

Quarterly Issue Focus

Q2 2022

Mental Health and Community 708 Boards

In 2015, The League of Woman Voters of Roselle-Bloomingtondale undertook a study¹ to determine if establishing a mental health board by referendum could aid in the prevention of and care for the mentally ill, developmentally disabled, and those with addiction problems. The data the League gathered demonstrated that these issues affect a significant number of people in our community. Mental illness issues alone conservatively cost \$850 per capita or \$94,798,000 per year in Bloomingtondale Township.

The National Institute of Mental Health reports that approximately one in five U.S. adults lives with a mental illness; however, estimates suggest that only half of those adults receive treatment. Young adults aged 18-25 years have the highest prevalence of mental illness (30.6%). Approximately 20% of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition.²

During the first six months of 2020, at the start of the pandemic, the DuPage Coroner reported suicides numbering 54, a 23% increase year over year. At the same time, drug overdose deaths rose 52% to 52 deaths.³ While mental illness has dropped from peak levels during the pandemic, levels are still higher than they were pre-pandemic.

Background

The Illinois Community Mental Health Act was established following the federal Community Mental Health Act signed into law by President Kennedy in 1963. At that time, the goal was to de-institutionalize mental health and help people thrive in their community.

In Illinois, there are more than 90 Community Mental Health Boards, called 708 Boards after the House of Representatives Resolution 708 which created them. These Boards are not service providers. The goal of a community mental health board is to develop a comprehensive local mental health plan in collaboration with local providers to ensure that preventive and therapeutic programs are accessible for all residents in the community. They evaluate a community's needs, create targeted local support, and coordinate a comprehensive system of services. The 708 Board is then responsible for putting out a request for proposals that stipulate which providers are eligible for funding. At a public meeting, the 708 board determines the amount of funding that will be provided to each respondent based on how well it meets the request for proposal's parameters. After funding is allotted, the 708 Board monitors progress toward the goals. Mental Health Boards are funded by a levy, which is capped at 0.15% of the equalized assessed property value under Illinois law.

¹ https://my.lwv.org/sites/default/files/708c_mental_health_board.pdf

² <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/>

³ <https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/naperville-sun/ct-nvs-dupage-suicides-st-0918-20200917-04a6uoozebfpjnglxbmzbt5cy-story.html>

Bloomington Township Mental Health Board

Bloomington Township was the first township in DuPage County to establish a 708 Board, but many townships in neighboring Cook County have had them for decades. They are a highly successful model of providing desperately needed services at the local level and have been approved or suggested in other DuPage communities.

The Bloomington Township 708 Mental Health Board was established by referendum in 2017. The Bloomington Township levy was a modest .0186% in 2021, which equates to \$22.91 annually or \$1.91 a month for a home with a market value of \$437,000 and an assessed value of \$129,190. The six member Bloomington Township Mental Health Board provides almost \$1,000,000 in annual grant funding to support a broad range of service providers. Funds provided by the Bloomington Township Mental Health Board can only be used for the more than 111,000 township residents. Bloomington Township is comprised of communities including the entire Village of Bloomington and portions of the Villages of Addison, Carol Stream, Glendale Heights, Hanover Park, Itasca, and Roselle—including both incorporated and unincorporated areas.

In Bloomington Township, a six member volunteer board reviews grants and allocates funds at public hearings which allow for public comment. Specific grant categories include: 1) prevention, education, and screening programs, 2) 24-hour telephone and on-site crisis response to mental health emergencies, 3) family support, 4) life skills and vocational training, 5) transition services, 6) therapeutic activities for treatment and rehabilitation counseling/psychiatric services, and 7) access to transportation for those with mental illness, addiction or developmental disabilities that are critical in the recovery process. Oftentimes, 708 Boards will also become an avenue to build awareness for mental health, substance use, and developmental disabilities in a community.

The Bloomington Township Mental Health Board installed 8 additional therapists in our community—all of whom have wait lists. Critical funded programs include putting full-time social workers in police departments. Police departments have been very receptive to the aid provided by social workers on public calls related to domestic violence, suicide, substance abuse, housing and homelessness, and legal issues. Care coordination uses a children's public health model to screen children ages 0-8 with agency collaboration to provide early intervention and promote well-being for children. Social workers at the high school screen for *Signs of Suicide*, placing students into three categories, green, yellow, and red. Students in the yellow category are seen by therapists; students in the red category are triaged.

State Funding for Mental Health

State-level funding also will address the nation's mental health crisis. In 2019 a state task force estimated that by 2030 Illinois would have a shortage of more than 3,300 behavioral health treatment providers. State Sen. Laura Fine, who chairs the Senate Behavioral and Mental Health Committee, said that currently, there are only 14 behavioral health care providers for every 10,000 residents of Illinois. In June 2022, Governor JB Pritzker signed a bill aimed at expanding the state's mental health workforce and improving access to mental and behavioral health services throughout the state. Senate Bill 3617, an omnibus mental health bill sponsored by Senator Fine, passed unanimously in both chambers. The law makes it easier for in-state providers with lapsed licenses to be reinstated and for out-of-state providers to become licensed in Illinois. Tax credits will be offered to employers that hire individuals who are recovering from mental illness or addiction. Moreover, the bills will provide funding for training programs to expand the number of clinical social workers, counselors, and marriage and family therapists.

Event Video for More Information

The League recently hosted a panel discussion that highlighted several of the programs that were funded by the Bloomingdale Township 708 Mental Health Board for the next fiscal year. Dominick Lanzito, Board Chairperson, explained the process used to issue grants and highlighted the impact on our community. Dr. Brenda Huber, Ph.D., ABPP, Rush University Professor and Children's Mental Health System Consultant, collaborated with area educational, social service, healthcare, mental health, and juvenile court systems to identify and eliminate any barriers, duplication, and/or gaps in service. She then began to organize a "Youth Network" to improve access and outcomes in our community. Shannon Hartnett, Executive Director of Northeast DuPage Youth and Family Services, helps families navigate the system to connect with the best providers for their unique situations. Dawn Arimura, Clinical Supervisor and Family Therapist for the Bloomingdale Township Youth Service Bureau, reviewed how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted our youth and families, citing an increase in cases from 1200 to 1400 over one year, and explained how the Youth Network helped. A [video of the panel discussion](#) can be found on the League of Women Voters of Roselle-Bloomingdale website.

Mental Health 708 Boards help build community so that we can all take care of each other.