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Indiana Council of Community Mental Health Centers Wins National Award for Mental Health Advocacy

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. – Each year the National Council for Behavioral Health, the largest behavioral health trade association in the United States, recognizes individuals and organizations for their outstanding work in bettering the lives of individuals who struggle with mental health and substance use disorders. This year, the Award of Excellence in Advocacy Leadership will be awarded to the Indiana Council of Community Mental Health Centers (Indiana Council) on Tuesday, March 8th in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The Indiana Council is being recognized for advocacy efforts in the 2015 Legislative Session to improve the lives of Hoosiers by enhancing access to mental health and substance use treatment. Through an initiative of the Indiana Council, legislation was passed that improves access to Medicaid-based mental health and substance use services for incarcerated individuals returning to the community, developing integrated care systems within the community mental health center system by ensuring access to both primary and behavioral health treatment, and developing a Mental Health First Aid program, which improves training for educators and other individuals who interact with youth for the purposes of identifying the warning signs of a mental health or substance use issue, including risk of suicide. The Indiana Council's President and CEO, Matt Brooks remarked, "the Indiana Council is honored to receive this national award recognizing our organizations advocacy efforts aimed at improving access to mental health and substance use treatment for our most vulnerable Hoosiers". This legislation was signed into law by Governor Pence in 2015 and efforts to implement provisions in the new law have been undertaken by the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration.

Mr. Brooks further indicated "By developing a robust mental health and substance use treatment system in Indiana, we can ensure individuals in need have access to treatment, including Medicaid-based substance use services. Indiana is becoming a national leader in developing innovative approaches to mental health and substance use treatment and this award from the National Council is an example of how state administrators, legislators, health providers, and health consumers can work collaboratively to improve access to mental health and substance use treatment."

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