



## Policy Priorities

### **1 • A robust, quality continuum of care is medically necessary for people with serious brain diseases.**

#### **Summary.**

The siloed, under-resourced system for treating schizophrenia falls woefully short of meeting the complex needs of people with this serious, TREATABLE brain disease, particularly at crucial moments when early intervention and comprehensive treatment could alter the trajectory of the illness. These harms are amplified for people from historically marginalized communities.

#### **Call to Action**

A paradigm shift is needed to create one integrated system of care that prioritizes early detection, coordinates care across health and social services and ensures equitable access. Funding and policies are urgently needed for:

- Early detection of schizophrenia and connection to care.
- Building a well-trained schizophrenia workforce.
- National integrated care centers to treat the health and social needs of people with schizophrenia.
- Removal of barriers to care (e.g., IMD exclusion).
- Caregiver support.
- Data collection & sharing.
- Funding to promote intensive case management and care coordination among (currently siloed) facilities, agencies and providers.
- Supportive housing.



## Policy Priorities

### **2. Schizophrenia and other serious brain diseases must be decriminalized.**

#### **Summary.**

The incarceration of people with schizophrenia and other serious brain diseases is discriminatory, punishing people for having a TREATABLE brain disease instead of providing treatment.

#### **Call to Action**

People with schizophrenia and other serious brain diseases should receive effective treatment that prevents their involvement in the criminal justice system in the first place. Until then, we call for:

- More resources for diversion programs.
- Improved diagnosis and treatment in jails and prisons.
- Discharge plans that include housing, connections to Medicaid and other social services etc.
- Uniform judicial guidelines that reflect the impact of schizophrenia.
- Improved data collection on people with schizophrenia in jails and prisons.
- No death penalty for people with schizophrenia and other serious brain diseases.
- Mandatory disease education and training for judges, attorneys, first responders and clinicians.



## Policy Priorities

- 3. Federal research funding for schizophrenia and other serious brain diseases should be significantly increased to align with research funding for other serious brain diseases.**

### Summary.

Schizophrenia and related psychosis disorders affect at least 1 in 100 people in the United States – or about 2 million adults. The prevalence is thought to be even higher when people with schizophrenia in homeless shelters, jails and prisons and nursing homes are included.

The cost of schizophrenia to the United States exceeds \$281 billion each year. Yet federal research funding for schizophrenia lags far behind that for other serious brain diseases, including Alzheimer's disease.

### Call to Action

Given the high prevalence of schizophrenia – and the enormous cost to federal, state and local governments, the healthcare system and families – more resources should be invested in federal research to seek earlier diagnosis, better treatments and someday, a cure.