

Round 1- Current Event:

Funding continues to damper Indiana's mental health infrastructure

The Indiana Behavioral Health Commission released its 2024 report on Tuesday. A lack of funding is causing a lack of access for people in need of services.



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INDIANAPOLIS — A bipartisan group of lawmakers and mental health professionals have been studying the shortfalls of Indiana’s mental health infrastructure.

According to the [State of Mental Health in America 2023](#), Indiana ranks 41st in terms of mental health. While that is an improvement from 2022, when Indiana ranked 43rd out of the 50 states, the state wants to see more improvement.

The over 70-page report details infrastructure and reimbursement issues, workforce shortages, what each sector of the population needs in terms of mental health and ways to sustain needed programs better financially. The financial gap is an issue providers say is often a conversation.

"The challenge of funding often becomes a topic of how do we not only maintain what we are doing but how can we grow our services to even getting close to meeting the capacity need," Amanda Everidge, the Executive Director of the Behavioral Health Service Line for Hancock Health, said. Everidge knows firsthand how in-demand mental health services are.

She says every three months, Hancock Health has around 900 people requesting services. They can only afford to serve about 200 people in that time period.

"It comes down to funding, it comes down to building the workforce," Everidge said. "Being able to find the therapist that can provide the treatment and care that is needed."

The report also addressed getting that help into communities with mobile response teams. The commission estimates that if these programs were expanded, it could save the state nearly \$5 million.

Hancock Health launched its program earlier this year and is already seeing results.

"We've been able to respond in the field in that immediate moment to de-escalate situations when it is happening with the support of first responders and prevent hospital stays altogether," Everidge said.

Since funding is the issue, the commission has laid out financial sustainability options.

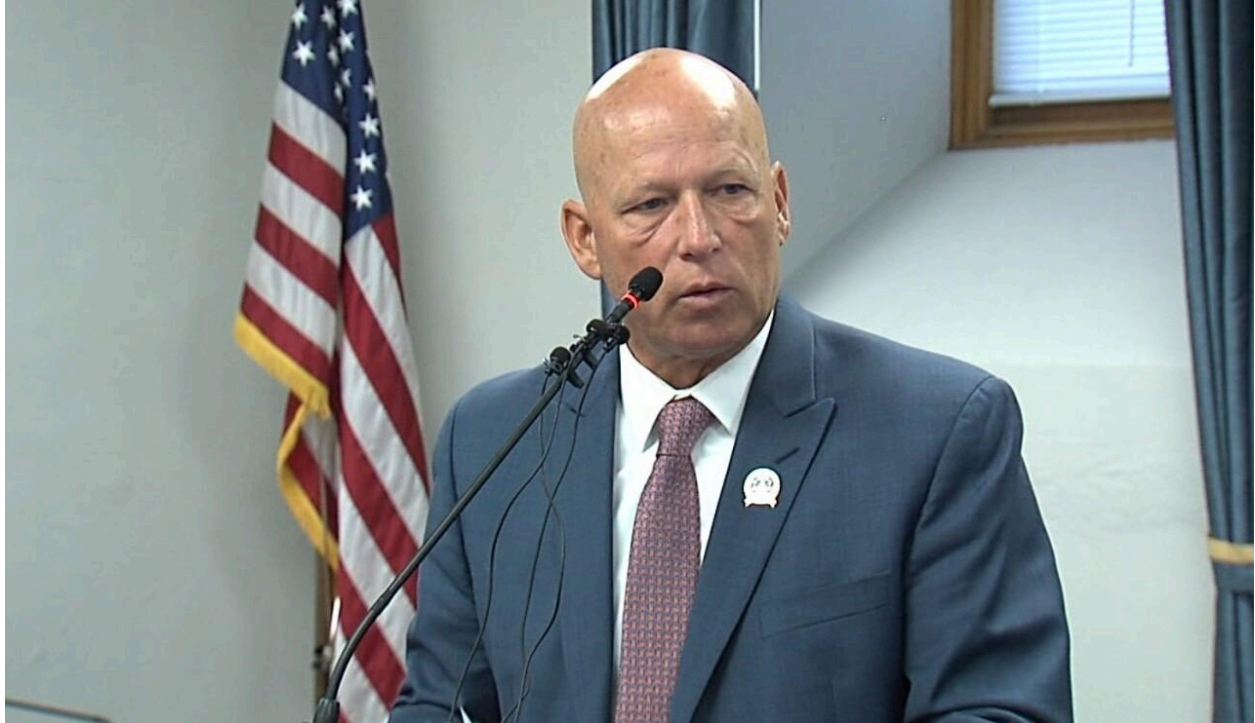
They include raising the tax on alcohol and cigarettes, and increasing the tax on sports betting operators. They are also suggesting taxpayers help fund the 988 suicide prevention hot-line.

All suggestions are in the hands of lawmakers.

Lawmakers on the commission presented the findings on Tuesday, admitting that something must change.

"Until we get in a mode where we have long-term sustainable funding, we are going to continue having this discussion," Senator Michael Crider,

a commission member and republican representing Greenfield, said.
“That is despite the federal grants and other things we have seen.”



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Others are calling on their colleagues to act.

"We, as a state, need more psychiatrists," State Rep. Victoria Garcia Wilburn, a commission member and democrat representing Fishers, said. "The general assembly has the authority to help our state medical schools fund more psychiatry residency positions."

Round 2 - Media:



70,000 people attended *The Eras Tour* in Nashville, TN.

Round 3 - Literature:

Wild Geese

Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.