Fragile Mental Health Systems Target of Reform

Focus is on cost-effective, evidence-based care

by Kate Torney (ktorney@csg.org)

oughly one in four American adults is struggling with a mental illness, according to the National Institute on Mental Health, and half of them are dealing with more than one disorder at the same time. About 20 percent of American children already have had a mental illness at some point in their lives.

While the severity of these disorders varies, the common thread is that mental illness can be life-altering for patients and their families. But for some affected by psychological disorders, help can seem worlds away.

There is an average delay of eight to 10 years between when symptoms first show up and when someone seeks help.

Given the widespread nature of mental health issues in this country, why is there such a gap between those who are struggling and the care they need?

“We have a very fragmented system,” says Bob Carolla of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. “It is very difficult, if not impossible, for a family to navigate. Frequently, these two types of care, which are often interrelated, are a key recommendation in a NAMI report assessing state mental health care systems (see graphic on page 6).

Historically, Carolla says, the nation’s physical and mental health care systems have been separated. Better integrating these two types of care, which are often interrelated, is a key recommendation in a NAMI report assessing state mental health care systems (see graphic on page 6).

Policy experts also point out another major weakness of the U.S. health system: many people simply don’t have coverage for behavioral services. In addition to the uninsured, there are those who are “under-insured”— their health plan doesn’t cover mental health services in the same way it covers physical conditions.

These structural issues, paired with the stigma associated with mental illness, keep many in need from receiving care. This lack of care (or care that comes only when a crisis occurs) can be a tremendous strain on states’ safety nets.

That’s in part because people who live with, or have a child who suffers from, severe mental illness often exhaust their private health coverage, which typically doesn’t include ongoing intensive services.

Mental illness also puts people at higher risk of losing a job or becoming unable to work; others are forced to leave their jobs to care for a loved one. When people lose their private coverage, they turn to public services or Medicaid (if they are eligible).

“There is a cost shift onto public systems because public health care has become the default system for children and adults with the most severe mental health conditions,” says Angela Kimball, NAMI’s director of state policy. And other parts of the safety net are impacted as well: emergency rooms, schools, housing and employment programs, and the criminal justice system, for example.

States have policy options

Since 2008, about 30 states— including Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Nebraska and Ohio— have cut spending on mental health care, according to NAMI. In one-third of those states, including Illinois and Kansas, reductions accounted for more than 10 percent of total funding.

Some policymakers, citing the need for better care, especially for those who could be a danger to themselves or others, have proposed reversing this trend and investing more in mental health programs. For example, Kansas Republican Gov. Sam Brownback recently announced a new $10 million program aimed at providing mental health care for the seriously ill.

The program would put in place a regional system of services for the state’s "most..."
**Economic Development**

Report shows fast-growing firms not limited to usual geographic ‘hot spots,’ high-tech sectors

A report by the Kauffman Foundation reveals some surprising results with regard to the “geography of entrepreneurship,” both in terms of where high-growth companies and innovations tend to be located and the factors that drive concentration patterns.

A part of Kauffman’s “The Ascent of Americas High-Growth Companies” series, the report analyzes state and metropolitan geographic trends of high-growth companies and innovations over the past 30 years. The companies studied are those that appear on Inc. magazine’s annual list of the 500 fastest-growing firms in the United States.

In terms of the total number of high-growth firms, Illinois (eighth), Ohio (12th), Michigan (16th) and Indiana (20th) rank among the top 20 U.S. states. But when the size of a state’s population is accounted for, Ohio, Michigan and Indiana fall out of the top 20, while Minnesota ranks 13th and Illinois drops to 16th.

In the Midwest, the Indianapolis and Minneapolis areas rank sixth and 17th, respectively, among the top 20 large metropolitan areas. Five other regions in the Midwest rank in the top 20 mid-size metro areas: Ann Arbor, Mich. (ninth), Madison, Wis. (11th), Des Moines, Iowa (16th), Omaha, Neb. (18th), and Akron, Ohio (20th).

The Kauffman study also shows that there is a large presence of innovative, high-growth companies outside the traditional technology “hot spots” of Boston and California’s Silicon Valley. And in general, “high tech” does not necessarily mean high growth: Between 2005 and 2010, the high-tech sectors accounted for only about one-quarter of the fastest-growing firms.

**“Inc. 500” (fastest-growing) firms in Midwest, 2001-2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th># of firms</th>
<th>Change from previous decade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>-4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>+17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>+16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-56.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>-21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>+27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+250.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>-3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>-29.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kauffman Foundation

Of the various high-tech sectors, only information technology and the health and drug sectors were among the 10 fastest-growing industries.

Innovation and growth come from a wider range of industries than has been conventionally thought, the authors of the Kauffman study conclude.

They also found no correlation between the geographic concentration of fast-growing industries and several oft-cited growth factors: venture capital investment, high-quality research universities, federal research and development money, and patents.

Instead, the researchers found that the presence of a highly skilled labor force is the most important factor related to the geographic concentration of high-growth companies and innovations.

**Agriculture & Natural Resources**

Midwestern states’ input helps shape new U.S. guidelines for tracking livestock movement

After much consternation about how to improve the nation’s system for tracking animal movements in the case of an infectious-disease outbreak, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has settled on a set of final rules that leaves much flexibility and work to the states.

Issued in January, the new guidelines were clearly shaped by input from livestock producers and policymakers from the Midwest and West.

“We are glad that the USDA was flexible enough in the final regulations to leave most of the decisions regarding method of identification and record keeping up to each state,” says Dustin Oedekoven, state veterinarian for South Dakota.

The USDA had originally proposed requiring the use of electronic ear tags and barcode scanners to track all livestock — from farm to fork.

But U.S. senators from ranching states responded by ending funding for the USDAs animal traceability program. Meanwhile, other livestock-producing countries such as Australia and Canada have moved forward with “birth-to-store” tracking programs, leaving U.S. meat producers at a trade disadvantage.

But issuance of the final rules means a mandatory federal system is now in place. Here are some key provisions of the new rules, which most impact the movement of breeding-age cattle.

- Livestock producers required to register with state for purposes of animal identification
- Livestock producers required to register with state only if animals are being exhibited
- Producer registration with state is voluntary

Animals moved to custom slaughter are exempt.

- Record-keeping requirements for poultry and swine are limited to two years; for other species, records must be kept for five years.
- Metal tags, brands and breed registry tattoos will be accepted as identification, provided these forms of ID are accepted by the state shipping and receiving the animal.
- Back tags will be accepted as identification for animals moving directly to slaughter.
- Cattle under 18 months of age will have separate requirements, which will be released at a later date.

Within these broad federal guidelines, states will be responsible for determining acceptable identification methods and tracking animal movement, primarily through the use of certificates of veterinary inspection and state-maintained databases. And if animals are not being moved out of state, the federal rules do not apply.

