, **Sarah Needler, director of research with The Council of State Governments Center of Innovation**, presented research regarding mental health, including maternal mental health, insurance parity, social determinants, and social isolation and loneliness. Highlights from her presentation include:

- **Maternal mental health** remains a concern at the federal and state levels, as mental health challenges are being diagnosed at an increasing rate among pregnant women. The main policy challenge is identifying the appropriate medication pregnant women can take, as well as a lack of health care providers. State policy opportunities around maternal mental health can focus on expanding the availability of telehealth, post-partum home visiting options and insurance coverage beyond the average post-partum timeline.
- **Insurance parity** (treating mental health care as equivalent to physical health care) remains a concern as well. Policy challenges around insurance parity include non-compliance of insurance managed care plans, lack of transparency and accountability and misalignment between law enforcement and behavioral health care. Future policy avenues for addressing insurance parity include ‘mental health redesign,’ which aims to eliminate policies that separate mental health and substance use disorders from overall health care.
- **Social determinants** often dictate whether an individual will face a mental health crisis in their lifetime. Policy challenges include defining and tracking determinants, as well as identifying the scope of problems and solutions. State policy responses



may focus on the cultural competency of health professionals, health disparities among populations, housing instability, mental health of children and healthy community design.

- Finally, **social isolation and loneliness** are exacerbated by the pandemic, especially among older individuals and those in long-term care facilities. Policy solutions are concerned with social-emotional learning curricula, which assess the mental wellbeing of students. Moreover, including telehealth for remote schooling is a focus, as well as teacher training in identifying students who are struggling.

Next, national task force member **Adam Meier (Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services)** moderated a discussion among **Caren Howard (Mental Health America)**, **Edward Garcia (Foundation for Social Connection)** and **Ayesha Delany-Brumsey (CSG Justice Center)** regarding the increased necessity for improved mental health services, insurance parity and awareness of social determinants and social isolation and loneliness. The panelists also covered the intersection of mental health and criminal justice policy. A few highlights:

- **Adam Meier** spoke about challenges to mental health in Montana, such as rurality and lack of population density which increase isolation and loneliness. Further, continued investment in broadband infrastructure must be made to increase the availability of telehealth options. Meier also discussed how Montana has some of the highest suicide rates in the nation and the stigma of mental health challenges has exacerbated the crisis. Montana plans to implement 988, a national calling code for suicide prevention, as well as drop-in centers for mental health concerns.
- **Caren Howard** discussed how the availability of safe spaces for young people is important in determining whether they will overcome a mental health crisis. She recommended that K-12 schools look at mental health education as a requirement, as well as allowing excused absences for mental health concerns.
- **Edward Garcia** spoke about how identifying social determinants of health are critical in determining whether one will overcome a mental health crisis, as well as the potential negative effects of social media on one's mental health.
- **Ayesha Delany-Brumsey** spoke about how mental illness is overrepresented in jails and prisons. Further, she discussed how police brutality negatively effects those suffering from mental illness, and crisis intervention is needed to mitigate mental health concerns in the prison system.



Human Health Subcommittee Working Session – Thursday, Dec. 2

Human Health Subcommittee members met in a working session on the second day of the 2021 CSG National Conference to discuss the content covered during the “Making Mental Health a Priority” panel the previous day, brainstorm policy recommendations for reducing mental health care disparities and prepare a programming agenda for 2022. Key themes that emerged from that conversation include:

- Effectively utilize information governments collect and navigate robust federal regulations on data usage created prior to the emergence of much of today’s technology.
- Identify “use cases” so the data collected by governments is useable and not overwhelming or wasted.
- Build better data systems within the courts so the judiciary can make evidence-based sentencing decisions.
- Articulate how public health data is relevant to the judiciary.
- Implement greater coordination in data collection and utilization so states can demonstrate how long-term budget investments in public health are achieving public policy goals.
- Work through privacy and cybersecurity concerns.
- Identify pathways for the branches of state governments to better collaborate on public health issues.
- Demonstrate how cost savings produced by investing in front-end services and other public health programs, such as family treatment courts, compare to the costs of incarceration for those with mental health or substance abuse disorders.

Resources

The Council of State Governments

- [Mental Health Resource Guide](#) (Report)
- [Mental Health Resource Guide Presentation](#) (PowerPoint)

The Council of State Governments Justice Center

- [Help communities build comprehensive health care systems for people in the justice system](#) (Article)
- [Creating Buy-In: Best Practices for Collaborating with Referral Sources for Crisis Stabilization Units](#) (Brief)



Mental Health America

- [Addressing the Youth Mental Health Crisis: The Urgent Need for More Education, Services, and Supports](#) (Report)

Policy Examples Highlighted by Task Force Member, Partners and CSG Staff

- Through the [Safety and Violence Education Students Act](#), the **Ohio** departments of Education and Mental Health and Addiction Services will maintain lists of approved training programs for social inclusion. This program looks to define social isolation and ways to promote social inclusion within the schools.
- **Oregon** [House Bill 2949](#) (2021) authorizes a program that will award to qualified mental and behavioral health care professionals student loan forgiveness or student loan payment subsidies if the individual commits to two consecutive years of full-time practice in certain public or nonprofit facilities.
- **Tennessee's** [Building Strong Brains Tennessee program](#) was established to mitigate the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and promote statewide economic prosperity. The program combines strong champions from three branches of government, private sector and community partners, evidence-informed messaging and sustainable financial support to work toward a statewide culture change on the issue of ACE.

Human Health Subcommittee

- Chief Justice Bridget McCormack, MI (co-chair)
- Chief Executive Officer Dannette Smith, NE Department of Health & Human Services (co-chair)
- Rep. Colleen Burton, FL
- Chief Justice Susan Christensen, IA
- Chief Privacy Officer Ted Cotterill, IN
- Judge Melanie May, FL
- Justice Anne McKeig, MN
- Director Adam Meier, MT Department of Public Health & Human Services
- Rep. Cindy Ryu, WA
- Rep. Brian Sims, PA



Contact Information

2021-22 CSG Health States National Task Force

| [Website](#)

| [Email](#)

CSG Staff

Carl Sims
The Council of State Governments
csims@csq.org

Dexter Horne
The Council of State Governments
dhorne@csq.org