

[Sample Letter to Your Elected Official]

The Honorable _____

[address]

Re: Reforming Mental Health Services

Dear _____ :

I'm writing to support the Seat at the Table Campaign, a state-wide initiative to include peers and providers in planning how mental health services are designed, implemented, and evaluated. This is the same reform that the NYS legislature called for almost 50 years ago:

“Consumer and citizen involvement must take place at all levels of the system, and in every phase of operation. Clients should actively participate in establishing goals, planning, decision-making and evaluation of the system at the State and local levels.”

Mental Health In New York | A Report From The Assembly Joint Committee To Study The Department Of Mental Hygiene, NYS Assembly Committee On Mental Health and Ways And Means Committee, 1976

The Campaign is advocating for the passage of the “Person-Centered Mental Health Services Act,” legislation that will mandate the following reforms:

- Local mental health services must be designed using a participatory planning process that includes peers, providers, and other community stakeholders.
- Local services plans must include priorities for specific, measurable, goals, with a budget, timeline, and strategy for implementation.
- The Office of Mental Health and local governments will negotiate a final plan and budget.
- The state and localities will sign binding agreements that outline who is responsible for financing and implementing every program and service.

These basic and critical reforms are needed if the state is to achieve its stated vision to create a “person-centered and recovery-focused” mental health system that promotes “community and social environments, eliminates stigma, and fosters community inclusion.”

Sincerely,