States already have some type of traceability program in place. All, for example, require a veterinary certificate before livestock can be brought in from another state. But identification and farm registration methods vary.

For instance, Wisconsin in 2004 became the first state in the nation to require registration of all farms. According to Robert Ehlenfeldt, the state’s animal health administrator, Wisconsin will continue to have requirements more stringent than the new federal rules — it will, for example, require individual identification of all sexually intact cattle, regardless of age.

Michigan has some of the most stringent traceability requirements in the nation, including a rule that cattle moving within the state have individual radio frequency identification ear tags. Indiana, which requires farm registration, will also mandate individual identification of breeding-age cattle.

In Minnesota, the state is working to “capture all animal movement possible throughout the state — from testing programs, sales barns, show records and slaughter facilities,” says Bill Hartman, executive director of the Board of Animal Health.

The state will develop a database "to provide quick trace-back should a disease event occur," he says.

Creating a system to follow animal movement in South Dakota, Oedekoven says, will be a big change. To do this, the state has provided animal-gathering locations with renovated computers from the state’s surplus.

**Livestock traceability requirements in Midwestern states**

Source: CSG Midwest research

Brief written by Laura Tomaka, CSG staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Economic Development Committee. She can be reached at ltomaka@sg.org.
Governments trying to address border inefficiencies that raise business costs, consumer prices

With the North American economy becoming ever more integrated, delays at the U.S.-Canada border have the potential to cost more and more money.

Robert Pastor, director of the Center for North American Studies at American University, told the Midwestern Legislative Conference Midwest-Canada Relations Committee last summer that up to 10 percent of the cost of a product manufactured in North America is due to border and trade inefficiencies at the point that goods cross between Canada and the U.S.

In a recent report for the Canada Institute, trade expert Laura Dawson cites another statistic: Delays at the border add $800 to the price of a car made in North America. The delay is not only due to long lines of traffic. The integrated nature of the auto supply chain means that components might cross the border seven times, each time subject to inspections and fees, before a car is fully assembled.

Dawson says some companies that rely on supplies from across the border have moved from a just-in-time delivery system to “just-in-case production,” stockpiling inventory and doubling up on orders — a necessary but expensive business move.

Only three states — Michigan, Minnesota and North Dakota — share a land border with Canada, but all 11 states in the Midwest have an economic stake in efficient land-border operations. In October 2012 alone, surface trade (mainly via truck traffic) between the United States and Canada totaled $4.6 billion, and five of the top 10 U.S. states for trade value are in the Midwest (see table).

Due to inadequate roads and border facilities, trucks now are subject to delays; shipments are also slowed due to the operation and management of the border.

But recent movement at the state, provincial and federal levels of government may soon lead to improvements at the border.

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder reached an agreement last year with the government of Canada to build a publicly owned international bridge crossing that would relieve traffic congestion on the 83-year-old Ambassador Bridge, the busiest commercial crossing in the United States.

The new span will provide an alternate route in case the Ambassador Bridge needs to be temporarily shut down and, by way of a new access highway, keep traffic off city roads in Windsor, Ontario. (The privately owned Ambassador Bridge was never fully integrated into the highway system, so trucks traveling into the United States must use local roads to access the bridge.)

Meanwhile, through the bilateral Beyond the Border initiative, the U.S. and Canada are in the midst of a multi-year effort focusing on border management. The effort has resulted in a series of reforms and pilot projects designed to streamline the border-crossing process.

Under the five-year Border Infrastructure Investment Plan, for example, work will be done to expand, renovate and build new customs plazas, lanes at border facilities, and roads leading to the facilities. Also, one of the new pilot projects will allow for pre-inspection of goods coming into the U.S. from Canada, moving inspections away from border facilities and removing a source of potential delays.

Midwestern Legislative Conference 68th Annual Meeting

St. Paul, Minnesota | July 14–17, 2013

Are you looking for a place to share ideas in a nonpartisan environment?

Join us in St. Paul for this summer’s MLC Annual Meeting, the premier event for Midwestern state lawmakers. Register by May 7 to receive a discount on your registration fee.

The MLC Annual Meeting is a conference for policymakers from around the Midwest to share ideas, talk about innovative state policy, discuss common challenges and identify solutions.

Small-group discussions foster collaborative problem-solving, while larger sessions allow attendees to hear from some of the country’s top experts on issues of importance to state policymakers.

This year’s meeting will feature a presentation from one of America’s foremost historians, Jon Meacham. The Pulitzer Prize-winning author will talk about leadership, drawing on his works about some of the world’s most notable historical figures.

And author Jonathan Haidt will share his insights on how policymakers can repair their differences by finding the reasons for which they disagree.

Evening social events offer the opportunity to network with colleagues. This year’s agenda includes an opening reception at the Minnesota Science Museum and a family-friendly evening at The Minnesota History Center. The elegant tradition of the State Dinner will be celebrated this year at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, a beautiful concert hall in the heart of St. Paul.

SPEAKERS

Jon Meacham
Pulitzer Prize-winning author

Ann Bancroft
Polar explorer and educator

Jonathan Haidt
Author, expert on human morality

WWW.CSGMIDWEST.ORG

Midwestern states’ surface trade with Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Cargo value, October 2012</th>
<th>Change from October 2011</th>
<th>Rank in U.S. top 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>$4.6 billion</td>
<td>+5.6%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>$1.6 billion</td>
<td>+9.2%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>$658 million</td>
<td>+8.8%</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>$165 million</td>
<td>+9.6%</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>$67.7 billion</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>$7.1 billion</td>
<td>+12.5%</td>
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<td>Nebraska</td>
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<td>$980 million</td>
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<td>—</td>
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<td>South Dakota</td>
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<td>+21.9%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>$580 million</td>
<td>+7.6%</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics
Governors and courts help put K-12 funding at top of 2013 agendas

For every $3 spent from state general funds, more than $1 goes to elementary and secondary education. K-12 education spending dwarfs any other single item in state general-fund budgets, and it has risen to the top of policy agendas in many Midwestern states early in 2013. In states such as Indiana and Wisconsin, the governors have said their new budgets will place a greater emphasis on measuring school performance and tying funding to it.

“We want to reward and replicate success,” said Republican Gov. Scott Walker, who is proposing new financial incentives for the state’s high-performing and rapidly improving schools.

In Iowa, the centerpiece of Republican Gov. Terry Branstad’s proposed education reforms is a new system for paying teachers. He wants to increase starting salaries while also establishing new paths for top teachers to take on instructional-leadership positions — allowing them to get paid more as a result. Branstad’s proposal builds on a teacher-pay model that was passed by the legislature 12 years ago but never funded.

That measure, viewed as a policy breakthrough at the time, established a new type of career ladder that rewards teacher effectiveness and performance.

