



Memorandum

Date: October 2020

To: Napa County Legislative Subcommittee

From: Rob Weiss, Executive Director, Mentis

Re: Recommendations for Napa County's 2021 Policy Platform

Please find attached policy recommendations for the Legislative Subcommittee's consideration for the 2020 Napa County Policy Platform. The context for this recommendation is the fact that the current Legislative Platform tends to focus on the Mental Health needs of youth and adults with more severe mental illnesses. While this is an important segment of our community that needs more resources, it is too limited in scope and ignores the larger and growing mental health needs in the County as a whole.

Mental Health Needs

Issue: Access to care across the spectrum of need and age for all county residents

Our community should have access to affordable mental health care across the spectrum of need starting with prevention and moving toward mild to moderate to severe. While services for children and adults with severe mental illness have been the primary focus of Napa County, there is a pronounced and significant need to offer mental health treatment to youth and adults that would be considered more moderate in their level of need. Typically, this means providing mental health treatment around depression, anxiety, and trauma to be people of all ages. Without access to care that is affordable, youth, individuals, and families suffer in silence and struggle in school, at work, and at home. Sometimes these

clients are covered by insurance, sometimes they are not. Even for people with insurance, there remains barriers to accessing high quality care. For providers, most insurance reimbursement is low and does not ensure a sustainable model for providing essential mental health treatment services. In addition, a significant percentage of County adults remain uninsured and low income with no means to cover the cost of care (estimates seem to vary from 10-12%).

Furthermore, there needs to be greater community emphasis on prevention; including outreach about the importance of mental health and wellness, stigma reduction and coping skills, education about mental health issues and how to identify them, easy access to resources, and resilience trainings. By investing in prevention and early intervention programs and providing early access to appropriate services, we can mitigate the effects and consequences of more severe mental health issues in our community.

Action:

- Support legislation that improves access to mental health treatment for people of all ages that are in the mild to moderate range in regard to the severity of their condition. This legislation also needs to support community providers who are delivering this service but not receiving full reimbursement to cover their costs, which makes sustainability very difficult. Furthermore, there needs to be funding streams made available for agencies that want to offer prevention services and support.