



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF SOUTHERN NEVADA

### **Position on Behavioral Health in Nevada - January 2018**

Nevada has made commendable advances addressing behavioral health care over the last five years; but due to our fragmented governing processes and a historic and societal disregard for stigmatized behavioral health illnesses (including addictive disorders), we still have work to do to develop a unified and integrated behavioral health care system.

Behavioral health is a component of most social issues and medical conditions, consequently, any plan or approach to truly address the topic must include an emphasis on system analysis and integration. Currently, while behavioral health touches almost every part of government and social services, no one office, agency, or person is empowered to track the myriad of programs, initiatives, and studies connected to behavioral health care. And because we lack such comprehensive information, we are very likely letting vulnerable Nevadans slip through the safety net, which wastes precious lives and taxpayer dollars.

To continue advancing behavioral health care outcomes, the League of Women Voters of Nevada proposes the following priorities for the 2019 legislative session:

1. Nevada must create education pathways, and provide the support services needed, to place our students into behavioral health care jobs in recognition that the majority of the state is in a designated mental health shortage area.
2. Nevada must create a practical license-reciprocity process that allows newly-arrived professionals to practice in the state as quickly as possible.
3. Nevada should complete a system analysis to identify all programs, initiatives, grants, boards, and offices that address behavioral health care. The resulting report should include a narrative on unrealized opportunities, redundancies, and missing services, data, and funding sources.
4. Teachers in K-12 and higher education should have access to high-quality professional development on assisting students who need behavioral health care support.
5. Nevada should open clinics offering integrated health care and social services on elementary school campuses. These clinics should provide access to services for: eye care, dental care, pediatric wellness, minor diseases, and behavioral health care assessment.

We firmly assert that early interventions in preventive care, behavioral health care, and family wellness are absolutely necessary for Nevada to create a 21st century workforce, to lead in business diversity and to excel in civic participation.

We argue further that Nevada wastes taxpayer dollars treating adults who suffer from advanced stages of illnesses that could have been addressed for a fraction of the cost during childhood. We waste dollars and lives treating behavioral health sufferers in jails and emergency rooms when many of these individuals could have been productive members of society if they had received care as children, especially given the impact that childhood trauma has on functioning as an adult.