

Writing Letters to the Legislature

Emphasize and personalize how important Mental Health Treatment is. For example, letters can speak on how community treatment helps keep families together, protects children from being hurt, prevents homelessness and suicide. Mental health treatment keeps individuals productive and employed. Please consider making your voice heard by sending a letter in support of protecting mental health funding and the importance of preserving community based services.

Helpful Tips

- Do not send letters to Legislators addressed as "To Whom it May Concern" or "Dear Legislator", know the name of whom you're writing to and use it. When writing use Dear Senator (name) or Dear Representative (name). When writing letters to the editor it is acceptable to write Dear Editor, but try to write it to a specific editor whenever you can.
- Legislators care about what the people in their district think is important so make sure you mention that you live in their district.
- Focus on one issue and be specific about what you want your legislator to do.
- Keep letters to one page and be specific. Whenever possible, give numbers, amounts and examples. (For example: I go to the drop in center five days a week. If they cut the budget, then the center will have to reduce its hours and I will not have this service available to me)
- To help gain additional support send your letter to your legislator to the newspaper.
- A personal letter is much more effective than a pre-written or form letter, so if you are comfortable writing your own...go for it! But if you must use the pre-written letter it will still help to send something to show support.
- Use comparisons if possible. (For example: before I started going to the drop in center or working at my new job, I was in the hospital frequently or lived in a group home because I could not manage on my own)
- Be diplomatic. Avoid lashing out. Offer solutions. If you do not agree with your legislator's opinion, an informed and thoughtful letter will do more good than an angry one.
- For example: instead of saying, "if you cut the budget anymore, then we'll all rebel or die" say, "if you cut the budget further, then I will need more intensive services like hospitalizations. These services are more costly in the long run".
- When you receive a response to your letter, keep the lines of communication going. Write them back to say you are following the issue, have voted on the Bill you were concerned about, or thank them for their support or express your displeasure for the

lack of support. Let them know you pay attention, you are interested and that this is important to you.

- Thank you letters always go a long way; remember to write them whenever you can.
- Information compiled from Sangster Associates 2002, The Colorado Leadership Academy Advanced Training and WE CAN! of Colorado.

More Helpful Tips

- Letters sent to the Capitol without a return address are not delivered!
- So don't forget to put a return address on your letter and envelope.

To send letters to your local legislator

Senator or Representative _____

Colorado State Capitol

200 East Colfax

Denver, CO 80203