State general-fund spending, FY 2011

Of the 11 states in the Midwest, none has more dramatically restructured its K-12 funding system in recent years than North Dakota. In that state, a system reliant mostly on local property taxes has been replaced by one in which 70 percent of school funding comes from state revenue sources.

Branstad’s proposal builds on a teacher-pay model that was passed by the legislature 12 years ago but never funded.

As many meeting speakers and participants noted, part of the challenge for Great Lakes policymakers is taking action in the face of many unknowns — how much the climate will change in the coming decades, for example, and how it will impact the ecosystem.

Current forecasts of lake levels, Nevin said, show that they will be lower than normal over the next 30 years, but remain within the six feet of fluctuating levels recorded during different periods of the 20th century.

“Beyond 30 years,” he said, “it is unknown.” Lower water levels affect boaters and shippers, shoreland owners and users, and Great Lakes habitat and wetlands.

At least over the short term, the low water levels have led to calls for more state-level investments in the dredging of ports and harbors. Another potential government response is to make structural changes in the St. Clair River — a move that would boost water levels in lakes Michigan and Huron but also raise concerns about the impact in other parts of the basin.

Rise in algal blooms, sewage overflows among other effects

Low water levels are only one of the many potential consequences of climate change.

Higher temperatures have also been identified as one reason for the rise in Lake Erie of harmful algal blooms, which are more likely to occur in warmer waters.

“Combating these algal blooms has long been a binational priority due to their impact on the Great Lakes ecosystem and fishing industry, as well as the threat they pose to beaches and drinking water sources,” Dereth Glance, a U.S. commissioner for the International Joint Commission, said at the meeting.

Sea changes: Signs of changing climate in Great Lakes region

• ICE COVER
  Between 1973 and 2010, ice cover on the Great Lakes decreased 71 percent. (Source: Journal of Climate)

• RAINFALL
  Between 1958 and 2007, the number of heavy downpours in the Great Lakes region increased 31 percent. (Source: U.S. Global Change Research Program)

• WATER LEVELS
  Water levels in lakes Michigan and Huron reached an all-time recorded low in December 2012. (Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

“But now we’re in a new era of serious backsliding,” Jim Bruce, a longtime Canadian leader on Great Lakes policy, said at the meeting.

He cites warmer water temperatures and non-point source pollution from agricultural land as two leading contributors to the algal-bloom problem in Lake Erie.

Under the recently updated binational agreement, new “loading targets” will be established to limit the concentration of phosphorus in Lake Erie. The targets will be in place within three years and a framework for meeting them will be in place within five years. (Targets will also be set for the other four lakes, but a specific timetable is not set.)

As a result, states will be asked to establish new rules, programs and laws to reduce the amount of nutrients entering the Great Lakes.

Bruce noted, too, another significant change in the Great Lakes region’s climate — “when it rains, it pours.”

Between 1958 and 2007, the number of heavy downpours in the region has increased 31 percent (there was little change in light or moderate precipitation during this period). This trend is expected to continue, leading to more sewage overflows and more pollution entering the lakes.

For states, this will mean more pressure to finance upgrades to their water infrastructures.

“At the end of the day, it all comes down to states and their policies,” said Dereth Glance, a U.S. commissioner for the International Joint Commission.

She said governors on both sides of the border will have to establish more adaptive-management strategies: bolster scientific monitoring and research of the Great Lakes, and then use the findings to revise their policies.

Article written by Tim Anderson, who helps provide CSG Midwest’s staffing services for the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus. He can be reached at tanderson@csg.org
QUESTION OF THE MONTH

The Question of the Month section highlights an inquiry received by this office through its Information Help Line, a research service intended to help lawmakers, legislative staff and state officials from across the region. To request assistance through CSG Midwest’s Information Help Line, call 630.925.1922 or send us an e-mail at csgm@csg.org.

QUESTION: What is an “essential health benefit” package, and how have states implemented this new federal requirement?

Under the federal Affordable Care Act, all individual and small-group plans available in state health care exchanges must cover certain services, or “essential health benefits.”

States have recently crafted their EHB packages in response to a December deadline — and in order to prepare for Jan. 1, 2014, when exchanges will begin offering health plans.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the EHB provision of the Affordable Care Act encourages consistency among plans offered in different states and ensures access to coverage for a “core” set of services. The department estimates, for example, that 62 percent of current enrollees in individual health plans do not have maternity coverage and nearly one-fifth do not have coverage for mental-health services. Coverage for both kinds of care will be required in the newly created exchanges.

The EHB provision does not apply to “grandfathered plans,” or plans that existed before the ACA and do not have to comply with certain new regulations.

EHB packages must include 10 general categories, such as emergency services, hospitalization, maternity and newborn care, mental-health and substance-abuse services, prescription drugs, preventive care, and pediatric dental and vision care. But which services are covered within those general categories is up to states, which must stave to make benefits comparable to what a “typical” employer in the state offers.

States must choose an existing health insurance plan, or “benchmark” plan, to serve as a model for minimum coverage. Many benchmark plans, however, do not include all of the benefit categories required by the ACA. In these cases, states must identify supplemental coverage to make EHB packages complete.

In the Midwest, North Dakota and Michigan were among only four states in the nation to choose the state’s largest HMO as an EHB package. Nebraska’s chosen package was not accepted by the federal government, so the state will default to the backup option.

About 68 million people are expected to have access to care covered under EHBs once the ACA is fully implemented, Kaiser reports.

More than 300,000 served: Ohio’s Senate districts are largest in region

by Mike McCabe (mmcabe@csg.org)

Across the Midwest, the average state representative serves just over 58,000 constituents, while the average state senator represents almost 122,000. Both of these numbers are slightly lower than the corresponding national averages, and state-specific figures vary significantly, depending on population size and the number of seats in each legislative chamber.

In North Dakota, for example, each legislator represents just over 14,000 constituents (each of the state’s 47 districts includes two representatives and one senator), the smallest such number among senate constituencies nationwide.

At the other end of the spectrum, Ohio stands out as the state with the region’s largest legislative districts.

The Midwest’s second-most populous state, Ohio is governed by one of the region’s smallest legislatures. That means its 132 members typically represent much larger constituencies than do their counterparts in other states. An average house district encompasses 116,530 residents, which ranks fifth nationally among lower legislative chambers.

With almost 350,000 constituents, the Buckeye State’s 33 Senate districts are fourth-largest in the country. (California’s are the largest; at more than 931,000, they have more people than an average U.S. congressional district.)

Ohio’s current legislative structure, in which each Senate district encompasses three contiguous House districts, was adopted by constitutional amendment in 1967. According to former Senate President Stan Aronoff, who served in the Ohio General Assembly for 36 years before retiring in 1996, the amendment was part of a wave of reforms designed to implement the “one man, one vote” principle established by the U.S. Supreme Court during the early 1960s.

