

2022 STATEMENT OF POLICY PRIORITIES

ENSURE STRONG COMMUNITY-BASED HUMAN AND HEALTH SERVICES SYSTEM THROUGH STATE RATE SETTING AND ADEQUATE PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL INSURANCE

Community-based social and health services are critical to a responsive system. Community-based non-profit organizations are small and mid-size businesses that extend the work of government and enhance those services with private resources. Organizations that are based in local communities respond nimbly to changing needs and coordinate most effectively with families, schools, government, and other providers. To fulfill their missions, private agencies rely on a combination of private philanthropy, government contracts, and insurance-reimbursement. Community services must be high quality, comprehensive, and accessible to ensure that children and families receive services in the least restrictive setting and closest to home.

After years of neglect, current contract rates and insurance payments for community services are well below actual costs of program operation which risks the viability and quality of programs. The current workforce crisis makes targeted state investment and immediate action critical. State rate-setting methodologies are law elsewhere and a rate setting process must be passed this year in Rhode Island, with interim investments while the process is developed and implemented. Equally, the state needs to address insurance reimbursement rates for both its Medicaid and commercial insurers to achieve parity and consistency in addressing health and behavioral health needs. Flat rates and underfunding by both the state and insurers have brought the sector to the brink. It is time to act!

ENSURE A COMPREHENSIVE, EQUITABLE, AND ACCESSIBLE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Rhode Island must ensure that a range of services and supports are in place to assist families in crisis, provide appropriate supports in education and for those living with disabling conditions, address mental health and substance use issues (known as behavioral health), and provide quality and safe foster care, residential placement, and permanency supports.

Children's Behavioral Health System of Care and Leadership

Children and youth in need of behavioral health services face a fragmented and inadequate system. One of the costliest outcomes of the status quo is that children become stuck in inpatient care or out-of-state placement for lack of community alternatives. Authority for behavioral health services for children, youth, and families is spread across several state departments (DCYF, BHDDH, RIDE, RIDoH) and largely funded by Medicaid and private insurers). A comprehensive and effective response will require 1)state leadership integrated across state departments and agencies 2)coordinated and comprehensive planning including nonprofit community-based providers, 3) consistent coverage across insurers and strengthened state oversight of Medicaid and commercial insurers; and 4)program enhancements including: intensive and extended community- and home-based treatment options, and a statewide mobile crisis response system to respond to emergencies and mitigate hospitalization.

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2022 STATEMENT OF POLICY PRIORITIES *(cont.)*

ADDRESS BASIC NEEDS AND SAFETY ISSUES TO STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT FAMILIES

All children, youth and families should have access to safe and affordable housing, food, healthcare, education, and appropriate income and work supports. Poverty among children and families in Rhode Island is among the highest in the nation and wages, tax benefits, and other remedies are critical at both the state and federal level. Strong families and the well-being of children are core to the work of our members, and current crises such as escalating opioid abuse, gun violence, and the needs of undocumented persons are examples of additional issues impacting the children and families in our state.

For our 2022 Legislative & FY '23 Budget Priorities as well as our 2022 Additional Legislation and Budget Items of Interest see www.riccf.org/legislative-policy-priorities. For further information, or with questions, contact Tanja Kubas-Meyer, Executive Director, at tanja.kubas-meyer@riccf.org or 401-263-1126(c).