



## Psychotherapy Action Network

### Comment on Governor Pritzker's budget plan for Illinois

23 February 2019

Psychotherapy Action Network (PsiAN) lauds Governor Pritzker for his efforts to increase mental health spending even while the state of Illinois struggles to restore its *fiscal* health to solid footing. This budget clearly reflects the insight that in order to strengthen our state, we must make wise investments in the well-being of Illinois 12.8 million citizens that will pay off many times over going forward. Assuring access to optimal mental health and substance abuse care is both a fiscal and a humanitarian obligation. This budget suggests that the Governor intends to take this obligation seriously after years of erosion of support for needed services.

Many of the line items in the Governor's plan will fund programs that PsiAN has had a continued stake in promoting. While Illinois has moved forward on mandated screenings of social-emotional well-being for school-aged children, for instance, we have highlighted the futility of implementing such an effort, as well-intentioned as it might be, without providing adequate treatment resources for the most vulnerable children and adolescents who are identified through this program. Thus, we applaud the Governor's intention to increase funding for children and adolescents in the child welfare system.

Additionally, as PsiAN has worked to explore avenues for creating informed mental health services for children within the context of physician practices, our organization appreciates the special emphasis the current budget places upon the need to provide for better integration between mental and physical health resources.

Further, PsiAN has worked to promote optimal treatment of individuals experiencing first-episode psychosis, and we are pleased that services that can potentially return individuals struggling with psychosis back into the community rather than turn them into life-long "mental patients" will be more adequately funded going forward. These services will be most successful, of course, when they are undergirded by adequate housing options, safe neighborhoods, and education and employment opportunities, as one aspect of the social health network of our communities.

We are hopeful that this budget is a harbinger of a positive trend. However, Illinois needs not just increased mental health and substance abuse funding, but increased access to individualized mental health care of *depth, dedication, duration and relationship*.<sup>1</sup> Too often,

mental health dollars are only spent in providing less-than-optimal care, as happens when trends towards overmedication and short-term, quick-fix superficial interventions are reinforced by budget choices.<sup>2</sup> We can no longer afford to overlook the fact that the behaviorally-focused interventions offered to those without means are insufficient to help most people most of the time.<sup>3</sup> Rather, we must view the glaringly inequitable distribution of therapeutic resources as a core issue of social justice.

We at Psychotherapy Action Network are hopeful that the Governor's turn towards greater attention to the emotional health of our citizens manifests in offering individuals true choice among a broadening range of mental health treatment options, supplanting one-size-fits-all approaches with individualized psychotherapeutic treatments that can transform personal struggle into lifelong participation in communities that thrive.

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<sup>1</sup> Wampold, Bruce E. and Imel, Zac E., *The Great Psychotherapy Debate: The Evidence for What Makes Psychotherapy Work*. Routledge 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Lazar, Susan G., M.D., editor, *Psychotherapy Is Worth It: A Comprehensive Review of Its Cost-Effectiveness*. American Psychiatric Association Publishing 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Shedler, Jonathan, Where is the evidence for "evidence-based" therapy? *Journal of Psychological Therapies in Primary Care* 2015;4:47–59.