Legislative districts in Ohio had tended to vary considerably in size, effectively diluting the influence of voters in underrepresented areas. Aronoff says the current system has served the state well, and has “led to a greater focus on small-group plans.”

The significance of Ohio’s relatively large constituencies appears to vary by chamber and by district. Sen. Peggy Lehner, who has served in both houses of the General Assembly and currently represents a district in southwest Ohio, says the large size of her constituency isn’t always as apparent as it would be in a more rural area.

“I don’t feel it the way some of my colleagues do,” she says. “Nothing in my district is more than 15 minutes away.”

Lehner’s district lies entirely within one county, and compared to other districts in Ohio, it tends to be more demographically homogeneous. She also benefits from the extra support that senators receive with constituency outreach.

“I have really good staff,” Lehner says, “and a lot more help than I had in the House.”

Sen. Cliff Hite, who has also served in both chambers, agrees that the additional staff is a plus. Still, he says there is no substitute for getting out and meeting constituents, a challenge for him in a northwest Ohio district that encompasses parts of all 11 counties.

“I’m dependent on local officials in my district to keep me informed,” he says. Representing parts of 11 counties means needing to know and work with 11 sets of county officials. And, Hite quips, “It means you have to be willing to go to 11 county fairs, at five elephant ears per county fair, I eat a lot of bad food.”

Hite says that personal contact is essential, regardless of district size. “If you are not willing to network and communicate, then having a large district could be a detriment,” he says. “You have to make it work, or you work your way out. If you’re not a people person, you shouldn’t be doing this.”

Figure article written by Mike McCabe, director of CSG Midwest. He can be reached at mmcabe@csg.org. Only in the Midwest is an ongoing series highlighting unique aspects of state governments and legislatures in the Midwest. Past articles are available at www.csgmidwest.org.
Policy options: Integrate care, improve access and implement evidence-based practices

challenging” cases, including intensive case management and care coordination, as well as parent- and peer-support and crisis-stabilization services. A newly created task force will evaluate the state’s mental health system and recommend improvements. But the spotlight on mental health care goes beyond dollars and cents. As a result of recent violence in this country, there has been a renewed focus on the need to improve care for the mentally ill.

The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports that people with mental illness account for a very small percentage of violent crime in the United States, and most people with a psychiatric condition are not violent. Still, concerns remain about whether people with serious illnesses, especially children, are falling through the cracks.

Minnesota Rep. Jim Davnie, for example, is working on a set of mental health reforms geared toward children. Half of all cases of mental illness appear before age 14 — although those affected aren’t likely to get care for many years later.

“Mental health practitioners treating adults are so supportive [of the legislation] because they recognize that many of their patients first started experiencing symptoms when they were children or adolescents,” says Davnie, a Democrat. “These kids are going to be more successful as adults the sooner that we recognize the mental health issues and connect them with treatment.”

Minnesota law already requires teachers to receive training on identifying possible mental illness in children upon re-licensure. A bill being considered this session would require mental health topics to be a part of the already-required high school health class. “By adding mental health curricula into those classes, you are educating students, which is an opportunity for them to recognize problems in themselves or in their peers,” he says. “And we’re helping to work through the stigma that is a barrier for so many children and adults to get care.”

In addition to identifying mental illness early, states can employ a number of other strategies to make sure those in need receive care. “State lawmakers are in an incredible position to make a real difference,” Kimball says.

Merging mental and physical health

One of the biggest barriers to getting psychiatric care in the United States is that mental and physical health care are treated in different systems. There tends to be little coordination between physical and mental health providers.

And the issue is well evidenced within the Medicaid program, where 11.5 percent of spending is on behavioral health (as opposed to 5 percent in private insurance plans, according to federal statistics). Over half of disabled Medicaid enrollees also have a mental illness, according to the Integrated Care Resource Center, which helps states implement best practices for integrating physical and mental health for beneficiaries. For people with common chronic conditions and mental illness, health care costs are up to 75 percent higher than for people without a psychological condition. When a substance-abuse disorder is added to the mix, costs jump by two to three times.

Mental health policy experts recommend implementing strategies for “integrated care.” One way to achieve this, Kimball says, is to better train doctors who traditionally treat physical ailments. “[Mental health] isn’t an integral part of primary-care training,” Kimball says. “The end result is people are not getting routinely screened for mental health conditions.”

And the disparity contributes to fears Americans have about mental illness, she adds.

“It is very stigmatizing because you are getting ‘specialty care’ and it promotes that you have something very wrong with you,” she says. “When we don’t have integrated care, it perpetuates that idea that mental illness is something unusual and bad.”

Kimball suggests that states change their medical licensure laws to require primary-care providers to be better trained in identifying mental health issues. She also points out that some states have had success in requiring mental health screenings in schools.

In Minnesota, for example, children must receive a screening that includes a look at social-emotional and learning issues before they enroll in kindergarten.

Minnesota’s Dakota County is also piloting a program aimed at integrating physical and behavioral health services for beneficiaries of public health programs. Under the program, launched in 2009, participants are assigned a “wellness navigator”

State efforts to improve mental health systems: Innovations in the Midwest

INNOVATIONS IN ILLINOIS
- Created Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) for law enforcement and jail diversion programs
- Investment in peer-provided education and supports, including training for “peer recovery support specialists”
- Community education and awareness efforts seek to reduce stigma and discrimination

INNOVATIONS IN INDIANA
- Uses Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) programs, which provide intensive individualized care in community settings
- Publishes a consumer satisfaction report card for its community mental health programs
- Increasing use of CIT programs in prisons and for police officers

INNOVATIONS IN IOWA
- Legislature involved in ongoing mental health improvement initiatives
- First state to implement a Medicaid option providing more services for residents who meet specific income and other criteria
- Pilot projects to study crisis response services

INNOVATIONS IN KANSAS
- Hospital and Home Initiative identifies best practices and barriers to care
- Emphasizes safe and affordable housing options for people with serious mental health issues or co-occurring disorders
- Certified peer specialists assist discharge planning at state hospitals

INNOVATIONS IN MICHIGAN
- Evidence-based practices include education for families and treatment for people with co-occurring disorders
- Care is person-centered and recovery-focused
- Community mental health service programs include drop-in centers or “clubhouses,” where people can voluntarily seek support from peers

INNOVATIONS IN MINNESOTA
- All state-funded insurance plans must cover a uniform package of mental health benefits
- State has invested in mental-health infrastructure through community-based resources and other reforms

INNOVATIONS IN NEBRASKA
- Support for recovery includes housing and employment programs
- Consumer and family teams monitor conditions at the two state hospitals, which are working to reduce use of restraint and seclusion
- Peer specialists to help develop Wellness Recovery Action Plans for patients

INNOVATIONS IN NORTH DAKOTA
- Evidence-based strategies being used include CIT training and a dual-diagnosis treatment initiative
- Consumer and Family Network enhances consumer involvement in policy development and education efforts

INNOVATIONS IN OHIO
- Evidence-based practices are promoted by state’s Coordinating Centers of Excellence
- National leader in jail-diversion and community reentry services, such as transitional housing for inmates
- Toll-free phone system provides information and resources to consumers

INNOVATIONS IN SOUTH DAKOTA
- Pilot program promotes screening for depression in primary-care settings
- Community mental health system initiative seeks to better integrate care for people with co-occurring disorders

INNOVATIONS IN WISCONSIN
- State stressors impact of mental health’s role in overall health and seeks to better integrate care
- Smoking-cessation programs available in state hospitals and community programs

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness
The result can be long waits for appointments, a problem that discourages people from getting care and that leaves people in crisis without the help they need.

