



*Spreading Hope, Spurring Action, Supporting Families, Saving Lives!*



## Legislative Updates, Upcoming Trainings, Tools and Information You Can Use to Help Make Informed Choices

### Advocacy Trainings Coming Soon!

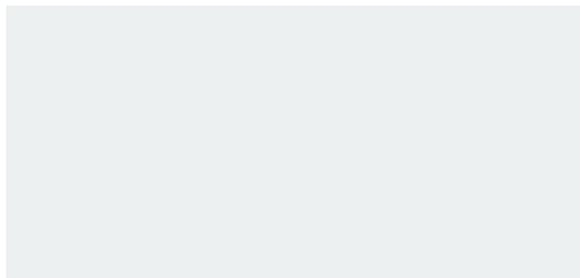
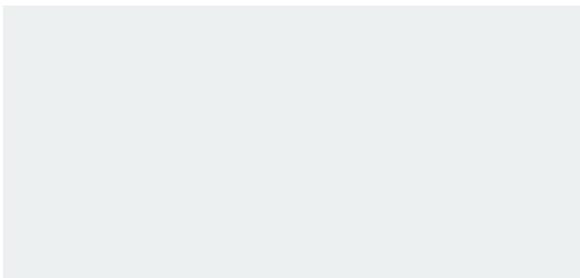
MHA, in partnership with Anuvia, The ARC of Mecklenburg County, and NAMI, will be presenting Advocacy 101 on October 19 (time and location to be determined). This hour-long course is designed to provide voters with the tools needed to advocate for change

through effective conversations with legislative officials.

In January, MHA and its partners will hold a half-day Advocacy 201 Legislative event to delve into the issues around mental health, substance use disorders and intellectual and developmental disabilities prior to legislators going back into session.

### Medicaid Transformation Bills Passed: Will it Move us Closer to Physical and Mental Health Parity?

The General Assembly passed two bills that work together, H. 403 and H. 156, to clarify the implementation of the Standard and BH/I-DD Tailored Plans and the licensure requirements for managers under Medicaid Transformation. In a historic move, legislators passed H. 403 that moves Medicaid recipients with mild-to-moderate behavioral health needs under the Standard Plan for Medicaid Services. Individuals with serious mental illness, a serious emotional disturbance, a severe substance use disorder, an intellectual/developmental disability, US DOJ settlement consumers, or individuals who have survived a traumatic brain injury are the defined population that will fall under the Behavioral Health/Intellectual-Developmental Disability (BH/I-DD) Tailored Plan. The BH/I-DD Tailored Plan will begin one year after the Standard Plan with the LME/MCOs as the lead plan managers working with another PHP to offer the physical healthcare services for Tailored Plan Medicaid recipients for four years after that. RFPs (Request for Proposals) have been sent out by NC Department of Health and Human Services for the Standard Plan. MHA will work to clarify what Medicaid Transformation means to consumers, but feels this is a move in the right direction to provide consumers with both physical and mental health services. (Source: i2I Center for Integrative Health)





## Lawmakers Fail to Address School Safety

While a new school year has started in North Carolina, lawmakers on the state and federal level have once again failed to address school safety. Recently, the Department of Education, under Secretary Betsy Devos, was debating on whether funds should be made available for teachers to purchase guns. While school safety committees were convened at all levels, nothing was done to truly address the underlying causes of school violence. We must continue to advocate for the personnel and resources needed to address students' mental health and behavioral issues while creating a school climate that is inclusive and welcoming for all students (NC Policy Watch, "As teachers and students return, state and federal lawmakers are still failing to address school safety," by Kris Nordstrom). "...schools must have school-based nurses, psychologists, and counselors necessary to identify and effectively treat student needs. All educators and staff must work together to identify behavioral issues, limit bullying and other abuses and identify and address potential threats." (NC Policy Watch, Nordstrom)

Rather than a focus on hardening schools, which is unlikely to protect students, funding should be provided for personnel and training, and a refocusing on the social and emotional needs of students. According to NC Policy Watch, the NC House Select Committee on School Safety did take a serious, balanced look at school safety. "In particular, the Student Health Working Group make clear that North Carolina's substandard staffing ratios for nurses,



## Study Income Tax Cap Constitutional Amendment Carefully Before Voting

On November 6, NC voters will cast their ballot for or against a proposed change to the current maximum allowable income tax rate in the state Constitution. The proposed change would lower the maximum allowable rate from 10 to 7 percent. Proponents claim that lowering the cap on the income tax rate in the Constitution is necessary to hold down spending and put more money in the pockets of North Carolina taxpayers. However, an analysis of these claims and the proposal to set the maximum income tax rate allowable in the state Constitution finds that:

1. **Fewer dollars are available to make critical, transformative investments in our state.** A graduated rate structure that taxes income above certain income thresholds at rates above 7 percent, like what was in place during the 2001-2006 period, would provide an estimated \$2.4 billion in state revenue. Those dollars would allow North Carolina to get teacher pay to the national average and make investments in our children's education by funding textbooks, classroom supplies, and technology.
2. **Middle- and low-income taxpayers will see their tax load increase.** Research has shown that tax limits do little to ensure that taxes are held down. Instead, policymakers often raise taxes such as sales and property taxes to meet identified needs in communities. Under a sales tax change, the poorest taxpayers would see a 0.9 percent change in their taxes as a percent of their income versus just a 0.1 percent for those at the top — while under

psychologists, counselors and social workers are an impediment towards creating safe, welcoming school environments, and lessens the chances for identifying threats before they emerge." (NC Policy Watch, Nordstrom)

**Resources:**

**2018 Mental Health Voter Tool Kit from Mental Health America**

Click the link below for a quick, actionable PDF to guide you through your voting rights and current issues on mental health.

**MHA Voter Toolkit**

Useful links for contacting your local and state representatives: [Links to Legislators](#)



a graduated income tax proposal, anyone making less than \$60,000 would experience no tax change.

**3. Barriers to equitable outcomes and reaching the full economic potential of the state is blocked when the state underinvests in opportunity for all and delivers tax cuts to the wealthy few.** One of the state's persistent economic challenges is that job growth has been uneven and barriers to opportunity remain, particularly for communities of color and rural places. These barriers are made worse and continue to compound over time when state investments are arbitrarily capped. By not ensuring that children from every background have access to a sound, basic education or the tools to be ready for kindergarten or reading by 3rd grade, North Carolina is missing the economic boost that is possible when every person in the state — regardless of race or ethnicity — is able to achieve their full potential. (From NC Policy Watch)

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Mental Health America of Central Carolinas promotes mental wellness through advocacy, prevention and education in Mecklenburg and Cabarrus Counties.



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