

# Why Advocate?

“Unless someone like you cares  
a whole awful lot, Nothing is  
going to get better. It's not.”  
- Dr. Seuss, The Lorax



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Nebraska Association of Behavioral  
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1 in 5 Nebraskans (325,000) experienced a mental illness within the past year



Severe & persistent mental illness affects about 4% of the Adult population

Over **37,000** Nebraska children face a specific behavioral health disorder



15% of Nebraska high school students reported they have considered suicide

1 in 5 young adults (18-25 years) reported using an illicit drug.



Nationwide mental health providers receive 62% of their funding from public sources; substance use providers receive 69%. That appears to be a fairly close reflection for Nebraska providers.



Of the total population at Tecumseh State Correctional Institution, 40% suffer from a serious mental illness.



There are 137,000 Veterans in Nebraska; 20% suffer from PTSD, and Substance Use Disorders, and homelessness impacts a high percentage.



Nebraska ranks 47<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation for binge drinking among adults (twice as high as the lowest ranked state), 43% of 18-25 year olds reported binge drinking within the past month.



11% of the total Nebraska population do not have insurance.

# Be ever watchful



and learn about the system.

Know your Senator  
(and their staff)

“Find your Senator” on

[www.NebraskaLegislature.gov](http://www.NebraskaLegislature.gov)

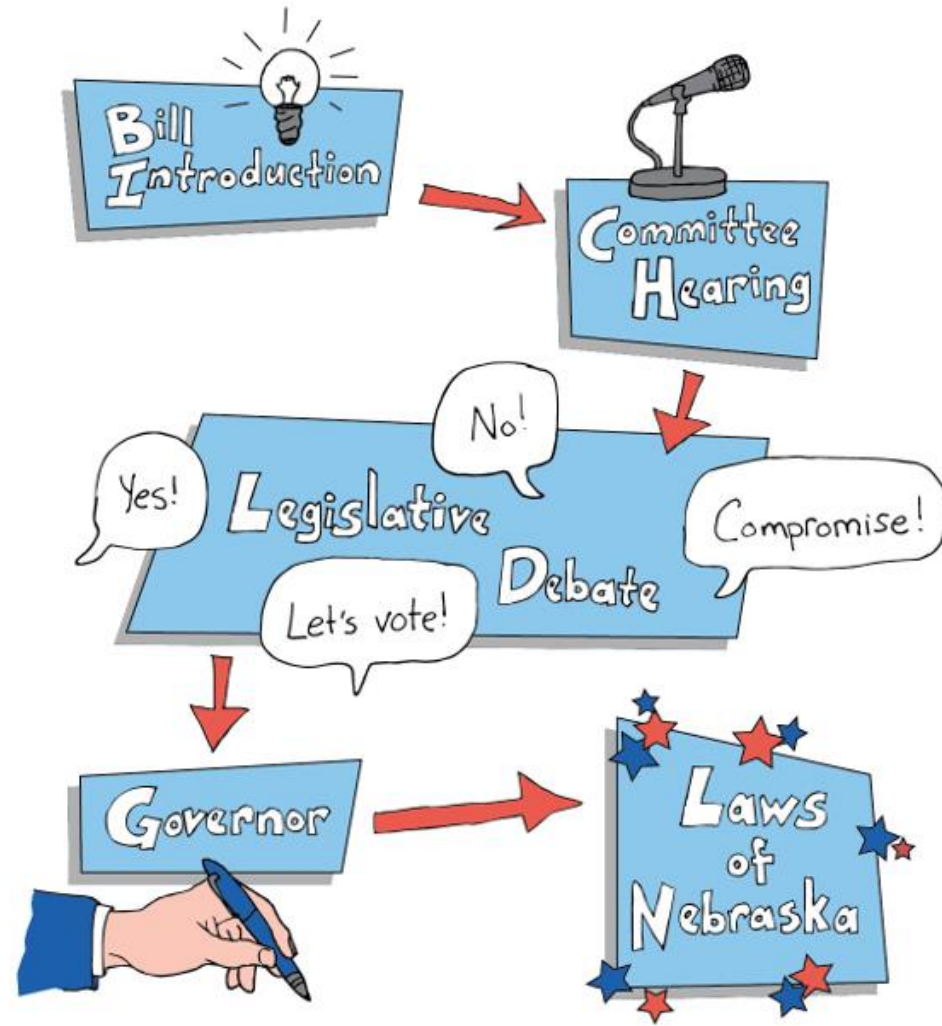
# Contacting your Senator

- ▶ Phone calls - Very effective, introduce yourself and let the staff person know you are a constituent and the issue you would like to discuss.
- ▶ Email - Be respectful, short and to the point, include your name and contact information, DO NOT USE SCRIPTED emails, speak with your own words. Don't expect an immediate response.
- ▶ Letters - Allow you to go into more detail but focus on your main points.
- ▶ Personal Meetings - Call their office and request a meeting. Attend any public meetings held by the senator.

