

Joint Statement by Frederick J. Frese, Ph.D. and Richard R. Karges, LISW-S, ACSW Regarding Passage of H. R. 2646: the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act



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MESOPOTAMIA, OH--(Marketwired - January 04, 2017) - We celebrate the president's signing into law The 21st Century Cures Act, which incorporates H. R. 2646, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act, initiated by Representative Tim Murphy (R.-PA-18). This act has been called the most transformative mental health law since John F. Kennedy was president and is long overdue.

Recent tragedies have opened our eyes to the fact we are in the midst of a mental health crisis in the United States. Our largest populations of persons with mental illness are no longer mental hospitals, but are now in prisons, because we have criminalized mental illness. We lack many hundreds of thousands of psychiatric beds. There are more than 350,000 deaths in the U.S. each year related to mental illness, over 43 thousand of these being suicides. Over 11 million individuals in this country live with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or major depression with psychosis.

Many more seriously mentally ill persons will now be able to receive care before their illnesses spiral into crisis. Data collected to help the mental health community will provide new hope. Assisted outpatient treatment efforts will now help many more individuals who otherwise may have never realized they needed help.

This new law establishes for the first time an assistant secretary for mental health and substance use disorders for the Department of Health and Human Services. This is a giant step forward. We will be able to invest in services for the most difficult-to-treat cases and ensure that families are part of the care-delivery team.

Further, our law enforcement officers and other first responders will be better prepared to respond to abnormal or potentially intense situations or behaviors.

While we know that a single law is not a panacea, we are encouraged that the future will be much better for those many families who have suffered in silence because the stigma of mental illness was so profound. This new law will help millions who need assistance which has not been readily available previously.

Thank you, Representative Tim Murphy and President Obama.

About the Authors

Frederick J. Frese, Ph.D. is a psychologist who has specialized in the area of schizophrenia for over 40 years. Dr. Mike Hogan, Chair of the President's New Freedom Commission that is revolutionizing the delivery of mental health services in the United States has called Fred "a national treasure." Dr. Frese is a founding board member of the National Treatment Advocacy Center which provided significant input to Representative Murphy during the four years he spent crafting and steering this important legislation through Congress.

Richard R. Karges, LISW-S, ACSW is Executive Director/CEO of Hopewell, a residential therapeutic farm community serving adults with serious mental illness. Hopewell is located in Mesopotamia, Ohio.

About Hopewell

Hopewell is a 300-acre residential working farm located in Mesopotamia, Ohio, where adults with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major depression learn to manage their mental illness and return to independent life. Hopewell is the only therapeutic farm community in Ohio. It is ODMHAS-licensed and CARF-accredited. Hopewell is a member of National Alliance on Mental Illness and the American Residential Treatment Association. Information and assessments are available by contacting Laura Scarnecchia, clinician/admissions coordinator at 440.426.2009. Visit www.hopewellcommunity.org.