Access to the Continuum of Care for Children, Youth, and Adults Impacted by Mental Health and Substance Use Subcommittee

Update from Dr. Julie Hayden, Subcommittee Chair

The subcommittee continues to examine access to mental health and substance use services for children, youth, and adults, with particular attention to what helps people enter care, move between levels of treatment, and sustain recovery.

A recent guest speaker from San Francisco discussed harm reduction and recovery outcomes. He highlighted the effectiveness of medications for opioid use disorder and raised questions about whether distributing supplies and providing safer-use education, by themselves, lead to sustained recovery. He also discussed the value of recovery living environments that do not permit active drug use. These perspectives prompted discussion about the range of treatment and recovery settings people need. Federal housing funding priorities are likewise placing greater emphasis on connecting housing with treatment and recovery support.

The subcommittee has also heard from individuals with lived experience. Their contributions continue to underscore the difficulty people can face when seeking care or transitioning between services. One emerging recommendation is to strengthen collaboration between mental health and substance use providers and the housing, medical, and other community services that support their clients. Better coordination and referrals across these systems could help people access appropriate care sooner and maintain progress after treatment.

The subcommittee will continue hearing from experts and people with lived experience, identifying gaps in the mental health and substance use continuum, and developing recommendations to improve access and outcomes across the lifespan.

Dr. Julie Hayden
Subcommittee Chair