



Public Policy Platform

The California Association of Mental Health Patient's Rights Advocates (CAMHPRA) works to:

- Protect and advance the legal rights and treatment interests of individuals with mental health conditions/psychiatric disabilities;
- Ensure access by consumers of mental health services to the services and supports to which they are entitled and desire;
- Promote public policy furthering the rights, empowerment, and well-being of consumers of mental health services, as informed by the following principles and positions:

(1) Timely access to quality, community based treatments and support services.

Treatment services should be based on the Mental Health Recovery Model, and so be responsive to the individual needs and wishes of consumers. We support parity between mental health services and physical health care services and initiatives that reduce disparities and improve access to mental health services to underserved populations.

(2) Support for initiatives consistent with the principles of least restrictive care.

The civil rights and liberties of consumers of mental health services should be protected, and unnecessary use of seclusion and restraint, forced medication, and over-medication should be reduced or eliminated. Community services and supports should emphasize choice and be consumer-directed.

(3) Access to affordable and supportive housing.

Consumers of mental health services should have access to affordable housing in communities of their choice that support independence and self-determination and offer voluntary services and supports. Strengthen Fair Housing Act protections and enforcement against discrimination. Oppose the effects of "NIMBY-ism" and stigma in housing choice.

(4) Diversion from the criminal justice system.

The criminalization of persons committing minor offenses due to behaviors related to a mental health condition should be eliminated, and the number of mental health consumers in the correctional system reduced. Although adequate mental health services need to be provided for individuals within the correctional system, jails — by their very nature — are non-therapeutic treatment settings. We support diversion of mental health consumers from the correctional system.

(5) Reduce and eliminate stigma and discrimination.

Stigma against mental health consumers harms individuals and communities, and restricts access to services and supports, while resulting discrimination limits housing, employment, education and other social and personal opportunities. We support anti-stigma and anti-discrimination efforts through education, litigation, advocacy and consumer self-advocacy.

(6) Support and encourage advocacy.

The voices of consumers and advocates have a unique power based in personal and professional experience. Effectively sharing one's perspectives and knowledge in a variety of venues stimulates dialogue and understanding, and can result in social, cultural, legal and institutional change. Advocates and self-advocates should have access to the training, supports and opportunities to pursue their valuable activities. Consumers and advocates should be included as participants in county behavioral health committees and state advocacy organizations responsible for evaluating mental health services and making recommendations for improving quality of services.