

Tammy Heinz and Colleen Horton
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health



Mental Health Advocacy in Troubled Times

The slide features a light green border with a subtle geometric pattern. At the top, there is a dark grey rectangular header bar. The main content area is white and contains the word "Introductions" in a large, bold, green sans-serif font.

Introductions

Why We're Here

- States across the nation are facing significant budget shortfalls
- Services and supports for people with mental illness are at risk

Top Ten Ways to Know Money Will Be Tight (in Texas)

1. Governor instructs agencies to reduce current budgets
2. Governor instructs agencies to identify budget reductions for next funding cycle
3. Speaker of the House attends appropriations committee hearing to state that everything is on the table, *except raising taxes*
4. Politicians won't participate in candidate debates
5. People are losing jobs or fear losing jobs

More of the Top Ten...

6. Comptroller's office and governor's office argue about the looming deficit...\$18 BILLION or \$21 BILLION? (Either way we're in trouble...)
7. Can't read the paper because bad news is hitting too close to home
8. Disability advocates are screaming "raise my taxes..."
9. Advocacy groups (often at odds) actually attending the same rallies and carrying the same message
10. Individuals who have never participated in advocacy before are getting involved, speaking out, and telling their stories

What Happens When States Face a Budget Deficit?

- Primarily two ways to address budget deficit
 1. Raise revenue (usually through new or increased taxes)
 - Increased taxes difficult in economic downturn
 - Republicans typically strongly oppose tax increases -- pushing for less government
 2. Cut services
 - Spending cuts must come from discretionary programs
 - Must think about how to spend the money more effectively

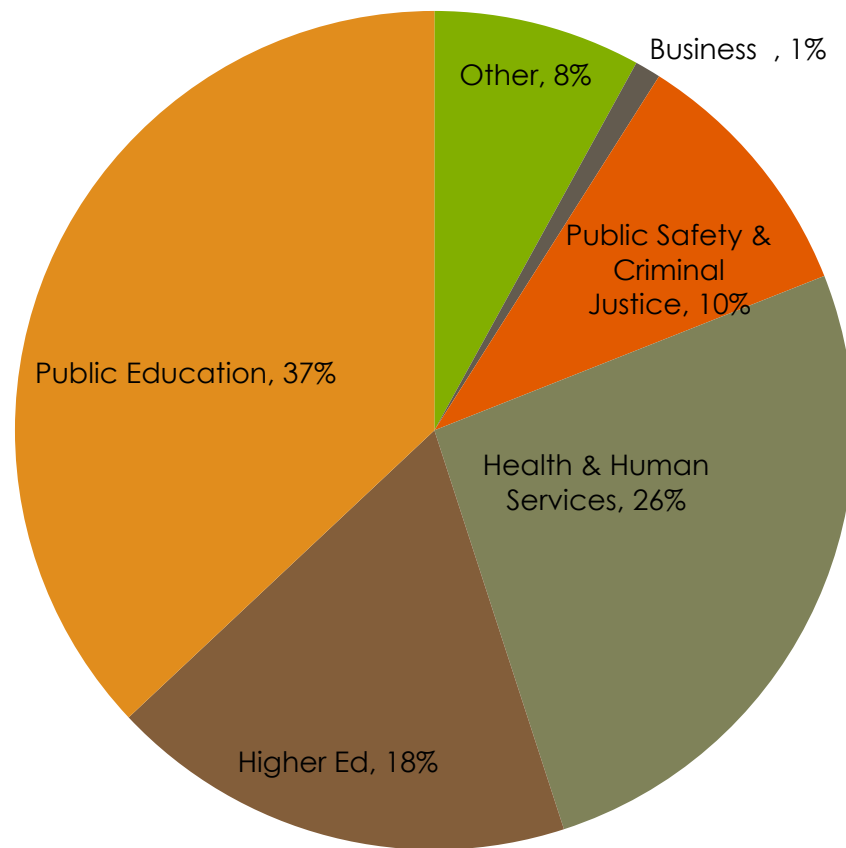
Entitlements vs. Discretionary Services

- Entitlement means--if you qualify, you get the services; state can't say no and can't put you on a waiting list.
- Medicaid is an entitlement
 - Certain services have to be included in state plan
 - States have the option to add additional services
 - Certain populations are mandatory
 - *States* have the option to expand covered populations

Discretionary...Translates to “We Don’t Have to Offer It”

- Discretionary programs are optional
 - Often can receive Medicaid match, but states don’t have to offer the services
 - Health and human services budgets are a big chunk of the states’ budgets
 - Can only cut discretionary programs
 - Medicaid waivers, and community mental health services are optional services

Spending in Texas (2010/11)



Total General Revenue \$87 Billion

What About My State?

- Mental health advocacy organizations
- State protection and advocacy organization
- Agency websites
- State budget office

Setting Priorities...

Where Do We Start?

- What's worth fighting for? What changes do you want or what are you trying to protect?
- Think about different ways to spend existing dollars
- Who is your target audience? What are the best ways to reach them?

Setting Priorities...

Focus on What's Doable

*It's not just about saying what's wrong –
You need to have ideas on how to solve
the problem!*

Identifying Partners

- Strength in numbers
- Who can I connect with?
- Where do I find champions?
- What makes a good champion?
- Two kinds of champions
 - Individual with personal experience with mental health
 - Person of influence you recruit

Building Coalitions

- Who can you bring together?
- Include nontraditional groups
- Get involved outside of mental health
- Nurture relationships

Coalition Meeting Tips

- Neutral location
- Be organized
- Have an agenda
- Start with a goal
- Go for a win-win
- Serve refreshments

Introduce Yourself

- Something memorable
- Unique to you
- Practice saying it out loud
- Practice with others

What Is YOUR Story?

- Recovery-focused
- Short and concise
- Highlight changes needed
- Your story needs to show why this change is important
- Make a clear “ask”

Seven Steps to A Great Story

1. Introduce yourself (Your name, something memorable, and your city)
2. Mention what you are advocating
3. How are you affected?
4. What happened BEFORE you got the help you needed?
5. What helped?
6. How are you different today?
7. Make your point (the “ask”) and say thank you

Adapted from NAMI.org

What You Need to Know... To Be an Effective Mental Health Advocate

- Don't need to be an expert, but do need to be informed
- What systems/agencies offer mental health services and supports in your state?
- What mental health programs are at risk? How many individuals will be affected?
- Learn the difference between state and federally funded programs.
- What is doable?

Creating an Advocacy Plan


- Be prepared
- Start early
- Set goals – short and long term
- Build relationships
- Be honest
- Be respectful
- Be persistent
- It's not a sprint, it's a marathon --- pace yourself.

Creating an Advocacy Plan

- Know what you want – be clear about what you're asking for
- Be ready to compromise
- Call, write, visit
- Build network around your state
- Attend important committee meetings and let your voice be heard
- Plan call-in days, rally days – keep your issues in the forefront
- The “squeaky wheel” does get the most grease



Start Today



“When the going gets rough and emotions are high, don’t take things personally. Hold your head high, maintain your composure, and focus on what’s really important. It’s NOT about egos, winning/ losing, who’s right or who’s wrong!”

--Kathie Snow



Questions & Answers

Thank You for Your Time

Feel free to contact us:

Tammy Heinz

Tammy.heinz@austin.utexas.edu

Colleen Horton

Colleen.horton@austin.utexas.edu