# Rules

- ▶ Always speak to senators and their staff politely and with respect.
- ▶ Understand that there are many demands on the senators time and they have many issues which demand their attention. They may not be able to speak to your issue immediately.
- ▶ Senator's families sacrifice a great deal to support their family member. Please refrain from confronting them regarding legislative business or any votes or actions of their family member.

# How an idea becomes a law...





# Take Action Early and Testify in Committee

## Standing Committees

- ▶ Agriculture - Senator Halloran
- ▶ Appropriations - Senator Stinner
- ▶ Banking, Commerce and Insurance - Senator Williams
- ▶ Business and Labor - Senator Matt Hansen
- ▶ Education - Senator Groene
- ▶ General Affairs - Senator Briese
- ▶ Government, Military and Veteran's Affairs - Senator Brewer
- ▶ Health and Human Services - Senator Howard
- ▶ Judiciary - Senator Lathrop
- ▶ Natural Resources - Senator Hughes
- ▶ Nebraska Retirement Systems - Senator Kolterman
- ▶ Revenue - Senator Linehan
- ▶ Transportation and Telecommunications - Senator Friesen
- ▶ Urban Affairs - Senator Wayne

Hearing schedules are available online: [www.nebraskalegislature.gov](http://www.nebraskalegislature.gov)

# Testifying in Committee

- ▶ Testimony is accepted as Proponents, Opponents, Neutral (in this order)
- ▶ Handouts or copies of your testimony are not required; if you do bring enough copies for each member of the committee plus 3 more for committee staff
- ▶ Fill out a Testifiers sheet prior to your testimony and hand to the Committee Clerk or Page as you come to the Testifiers Table
- ▶ Most Committees use the light system; be prepared to limit testimony to 3 to 5 minutes
- ▶ Committee members may ask questions after your testimony
- ▶ Letters may be submitted for the official record; email or deliver to committee chair by 5 p.m. on the day before the bill hearing, include your name, address, your position and request that your letter is included as part of the public hearing record.

# Raising Awareness through Letters to the Editor

Every paper has policy specific to Letters to the Editor, such as maximum word count. Check your paper's website or call and ask for information regarding letter submissions.

# What is *Mental Health*

- ▶ A state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with normal life stresses, and can work productively
- ▶ Feel in control of their emotions
- ▶ Have positive inter-actions with people

# What is Mental Illness or Disorders

- ▶ Diagnosable illness that affects a person's thinking, emotional state and behavior. It is a medical condition due to brain biology
- ▶ Disrupts ability to work or carry out day to day activities
- ▶ Disorders include: depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar
- ▶ May be co-occurring (depression/anxiety, depression/addiction) or co-occurring with a physical illness(depression/cancer, depression/diabetes)
- ▶ 1 in 5 American adults live with a mental illness
- ▶ Medical experts rate mental illness among the most disabling illnesses
- ▶ Those with untreated mental illness will die 25 years sooner than their peers
- ▶ As with physical illness people will fall along a wide continuum from mild to moderate to severe

# Myths

- ▶ Mental illness and substance use disorders are NOT a sign of weakness or moral failing
- ▶ Willpower cannot “cure” a mental illness or substance use disorder
- ▶ Individuals who suffer from a mental illness are no more likely to be violent than anyone else. They are more likely to be victims of violence

# Important Statistics

- ▶ In 2017, of 46 million adults with a mental illness only 42.6% received treatment
- ▶ Only 38.4% of young adults aged 18-25 years with AMI received mental health services
- ▶ Inability to afford care is the most common barrier to treatment
- ▶ Mental illness does not discriminate; it can affect anyone, regardless of gender, age, income, social status, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or background.
- ▶ Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for 10-34 year olds in the US.
- ▶ Each day an estimated 18-22 veterans die by suicide.
- ▶ Without adequate support, LGB youth are 4 times more likely, and questioning youth are 3 times more likely, to attempt suicide as their straight peers.

# What is Recovery

- ▶ Recovery is a personal journey
- ▶ A process in which people are able to live, work, learn and participate in their communities
- ▶ Involves many types of treatment including medications, hospitalizations, talk therapy or a combination
  - ▶ 70-90 percent of individuals receiving treatment experience a reduction in symptoms and an improved quality of life. With the proper treatment, it is very possible for a person with mental illness to be independent and successful.



# What Can You Do

- ▶ Support and Encourage - Casserole Illness
- ▶ Educate yourself
  - ▶ Mental Health First Aid - [www.TheNationalCouncil.org](http://www.TheNationalCouncil.org)
  - ▶ NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Health)-  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
  - ▶ Mental Health American -  
[www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)
    - ▶ Screening Tool - <https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools>
  - ▶ National Institute of Mental Health - [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)