

MHA Applauds Governor's Medicaid Rate Increase

October 25, 2017, Madison. Mental Health America of Wisconsin (MHA) applauds Governor Walker for the recently announced increase in Medicaid reimbursement rates for outpatient behavioral health services. This has been a long-standing priority for MHA and other mental health advocacy groups based on the input we have received from providers that current rates are inadequate. Paired with the recent elimination of prior authorization for these services Medicaid has removed two major barriers to provision of outpatient behavioral health services.

This investment also responds to the Medicaid Fee-For-Service Access Report, which was released by the Department of Health Services (DHS) last year. That report identified significant access concerns for mental health services and noted that Wisconsin Medicaid rates were only 75% of the Medicare rates for comparable services. MHA had advocated for increasing the Medicaid rate to at least the Medicare rate. While we don't yet know how the \$17 million will translate into actual rate increases, the Governor's announcement suggest they will be "competitive" with Medicare rates.

"This new investment continues the Governor's ongoing commitment to behavioral health that dates back to the 2013 budget," said Shel Gross, MHA's Director of Public Policy. "With the support of the Legislature, the Governor has expanded Comprehensive Community Services and Coordinated Service Teams, supported the development of peer run respite programs, initiated the child psychiatry consultation program, and most recently expanded school-based mental health services among many other initiatives", Gross concluded.

MHA looks forward to continuing to work with the Governor, the Legislature, DHS and service providers to make sure this rate increase translates into expanded access for Wisconsin Medicaid recipients.