Rethinking treatment delivery

Ensuring coverage for more people, though, isn’t helpful if there aren’t enough mental health professionals to serve them. Kimball points out that the United States currently faces a shortage of mental health professionals.

Insurance coverage a key concern

A nother key barrier for those in need of mental health services is access to coverage and/or affordable psychiatric care.

Iowa conducted a major overhaul of its mental health system last year amid concerns about equal access to care.

“Depending on where you lived, the services you received were different,” says Renee Schulte, a former state representative who now works for the Department of Human Services to implement the legislation. The state’s services will now be administered at the regional level (instead of by counties) but will be offered on a local level.

In Minnesota, uninsured and underinsured children with a psychiatric diagnosis are helped through a “school-linked mental health services program” that has been in place for four years. Under the program, the state provides grants to clinicians who collaborate with schools to care for children who are referred to the program. The program is aimed at treating young people’s illnesses so they can be successful in school, and it often keeps them from needing special-education services.

In addition, the Minnesota program maintains privacy by hiring an outside mental health professional instead of a school social worker or guidance counselor. Parents don’t have to take time off work, and children can stay in school for their treatment, says Sue Abderholden, executive director of NAMI Minnesota.

“It’s a much smarter way to do it than just giving the money to schools,” she says. “It is not the role of schools to treat mental illness.”

Program successes include decreased suspensions and an increase in the proportion of children who follow treatment plans. The program is currently available in 17 percent of Minnesota schools, and Abderholden is hoping that the Legislature will increase funding this session. With a budget of $4.8 million for the last two years, the program has served about 4,000 children per year.

States have typically cared for their low-income uninsured populations through Medicaid, and expanding access to the program through the federal Affordable Care Act is one way for states to get more people the mental health care they need.

“If a state expands Medicaid, you have a way to pay providers to provide treatment,” Kimball says, adding that the Medicaid programs tend to offer extensive coverage for mental health services.

The ACA will also better protect consumers in the private market. Plans sold in the small-group and employer market. Plans sold in the small-group and/or affordable psychiatric care.

Kimball holds up Minnesota as a model of this strategy thanks to its Community Behavioral Health Services, a system of crisis and acute-care services, which has reduced the reliance on state hospitals to treat mental illnesses. Instead of simply placing people in inpatient care, the state uses techniques to prevent psychological crises.

For example, through Assertive Community Treatment (a technique used by many state and local governments), patients with serious and persistent mental illnesses are given around-the-clock, individualized treatment at home or in a community setting. These services have resulted in people spending 60 percent fewer days in hospitals, which has resulted in significant savings, a state report concludes.

And mobile crisis teams made up of mental health professionals are helping to ease the burden on the criminal-justice and hospital systems.

“You can call them instead of calling the police,” Abderholden says. “They can actually go out to a home and provide stabilization services so people don’t end up in hospital.”

Thanks to the focus on community-based services, the state saw a 21 percent drop in the number of adults hospitalized in state institutions, and the average length of stay was halved between 2000 and 2010. Kimball points out that similar programs would not only improve care in many other states, but they would be more cost-effective; states can receive Medicaid reimbursement for care offered in community-based facilities (state hospitals are generally not eligible).

Data and evidence-based services

When NAMI graded states on their mental health systems, Carolla says the organization had a hard time finding quality data about how they were performing.

Without accurate data, he says, “you may have programs running where no one really knows what the effective outcomes are ... and what is most cost-effective based on evidence-based practices.”

Kimball agrees, recommending that state policymakers consider investing in data collection.

“It’s hard to improve without feedback,” she says. “However, despite the key role that good data and analytics play in improving both quality and cost efficiency of mental health care, few states have made this a target for investment and focus.”

Iowa’s recent mental health reforms put in place a “core” set of services everyone should be able to access — and that are backed up by the latest research.

Schulte, who is trained in psychology and has worked as a counselor and case manager, has advocated for her state to get rid of so-called “legacy programs,” or types of care that have been around for a long time and are no longer considered best practices. For example, placing all but the most seriously ill patients in institutions is considered the best option; community-based treatment is considered more effective for many patients.

So what are considered best practices?

Schulte points to programs such as mental health courts, which operate from the traditional criminal-justice system and help mentally ill offenders get treatment they need to stay well — and out of prison. Statistics show that a quarter of state prisoners have a recent history of mental illness. The number is even higher among juvenile offenders: 70 percent.

Over the five-year rollout period, Schulte hopes the state will put in place other evidence-based methods, such as conducting a pre-assessment before committing a patient, launching drug courts, offering crisis services that divert people from emergency rooms, and putting in place better “subacute care” for patients leaving the hospital, which can shorten expensive emergency stays.

“These practices are newer but have more promise,” Schulte says. “We’re not bouncing people back and forth to prison and the hospital.”

Policymakers throughout the country are seeking to utilize these proven techniques. Ohio has been a leader in promoting evidence-based practices through its “Coordinating Centers of Excellence.” The centers focus on six key areas of mental illness treatment, and each hold a partnership with an in-state university.

The center for Integrated Dual Disorder Treatment, for example, studies how to best integrate mental health services with substance-abuse treatment. Research shows that this method is three times more effective than providing separate treatment for each disorder. The center assists community-based facilities and state psychiatric hospitals in adopting this approach.

Other centers focus on supported employment, wellness management and recovery, innovative practices, mental illness and developmental disabilities, and criminal justice.

For eight years, Michigan, too, has been promoting best practices in the state’s public mental health system. In 2004, the state assembled a group of university researchers, advocacy organizations, consumers and state Department of Community Health staff to develop the strategy for disseminating evidence-based practices.

Programs are focused on “assertive community treatment” (team-based treatment for serious mental illness), education for families affected by a mental illness, supported employment, co-occurring disorders and medication guidelines.

In addition, the center plays a key role in providing focused training and support for underfunded community health programs to develop new expertise in best practices,” Kimball says.

