

The Carter Center Convenes Albany and Savannah Mental Health Leaders as Part of Yearlong Campaign to Elevate Awareness of Mental Health Insurance Law

Dec. 14, 2023

ATLANTA (Dec. 14, 2023) – The Carter Center, in partnership with Georgians for a Healthy Future and the Georgia Parity Collaborative, hosted roundtables on mental health insurance coverage Dec. 11-12 at the Gateway Community Service Board Crisis Center in Savannah and Albany State University in Albany. The roundtables aimed to gather input from diverse stakeholders to better understand the most effective ways to raise awareness about their rights to mental health care in Georgia.

Mental health professionals and community leaders gathered to discuss health insurance coverage for mental illnesses and addiction and what Georgians are entitled to under Georgia’s Mental Health Parity Act that passed in 2022. Parity means that mental health and addiction are covered by insurance at the same level as care for other health conditions.

“Hearing directly from health and community leaders in Albany and Savannah has been vital to planning our next steps in helping Georgians – especially those in underserved communities – clearly understand their right by law to payment by their health insurance for treatment of mental illness and addiction,” said Eve Byrd, director of the Carter Center’s Mental Health Program.

The roundtables were the final component of the Center’s one-year mental health parity awareness campaign in Georgia, funded by the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the Georgia mental health parity law and to advance implementation. Results of this phase of the campaign will be shared with the public in January 2024.

Members of the Carter Center's Mental Health Program, as well as representatives from community nonprofits, local elected officials, academic institutions, mental health consumers, and more discussed these topics:

- The state of mental health and access to behavioral health care in Albany and Savannah, especially as it relates to women and communities of color.
- Successes and challenges community leaders and mental health practitioners are experiencing when educating community members about the rights they're entitled to under the Mental Health Parity Act.
- Ideas for further outreach and messaging that would reach and resonate with vulnerable populations in Albany and Savannah.
- Ways that groups like The Carter Center and Georgians for a Healthy Future can help roundtable attendees spread awareness of mental health care.

Attendees praised the passage of the Mental Health Parity Act and are dedicated to finding ways to collaborate with other members of the community to ensure that people who need mental health services are aware that they are entitled to it through their insurance coverage.

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About The Carter Center's Mental Health Program

Continuing the legacy of the late former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, a longtime champion for the rights of people with mental illnesses, the [Carter Center's Mental Health Program](#) works to promote awareness about mental health issues, inform public policy, achieve equity for mental health care comparable to other health care, and reduce stigma and discrimination against those with mental illnesses.

About the Georgia Parity Collaborative

The Carter Center's Mental Health Program has led the [Georgia Parity Collaborative](#), a coalition of over 40 statewide and national organizations working to advance parity and educate policymakers, communities, and the media since 2020. Today, the collaborative monitors implementation of the parity provisions in the act by state agencies and evaluates the public's awareness of the act and its impact.

About Georgians for a Healthy Future

Georgians for a Healthy Future has provided substantive health policy information to community leaders and organizations, individual consumers, and advocates throughout the state; conducted seminars to equip consumers with the tools to become strong advocates; successfully injected the consumer perspective into hundreds of health care stories in the media; and engaged with policymakers to spark policy change for a healthier Georgia.

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