



2020 Legislative Talking Points

Legislative priority: **Permanently and Sustainably Fund Regional Mental Health and Disability Services**

What: Iowa Legislature needs to adopt a **permanent and sustainable fix to funding** regional mental health and disability services. This needs to be done before counties certify budgets on April 1.

Why: Currently regional mental health and disability services is paid for by a portion of the collected property taxes. The amount of the tax levy was frozen at the dollar amount in 1996. As populations grow, and more individuals need services using the money, the amount allotted from the taxes remains the same.

An Example:

Polk County - 1996

Collected \$46.30 per capita from taxes (\$16.4 million).

Population was 349,560.

Average incomes were \$25,946

Polk County - 2019

Collected \$30.87 per capita from taxes (\$14.8 million).

Population was 481,000.

Average incomes were \$48,118.

Twenty Five Years Later:

Polk County collects \$2 million less in taxes, but the population has grown by 132,000 more people.

Average per capita incomes during this time have nearly doubled.

Polk County FY 2020

Budget to Maintain Services: \$27,880,386

Property Tax Funds Available: \$14,874,092

Amount Polk County **Needs: \$13,006,293** for expenses vs. revenues

Without a fix, Polk County will be forced to **cut services to its most vulnerable citizens, including its safety net of Service Coordination, and will not be able to build a Children's mental health system.**

Recommendations:

- 1) Support the Governor's Invest In Iowa funding solution- providing property tax relief while moving the levy to a per capita system- helping larger population regions-**with legal protections in place to ensure that the money covering the gap is guaranteed to Regions moving forward.** OR
- 2) Fully fund the mental health regions to ensure that there is money within the general fund to cover the gaps in service budgets.

Legislative priority: **Building and Maintaining an Accessible and Qualified Workforce for Direct Support through Professionals within the Mental Health and Disability field.**

What: The Legislature should increase rates for Mental Health Disability Services (HCBS and Habilitation) by 10% with a 75% pass through directly for wages.

Why: Since 2015, the turnover rate for Direct Support Professionals (DSP's) has nearly doubled. Vulnerable Iowan's and our Mental Health system rely on our DSPs. Currently 99% of disability service providers have DSP vacancies. Workforce shortage has hit a critical level, and DSP wages are funded through Medicaid and directly impacted by rates set by the State of Iowa.

Recommendations:

- 1) Increase Rates for HCBS Waiver and Habilitation services by 10% with a 75% pass through for wages.
- 2) Support measures that lessen the burden on providers to find and retain qualified staff quickly

Additional Bills of Interest

Below are a series of bills that, as written, could negatively impact Iowans with disabilities or mental health issues.

1. **SSB 3178** Prohibits Cities and Counties from restricting landlords from discriminating against tenants based on the source of income used to pay rent. If passed could diminish affordable housing options, especially to individuals using rent support and section 8 vouchers.
2. **SF2366** Establishes work requirements for people using public assistance
3. **HSB 581** Requires a fee for reenrollment for a person who has been terminated from the Iowa Health and Wellness Plan (Medicaid Expansion). Note: Persons with mental health and disabilities lose their Medicaid through paperwork and system glitches frequently.