



Improving and Expanding Access to Mental and Behavioral Health

Supporting Resources for Essential Behavioral Health Services and Programs

- As the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, Senator Blunt has prioritized adequate funding for programs to expand access to behavioral health services and combat the opioid epidemic
- The FY2017 Senate Labor/HHS bill provides \$261 million to fight both prescription opioid and heroin abuse, a 93 percent increase over last year's level
- Under the Senate bill, when combined with mandatory funding for Community Health Centers, the Department of Health and Human Services will have access to \$355 million in FY2017 to specifically target opioid abuse prevention and treatment, a 542 percent increase since FY2015
- Senator Blunt cosponsored the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, S. 524, which provides grants to encourage states and local communities to pursue proven strategies to combat the growing opioid epidemic, expands educational efforts to understand this chronic illness, promotes treatment and recovery, and works to prevent opioid abuse going forward
- The FY2017 Senate Labor/HHS bill also provides \$541.5 million, an increase of \$30 million over last year's level, for the Mental Health Block Grant program, and continues the set-aside for serious mental illness activities at 10 percent
- And, the FY2017 Senate Labor/HHS bill provides \$50 million within the funding for community health centers to provide mental health services nationwide

Providing Quality and Accessible Mental Health Care Services Nationwide

- Senator Blunt introduced the Excellence in Mental Health Act, which was signed into law in 2014, to put certified community behavioral health clinics on a more equal footing with other health centers by improving quality standards and expanding access through an innovative demonstration program
- In the 114th Congress, Senator Blunt introduced the Expand Excellence in Mental Health Act, which will ensure that all 24 states awarded mental health planning grants through the Excellence in Mental Health Act will have the opportunity to participate in a demonstration program

Improving Awareness and Prevention of Costly Mental Health Issues

- Senator Blunt cosponsored the Mental Health Awareness and Improvement Act of 2015 to reauthorize and improve programs related to awareness, prevention, and early identification of mental health conditions
- Senator Blunt cosponsored the Mental Health and Safe Communities Act of 2015 to improve coordination between criminal justice and mental health professionals seeking to prevent crises related to mental health issues

- Senator Blunt also cosponsored the Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act of 2015 to improve access to mental health services for people in the criminal justice system who need treatment, and to give law enforcement officers the tools they need to identify and respond to mental health issues
- The Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act would also reauthorize the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act to continue support for veterans treatment courts, mental health courts, and crisis intervention teams
- In the 113th Congress, Senator Blunt cosponsored the Mental Health First Aid Act to authorize a demonstration program to support mental health first aid trainings nationwide to help identify, understand, and respond to the signs of mental illnesses and addiction disorders

Ensuring that Mental Health Resources are Available to Students & Foster Youth

- Senator Blunt successfully included an amendment to legislation that was signed into law in 2015 that would allow eligible schools to use Title I funding for school-based mental health programs to better serve the needs of students
- Senator Blunt secured funding in the FY2016 omnibus to support grant programs that target high risk youth and connect them with mental health treatment and services awarded to communities with civil unrest, such as Ferguson, Missouri
- In 2015, Senator Blunt introduced the Timely Mental Health for Foster Youth Act, which requires each state to provide an initial mental health screening to foster children within 30 days of entry into care and, if an initial mental health issue is identified, requires that each state provide a comprehensive assessment in mental health within 60 days
- This Timely Mental Health for Foster Youth Act ensures that these problems are identified and addressed as early as possible, setting foster youth and their foster care families up for a greater chance of success over the long-term

Identifying and Addressing Service-Related Mental Health Needs of Veterans and Service Members

- Senator Blunt cosponsored the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act, which was signed into law in 2015, to improve mental health and suicide prevention resources available to veterans, service members, and their families
- In the 113th Congress, Senator Blunt cosponsored the Mental-health Exposure Military Official Record Act to help service members and veterans better track potential exposures during military service that could be later connected to mental health and traumatic brain injuries
- Senator Blunt successfully included language from the Caring for America's Heroes Act in the FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act to help bring mental health treatment for the nation's veterans and military dependents in line with the way physical injuries are treated under TRICARE

Appropriately Funding Essential Mental Health Services and Programs

- As the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, Senator Blunt has prioritized adequate funding for important programs administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
- In the FY2016 omnibus appropriations bill, Blunt secured \$123 million for programs to combat opioid abuse at the Centers for Disease Control and SAMHSA, a 284 percent increase over last year's funding level
- Senator Blunt also secured \$414.6 million in the omnibus appropriations bill for mental health programs of regional and national significance, an increase of \$36 million over the FY2015 level

- Specifically, the omnibus provided a \$25 million increase above last year's level for Project Aware and the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training grants.
- Senator Blunt secured \$532.6 million in the omnibus for the Mental Health Block Grants Program, an increase of \$50 million over the previous year's funding level