

Behavioral Health Position, LWV Janesville and Beloit

The Janesville and Beloit League of Women Voters firmly believes that effective treatment of behavioral health is important to overall health and social well being of Rock County residents.

We encourage the Board of Supervisors, in their role as policy makers, and the County Administrator to support evidence based policies and practices regarding mentally ill and/or addicted individuals and their families.

We encourage the Rock County Human Services Department to continue to follow proactive procedures and policies by:

- Providing an affirmational, welcoming atmosphere/ service that is culturally competent, trauma informed, and recovery oriented.
- Building respectful and compassionate relationships with individuals and their families
- Managing co-occurring disorders (mental illness, substance abuse, and other issues occurring simultaneously) together with coordinated treatment
- When involuntary treatment for mental illness and/or addiction is required, providing the least restrictive option to meet the needs of the individual in a location close to their home.
- Pursuing harm reduction options when an individual is not yet ready for treatment such as wet housing, halfway housing, and needle exchanges
- Separating behavioral health issues from criminal activities through diversion courts, deferred prosecution, realistic probation rules.
- After detox or crisis events, following up with the individual the next day to try to connect the individual with services.
- Identifying and advocating for the needs of mentally ill and addicted individuals.

We encourage the Rock County law enforcement and courts to provide alternatives besides incarceration for mentally ill and addicted individuals.

We encourage all County, municipal, and district governments and agencies to:

- Provide training for employees to become "Behavior Health friendly", so employees may understand mental illness and AODA issues and become more competent working with these individuals.
- Provide first responders, correctional officers and youth workers with training, resources and skill building opportunities to de-escalate and manage crisis situations
- Adopt policies to allow agencies to cooperate and communicate with each other about mentally ill and addicted individuals and issues, as allowed by law.
- Provide mental health and addiction resources in schools

We ask the Board of Supervisors to provide sufficient funding so these evidence based practices can be carried out by County employees. We recognize that funding preventive measures saves money in the long run, and support funding in the following areas:

- Staff to provide the range of treatments needed to treat this population, including
 - counselors and therapists
 - case workers,
 - child psychiatrists,
 - professionals who can prescribe and monitor medications,
 - social workers for assisting incarcerated individuals to successfully integrate into the community to reduce recidivism
- Sufficient staff for agencies to provide effective treatment, to communicate between agencies, and to communicate with families of those affected.
- Local resources for inpatient care, including single occupancy psych beds.
- Harm reduction options such as wet housing, halfway housing, and needle exchanges for individuals who are not yet ready for treatment
- Diversion courts to separate behavioral health issues from criminal activities

Adopted

May 2, 2017 Janesville League of Women Voters

April 29, 2017 Beloit League of Women Voters