



The Campaign for Children's Mental Health

## Children's Mental Health Talking Points Budget Hearings January 4, 2013

These talking points are intended as guidance as you prepare your 3 minutes or less of testimony for the budget hearings. Feel free to adjust the order of the items to fit your message. If you have any questions in preparing your testimony, please contact Margaret Nimmo Crowe at [margaret@vakids.org](mailto:margaret@vakids.org).

- Introduce yourself: name, organizational affiliation, if any, or that you are a family member of a child with mental health needs.
- If you are a family member, tell 2-3 sentences about your story ***as it relates to the need for crisis services or child psychiatry*** here. Then link to the next statement: "Our story is not uncommon..."
- Serious mental health disorders affect an estimated 100,000 children and youth in Virginia; these are the kind of disorders that are severe enough to interfere with a child's daily functioning at home, at school, and in the community.
- **Thanks to the funding YOU provided last session, half of these children now have a better chance at accessing community-based crisis services and child psychiatry.**
- **Already we are seeing outstanding outcomes that are showing better results for kids and saving money:** (pick one or two based on geography, or substitute your own)
  - o At the new crisis stabilization unit in Richmond, which has 6 beds for children in crisis who can be diverted from an inpatient hospital setting, they served 36 children from May through October. 82% of these children were successfully kept out of the hospital. That represents a significant cost savings: state general fund expenditures for 1 child per night at the crisis stabilization unit are \$150. Compare that to a cost of \$700/child/day at the Commonwealth Center in Staunton, or more than \$1000/child/day at a private hospital.
  - o In Lynchburg and four surrounding localities, this funding has allowed Horizon Behavioral Health, the CSB, to expand its mobile crisis team to serve children with no insurance or private insurance, as well as those with Medicaid. Horizon has reduced its use of the state hospital by 50% since July 1. In November, they had an unprecedented zero admissions to the Commonwealth Center in

Staunton. In addition, kids in crisis situations can now see a child psychiatrist within a week instead of waiting 60 days, the typical waiting time.

- Prior to this funding, the area served by Rockbridge community services board (Lexington and surrounding rural areas) had no access to a board certified child psychiatrist. The only psychiatry was a part-time adult psychiatrist who was only willing to see patients 12 and older. Thanks to this funding, a board-certified child psychiatrist is available in this region. Children discharged from a psychiatric hospital now can be seen by a child psychiatrist in the community, which helps reduce hospital re-admission rates. Also, pediatricians in this area have been prescribing psychotropic medications without the ability to consult with a child psychiatrist. With this funding, many will be treated more effectively. For example, a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader already placed on 6 psychotropic medications by his pediatrician will now have an opportunity to see a child psychiatrist for the first time.
- Thanks to this funding, a large family practice clinic in Lynchburg which serves mainly low-income families is learning how to better treat children's mental health disorders. Horizon Behavioral Health, the CSB, sends a child psychiatrist to consult with the family medicine residents for two hours every week. So far they have received consultation on treating ADHD, anxiety and depression in children they see in their practice. This training provides better results for the kids and helps extend the reach of the child psychiatrist in a cost-effective manner.
- These are examples of how the \$1.5 million you included in the budget this fiscal year is being used to serve 3 health planning regions of the state: Region I (Lynchburg and Central Va), Region III (Southwest Va), and Region IV (greater Richmond area).
- **I am pleased that the Governor has provided an additional \$1 million in FY14 for these services. I ask that you support this amendment and add additional funding to that** so that Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads—the two regions that were not funded – can begin their projects. **Half of the state's population of children with serious mental health disorders live in these two regions.** The CSBs in these areas have planned solid projects and are ready to go, once they receive funding.
- We can expect to see more positive outcomes for children and effective use of resources by funding these two projects. Thank you.