Improving mental health care: Ideas for policymakers

✓ Boost insurance coverage rates for mental health care by expanding Medicaid, promoting enrollment in state exchanges and/or requiring parity with benefits for physical conditions.

✓ Invent in early intervention and/or encourage or require mental health screening.

✓ Provide school-based care to remove barriers to children receiving treatment.

✓ Improve access to mental health professionals by promoting collaboration between behavioral practitioners and other providers, offering incentives for choosing mental health professionals, and requiring primary-care workers to be trained in the diagnosis of mental health conditions.

✓ Provide “recovery supports” for people with serious mental illness, such as housing, peer support services and employment services.

✓ Improve crisis response services by training first-responders to identify and respond to mental health emergencies.

✓ Create support programs for families and friends to understand how to get help for someone with a possible mental health issue.

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness
Nebraska Sen. Heath Mello

Rise of Omaha lawmaker to key leadership position typifies state’s one-of-a-kind nonpartisan Unicameral Legislature

by Tim Anderson (tanderson@cs.org)

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our years ago, as a young freshman senator in the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature, Heath Mello heard one message over and over again from his veteran colleagues.

Nebraska’s legislative system, he was told, was a unique nonpartisan institution — a place where personal relationships and problem-solving trump party affiliation and even ideology.

Earlier this year, Sen. Mello’s selection as chair of the Appropriations Committee became a powerful case in point.

Mello is a Democrat in a 49-member body composed mostly of Republicans, and he has sparred openly with the GOP governor over key policy issues.

Yet when it came to choosing the person who would guide the Legislature’s work on spending policy, Mello’s 48 colleagues chose him. (The selection of committee chairs is unique in Nebraska’s unicameral as well; the full membership makes the selection via a secret-ballot election.)

“It speaks volumes about the strong nonpartisan nature that still resides within our unique unicameral,” says Mello, noting that several Democrats were selected to lead Nebraska’s 14 standing legislative committees.

Of course, the selection also speaks to the reputation that Mello built up in his first four-year term as a lawmaker. He served as a member of the Appropriations Committee and, last year, helped broker a compromise on tax reform.

But Mello says his ascension to the role of Appropriations chair also signals a commitment among colleagues to maintain a strong, independent legislative branch. That has been a concern ever since the onset of term limits in Nebraska (senators are limited to two four-year terms).

Would the loss of long-standing, influential legislative leaders shift too much power to the executive branch? many asked.

The choice of a senator who has at times been a vocal opponent of the governor sends a message of independence.

From volunteer, to senior aide, to senator

Mello was first elected in 2008, eight years after the historic U.S. elections of 2000 put him on a path to the Capitol. He served as a volunteer on the successful U.S. senatorial campaign of Ben Nelson, whom he subsequently worked for as a senior aide, and closely followed the drama of the Bush vs. Gore presidential election and recount.

Cleveland State University in Cleveland, Ohio, Mello is currently a community affairs and development specialist at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha.

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Bio-sketch of Sen. Heath Mello

✓ member of Nebraska Unicameral Legislature since 2009
✓ chair of Appropriations Committee
✓ served as a senior aide to former U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson
✓ works as a community affairs and development specialist at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha
✓ 2012 graduate of CSG Midwest’s Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD)
✓ married Catherine Leo in 2010

“The made me realize that politics and public service was a place where I wanted to be,” he recalls. “It is a noble calling, one where serious and important decisions are made.”

He is now the first Democrat in 64 years and the first Omaha senator in 58 years to lead the Appropriations Committee, perhaps the most powerful committee in the Legislature.

Mello says he feels much responsibility to live up to the trust given to him by colleagues, as well as to carry on the Unicameral’s tradition of nonpartisanship and consensus building.

Q: How would you characterize the fiscal situation in Nebraska right now?

A: It is the best in the four years that I’ve been here. We’re looking at a projected $200 million shortfall. That compares to two years ago when we had a roughly billion-dollar shortfall. … The question now will come down to, what areas should receive the most priority over others? That’s likely going to be K-12 education, higher-education funding and health care.

Q: The Legislature is considering a proposal to eliminate the corporate and personal income tax, and to make up the revenue loss by removing many sales tax exemptions. What are your thoughts on this proposed tax overhaul?

A: I applaud anyone who wants to look at overall tax reform. A lot of the debate [over the proposed tax shift] is going to be over who pays more and who pays less. That’s very important, but there is also more to it.

First, we need to make sure we consider all three parts of the three-legged stool — property taxes, sales taxes and income taxes. If you mess with those last two legs and don't consider the third [property taxes], that has a big impact on what we can and can’t do moving forward. State aid and spending has a direct impact on local property taxes. So you may decrease taxes in one area and open up the likelihood of increases in property taxes.

Second, I really want to do the homework on what the elimination of the income tax would mean over the long-term. What will the impact be two years, four years, six years from now on our state budget? And over the long term, how will it impact K-12 education, which is the largest [spending] driver in our state budget?

Q: In the coming debate over taxes and spending, how do you go about trying to find compromise while not compromising your own core political beliefs?

A: While I’m a registered Democrat, I’ve always been an independent-minded person. On certain issues, I’m more progressive. On others, I’m more conservative. On others, I’m right there as a moderate or centrist. And I think that is the uniqueness of Nebraska’s political landscape and, ultimately, the Unicameral. On a lot of issues, we’re not directly tied to an ideology.

You look at things like our decision on the Keystone oil pipeline [Editor’s note: The Legislature met in special session in late 2011 and passed a bill requiring more regulatory oversight as well as a rerouting of the pipeline] or the fact we’re the only state with a system of 100 percent public [electric] power.

That makes for a unique debate and dialogue in Nebraska. The idea is to take a pragmatic, common-sense approach to government, and to push some of the partisan and ideological divides to the side.
Reeling in the red tape
Ohio’s CSI program showing signs of success in efforts to bring common sense to state regulations and improve business climate

by Ohio Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor

In January 2011, Gov. Kasich used his first executive order to officially create CSI and place it under my direction as lieutenant governor. We believed that virtually all of the major policy challenges facing Ohio, including health care, education, the budget and welfare, would be easier to solve if more Ohioans had good, stable jobs. So we wanted to design our policy agenda around that philosophy.

During these conversations, we were struck by a common theme: Job creators said they were being suffocated by regulations. From environmental regulations to unnecessary paperwork and inflexible deadlines, there was a sense that government was making it too difficult for businesses to succeed.

Never in these conversations did we hear that regulations to protect the environment, injured workers, children and others were not important. Instead, business owners were nearly unanimous in the belief that the state did not view them as partners in its success, and the state did not understand that regulations created in Columbus had a real-world impact on people across Ohio.

Common sense a guiding principle

From these discussions came an idea to create a mechanism for instilling common sense into our state’s process for regulating business. To give it an identity, we branded it the Common Sense Initiative, or CSI.

