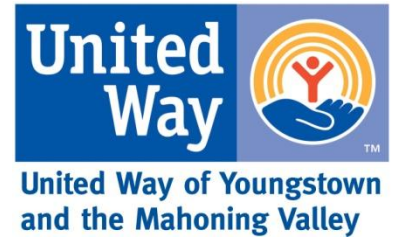


Legislative Priority Issue:
Behavioral Health Services
(including mental health & drug and alcohol related disorders)



United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley's position on behavioral health (mental health & other drug and alcohol related disorders) services seeks to address the importance of overall community health including behavioral health for individuals, families and employers. The consequences that can result from a fragmented, underfunded community behavioral health system will affect the entire community in a negative manner.

Behavioral healthcare is healthcare and should be treated as such. A healthy brain is every bit as essential as a healthy body and without complete healthcare Ohioans, including those in the Mahoning Valley, will be challenged at work, home and school.

Over the last several State budget cycles, cuts to mental health and additional services have been extreme. Further, the rates of suicide, incarceration and disability continue to rise. It is reported that two of every three Ohioans indicate that they are directly impacted by a friend or family member with a mental illness or addiction problem.

Lack of appropriate funding for mental health and addiction services will result in:

- Increased suicide
- Increased crime and incarceration
- Domestic violence
- Increased stress and congestion in emergency services i.e. hospital emergency rooms and police response
- Additional stress to the court system
- Job loss to employers
- Decreased employee productivity and losses to employers
- Truancy and school/academic related problems
- Increased unemployment
- Foreclosure
- General breakdown in a family and life quality
- Reducing the negative effects on not-for-profit agency programs that UWYMV funds to meet community need.

United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley supports the following legislative initiative, that mental (behavioral) healthcare is healthcare.

- Restore State budget community line items with allocations to counties (ODMH 408, 404 and ODADAS 401) to ensure that local levies will be protected to continue to support locally identified needs.

Majority of the information is from the Coalition for Healthy Communities, Ohio Association of Behavioral Health Authorities and the Ohio Council of Behavioral Health Providers