

Position Statement on Violence and Mental Illness

The Butler County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Services Board feels compassion and the utmost empathy for individuals, couples, children, guardians and families who have experienced negative effects of violence. The Board sympathizes with those who have lost loved ones to suicide, homicide, or other means of violence.

Although 20-25% of the population has mental illness in any given year, the fact is that the vast majority of people with mental illnesses are not violent. Research indicates that less than 5% of gun violence is associated with individuals with a mental illness (1, 2, 5). However, when mass shootings occur and mental illness is proposed as the likely cause, the rights and liberties of 20-25% of the population with mental illness may be in jeopardy especially with current conversations promoting more involuntary commitments and a national database for those with mental health conditions (4). It must be emphasized that except for instances of harm to self or others, individuals have a right to choose whether to seek mental health treatment or not.

A recent poll indicated that almost 50% of adult Americans inappropriately blame the mental health system for not identifying individuals who are a danger to others (3). Recognizing these statistics and the basic right of independent choice for individuals with or without mental illness, it is important for us as a society to not stigmatize those who have mental illness who rarely are violent (5, 7, 8). The Board encourages efforts to create a better understanding of mental illness, which is so prevalent in our nation and our local communities. Awareness about the signs and symptoms of mental illness can assist each of us to identify those around us who are in need of recovery services and supports. The reality is, treatment works and people recover from mental illness in mental health systems such as ours across the nation.

The Board, through its 15 contract provider network, offers a wide range of treatment options including prevention, education, assessment, case management, counseling, psychiatric, detoxification, crisis, residential, hospitalization, vocational, consultation, and social recreational services to support the unique treatment needs of those afflicted by mental illness and substance use disorders no matter what one's financial status is or one's ability to pay (9). For more information about mental illness and substance misuse in Butler County, Ohio please contact the Board's 24 hour hotline, 1-844-4CRISIS (427-4747), for a consult about mental health and referral resources.