In January 2011, Gov. Kasich used his first executive order to officially create CSI and place it under my direction as lieutenant governor. We thought the symbolism and substance of these actions sent a powerful message to state agencies and businesses alike that this administration was serious about regulatory reform and making Ohio a business-friendly state once again.

CSI is based on four simple principles that guide its actions:

• Regulations should facilitate economic growth, not get in the way.
• Regulations, and the agencies that create them, should be transparent and responsive.
• Compliance should be as easy and inexpensive as possible.
• Regulations should be fair and consistently applied.

It had been designed to operate along two tracks.

The first track is focused on the administrative rules adopted by state agencies. Since Jan. 1, 2012, all rules that impact business must be submitted to the CSI office for review, along with a Business Impact Analysis (BIA). The BIA requires the agency to explain why the regulation is necessary, which business stakeholders were involved in developing the regulation, and the nature and degree of the impact. Ultimately, the agency must show that the regulation justifies the impact to business.

The proposed rules and analyses are submitted to both CSI and stakeholders who have asked to be notified. The stakeholders are given an opportunity to comment to the agency and CSI. The CSI office then recommends that the agency either move forward with the rules, make changes or, if the agency hasn’t justified the need for the rules, go back to the drawing board.

For example, updates were long overdue for Ohio’s residential building code. The code had historically been an area of tension between home builders and regulators.

CSI brought the two sides together to work through disagreements, identify the purpose and costs of new provisions, and develop a new code that supports an active residential construction industry.

According to the industry, the changes made during the CSI process reduced the cost to build an average new home by at least $2,000, compared with the original proposal. That translates to more than $27 million industry-wide, without reducing the protections provided by the code.

More thought, fewer rules

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throughout the first year of this rule-review process, the results have included some surprises. We reviewed 166 rule packages, consisting of nearly 1,400 total rules, rejected only a handful and made 27 recommendations for rule changes. We worked closely with agencies to encourage CSI values and minimize business impacts, resulting in rule packages with better justifications and often changes to the rules themselves.

The most significant number from 2012, however, came from the legislative committee that oversees rule-making. It reported that agencies filed 44 percent fewer rules than the historical average. Along with the anecdotal evidence we heard from agencies and businesses, this statistic showed that agencies were becoming aware of the need to ensure that regulations are justified before moving forward. This new mindset is leading to more effective and less burdensome regulations.

The second CSI track is intended to ensure that we are focused on those regulations that have the most direct impact on Ohio job creators. We created as many communication channels as possible— including phone, Internet, e-mail, social media and direct outreach—to hear from businesses about their regulatory obstacles. This direct communication allows us to focus on the policies and individual problems that most affect real businesses on a day-to-day basis.

In our first month in office, I received a letter from Mayor Jim Smith of Avon, Ohio. Mayor Smith had been fighting for years to free a local food-manufacturing company from red tape that required the company to purchase alcohol needed for its recipes at retail prices and in retail containers.

To demonstrate how this requirement affected the company’s competitiveness, one recipe called for 140,000 pounds of Merlot wine—which the company had to purchase, uncork, sterilize and pour... one bottle at a time! The extra cost from this requirement virtually guaranteed that its parent company looked to expand. Ohio would not be in the running.

Immediately upon receiving Mayor Smith’s letter, CSI worked with Ohio’s Liquor Control Division and Avon’s state senator to identify a legislative solution. We introduced the legislation and passed it through the General Assembly, and in June 2012, the company announced a $5 million expansion creating new Ohio jobs.

Other CSI successes include assisting an asphalt company as it fought duplicative and expensive emissions testing; helping a small business avoid a six-month delay in receiving a $65,000 refund for overpaid sales tax; and helping local pharmacies navigate the Medicaid system to open new locations in underserved areas.

There is still much work to do, but the results so far have been encouraging. Through a number of efforts, including CSI, Ohio ranked fifth nationally and first in the Midwest in job creation in 2012. We were ranked by a national publication as having the second-best business climate in the nation.

Gov. Kasich and I are hearing from businesses that Ohio is moving in the right direction, strengthening and enhancing a new business-friendly environment.

We’re committed to instilling “common sense” practices to support job creation, while at the same time protecting and serving all Ohio citizens.

Ohio Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor was elected in 2010 after serving as a state representative and later as state auditor.

Submissions welcome

This page is designed to be a forum for legislators and constitutional officers. The opinions expressed on this page do not reflect those of The Council of State Governments or the Midwestern Legislative Conference. Responses to any First Person article are welcome, as are pieces written on other topics.

For more information, contact Tim Anderson at 630.925.1922 or tanderson@csg.org.
Each summer, a select group of Midwestern legislators gathers in Madison, Wis., to take part in the only leadership training program designed exclusively for the region’s newest lawmakers: the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development.

Applications are now available for the 2013 Bowhay Institute, which will be held Aug. 9-13.

The BILLD program uses a multistate approach to explore key policy issues in state government. In addition, the institute offers participants a non-partisan environment in which to discuss the meaning of leadership and strategies for more-effective policymaking.

“I came away feeling like I had something that I could apply to what I’m doing in the legislature,” says Indiana Rep. Rebecca Kubacki, a graduate of the 2012 Bowhay Institute. “I grew as a legislator from the experience.”

More than 600 regional lawmakers have completed BILLD since its inception in 1995. Many of the graduates have gone on to hold key leadership positions in their legislatures; others are now serving in the U.S. Congress.

Toll Fellows program offers professional development for mid-career policymakers

Applications are now available for The Council of State Governments’ leadership program designed for veteran state officials.

The Toll Fellowship Program, named for CSG’s founder Henry Wolcott Toll, is one of the nation’s premier professional-development programs for state government officials.

Each year, the Toll program brings 48 of the nation’s top state government officials together for an intensive six-day “intellectual boot camp.” It targets emerging leaders from all three branches of government. This year’s program will be held Aug. 16-21 in Lexington, Ky.

The program’s agenda includes a lineup of dynamic speakers and sessions designed to stimulate personal assessment and growth while providing networking and relationship-building opportunities. While each year’s program is unique, previous programs have included sessions on leadership personality assessment, media training, crisis management, appreciative inquiry, adaptive leadership and much more.

Past graduates have gone on to serve as governors, secretaries of state, chief justices, leaders of state houses and senators, and members of the U.S. Congress.

At present, Toll’s alumni base includes four current governors, seven lieutenant governors, six secretaries of state, a chief justice, eight members of Congress and the current U.S. secretary of labor.

Toll Fellows are chosen by a panel of program alumni in a bipartisan competitive selection process; 12 applicants are chosen from each of CSG’s four regions.

Applications are due April 15 and are available online at www.csg.org/leadershipcenter.

