



## **STATEMENT OF POLICY**

### **PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND PREVENTION OF MENTAL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDERS**

#### **Policy**

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) supports the development of strong coordination, collaboration and communication among mental health, public health and primary care practices and systems at the local, state and national levels. NACCHO advocates for the enactment of mental health parity legislation requiring insurers to offer the same coverage for mental health services as they would for any physical problems. NACCHO advocates more resources to support research and implementation of an integrated model of mental health, primary care and public health for prevention, intervention and treatment options for mental health patients with co-occurring chronic and brain disease problems, including children, adolescents, adults and the geriatric populations. NACCHO encourages public health policies and practices that reduce financial and other barriers to preventive and treatment services. NACCHO supports integrated community-based approaches to behavioral health that emphasize prevention and early intervention and that encourage continuity of providers and treatments, family support services, and culturally appropriate services. NACCHO supports practices that seek to identify risk factors for mental health problems, offer preventive activities to reduce the effect of these risk factors, especially for children, address the social determinants affecting mental health status for all, and promote mental wellness.

#### **Justification**

Mental disorders are the leading cause of disability in the US and Canada for ages 15-44.<sup>1</sup> Mental illness, including suicide, accounts for more than 15 percent of the overall burden of disease in established market economies, such as the United States; more than the disease burden of all cancers combined.<sup>2</sup> Mental illness is a major co-occurring problem for adults with chronic disease such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Also, post partum depression has become an increasingly diagnosed problem<sup>3</sup>. Mental health services are often more effective when integrated with primary care and public health services<sup>4</sup>. Despite the efficacy of behavioral health treatment options, nearly half of all Americans who have a severe mental illness and/or chronic mental illness do not seek treatment, which is often the result of barriers such as the stigma associated with mental illness, the lack of access to appropriate, affordable, and culturally-sensitive services, and lack of parity in payment by insurers<sup>5</sup>. Interventions for adults with co-occurring physical and mental disorders have been shown to be more effectively treated in an integrated atmosphere of public health, primary care and mental health or primary care and mental health (as in some federally qualified health centers)<sup>6 7</sup>. These integrated models have

been shown to effectively and collaboratively address the issues of affordable and appropriate mental health services<sup>8</sup>.

Record of Action

*Adopted by NACCHO Board of Directors June 27, 2001*

*Revision Adopted by NACCHO Board of Directors, July 11, 2007*

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<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Mental Health. The Numbers Count: Mental Disorders in America. 2006 (rev).

<sup>2</sup> National Institute of Mental Health. The Impact of Mental Illness on Society. 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America, 2003: President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (Rockville, MD) <http://www.nicic.org/Library/020228>

<sup>4</sup> 2005-2009 NYS OMH Statewide Comprehensive Plan for Mental Health Services;  
<http://www.omh.state.ny.us/omhweb/statewideplan/2005/chapter1.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Bartels, S., MD: Improving Access to Geriatric Mental Health Services. Am Journal of Psychiatry 2004, 161: 1455-1462

<sup>6</sup> Bartels, S., MD: Evidence- Based Practices in Geriatric Mental Health Care 2003, 53: 1419-1431

<sup>7</sup> Bartels, S., et al: Evidence Based Mental Health Services for Home and Community. Psychiatry Clin N Am, 28: 1039-1060

<sup>8</sup> McCabe, S. et al: Weaving a Safety Net of Mental Health Care in Rural America: A Model of Integrated Practice. Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 2002, 23:263-278.