12 lawmakers tapped to lead Great Lakes Caucus

Twelve state and provincial legislators have been chosen to serve on a bipartisan committee that will help lead state efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes Legislative Caucus Executive Committee was elected by fellow caucus members in December. Minnesota Sen. Ann H. Rest will continue to serve as chair of the caucus; Michigan Sen. Darwin Boehner is the vice chair. Here are other members of the Executive Committee:

- Illinois Rep. Robyn Gabel
- Indiana Sen. Zoë Konopka
- Michigan Sen. Bruce Caswell
- Minnesota Rep. Rick Hansen
- New York Sen. George Maziarz
- Ohio Rep. Dan Ramos
- Ontario Speaker Dave Levac
- Quebec Deputy Speaker François Ouellet
- Pennsylvania Rep. Curt Sonney
- Wisconsin Rep. Cory Mason

Through its mix of programming, advocacy and research, the caucus provides a forum for the regional exchange of ideas and information on key Great Lakes issues.

In the past, it has facilitated regional discussions on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact and pushed for federal passage of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. It is also among the groups that asked the federal government to expedite an Asian carp control study.

This year’s planned activities include in-state workshops for legislators, webinars on Great Lakes policy, and a regional meeting this summer in Duluth, Minn.

Membership in the caucus is free and open to all legislators in the 10 Great Lakes states and provinces. More information on the caucus, including a link to register as a member, is available at www.greatlakeslegislators.org. CSG Midwest provides staffing services for the caucus, which is funded by a grant from the Joyce Foundation.

Officers of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus

Minnesoata Sen. Ann H. Rest, chair
Michigan Sen. Darwin Boehner, vice chair

The Council of State Governments was founded in 1933 as a national, nonpartisan organization to assist and advance state government. The headquarters office, in Lexington, Ky., is responsible for a variety of national programs and services, including research, reference publications, innovations transfer, suggested state legislation and interstate consulting services. The Midwest Office supports seven great lakes states, including the Midwestern Legislative Conference, an association of all legislators in 11 states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. The Canadian provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan are MLC affiliate members.
Registration begins for MLC Annual Meeting, the premier event for Midwest’s state legislators

Registration is now open for the premier event for Midwestern state legislators to exchange ideas on shared policy challenges. It can be completed online at www.csgmidwest.org.

The Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting offers policy sessions, professional development seminars and networking opportunities for lawmakers from 11 Midwestern states and four affiliate Canadian provinces. The 68th annual conference will be held July 14-17 in St. Paul, Minn. This year’s MLC chair, Minnesota Rep. Alice Hausman, is leading her state’s efforts to host the meeting.

During the meeting, attendees will hear from one of America’s most prominent historians, Jon Meacham, a bestselling author who won the Pulitzer Prize for his 2008 biography of Andrew Jackson, “American Lion.” His most recent book is “Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power,” which reached No. 1 on the New York Times bestseller list.

Meacham will speak to lawmakers and other attendees about leadership, drawing from his extensive works about U.S. presidents and other influential historical figures. The keynote address at this year’s conference will be delivered by Jonathan Haidt, author of “The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion.” Haidt’s work focuses on morality and emotion — and how they vary across cultures.

Haidt’s speech will explore how policymakers can repair differences by finding the reasons for which they disagree in the first place.

Haidt draws on his research about human morality to study the struggle between conservatives and liberals — and why the most important differences aren’t about political issues but, rather, each side’s understanding of morality.

Attendees of the conference will also hear a presentation by polar explorer Ann Bancroft, a Minnesota native who will talk about the importance of inspiring young people to achieve their dreams.

In addition to a business agenda full of engaging speakers and public policy sessions, the MLC Annual Meeting features opportunities for lawmakers to network with colleagues from around the Midwest.

The family-friendly conference also offers daytime activities for spouses, other adult guests and children. For information, please contact CSG Midwest at 630.925.1922.

CSG adopts new governance structure aimed at better serving state officials

The Council of State Governments has retooled its governance structure to make it more streamlined and to better serve members.

The changes reflect CSG’s mission to be a member-driven, regionally focused organization that serves all three branches of state government.

At its meeting in December, the CSG Governing Board approved the changes recommended by the National Governance Working Group — leaders from across CSG’s national, regional and affiliate organizations. The group met over the past two years to examine the organization’s governance model.

A new Leadership Council will serve as the core group of CSG leaders from across the organization, including from the four regions, affiliates and the Justice Center.

This council will be available to assist staff on urgent organizational matters and to provide key strategic direction to CSG’s mission, products and programming. In addition, it may adopt interim statements of public policy and adjust budgets adopted by the Executive Committee.

The Leadership Council is expected to meet three to four times annually.

The first CSG Leadership Council meeting is planned for February and will take place in Lexington, Ky.
Under new Illinois law, immigrants have chance to obtain driver’s license

Illinois has become the first state in the Midwest to create a path for unauthorized immigrants to obtain a driver’s license. Proponents of SB 987, signed into law in January, lauded it as a measure that would improve traffic safety and provide greater employment opportunities for the state’s population of unauthorized immigrants — estimated by the Pew Research Hispanic Center to be 525,000.

According to the office of Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn, unlicensed drivers are five times as likely to be involved in a fatal crash as are licensed drivers. In addition, Quinn says, getting more drivers licensed and insured will cut insurance premiums for Illinois motorists.

Under the new law, the state will issue a separate license that applicants for the new license be fingerprinted. The size of inmate populations did not change in Illinois and Minnesota. It dropped in five Midwestern states: Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, North Dakota and Wisconsin.

South Dakota adopts series of reforms to criminal justice system

Facing the prospect of having to build two new state prisons to house the state’s growing inmate population, South Dakota legislators gave overwhelming approval this year to a series of criminal justice reforms. SB 70 was signed into law in early February.

The legislation passes it, the governor signs it into law.

The path for a bill to become a law is well known, but there is another step that is more obscure and less uniform — when enacted measures actually take effect.

Early this year, Wisconsin lawmakers appeared likely to change the process currently in place in that state, namely that the secretary of state must publish an act before it can take effect.

According to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, a bill passed by the Senate in late January would instead allow legislation to take effect two days after the governor signs it. The change was spurred by controversy over a 2011 measure that limited collective bargaining rights for public employees. That bill was passed by the legislature and governor, but the secretary of state delayed publishing the act for months due to a court order. The goal of the 2013 legislation is to eliminate such delays in the future.

In most states, laws generally take effect on a particular day (for example, July 1 in Indiana, Iowa, Kansas and South Dakota). Under the new law, more nonviolent offenders will be diverted from prison and additional state dollars will be invested in recidivism-reduction strategies. A state oversight council will be formed to measure performance and ensure that evidence-based practices are being employed.

According to the Rapid City Journal, the state also plans to expand the use of specialty courts for drug and alcohol offenders.

Wisconsin lawmakers eye change in process for when bills take effect

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