

May 5, 2016

To: State and Local League Presidents

From: LWWUS Board of Directors

Re: Notice of Intent to Propose Concurrence at Convention 2016

At Convention 2016 in Washington, D.C., LWWUS will be recommending adoption by concurrence on the floor of convention with the following LWW of Colorado position on Behavioral Health.

Behavioral Health Position

Support for:

- Behavioral Health as the nationally accepted term that includes both mental illness and substance use disorder.
- Access for all people to affordable, quality in- and out-patient behavioral health care, including needed medications and supportive services.
- Behavioral Health care that is integrated with, and achieves parity with, physical health care.
- Early and affordable behavioral health diagnosis and treatment for children and youth from early childhood through adolescence.
- Early and appropriate diagnosis and treatment for children and adolescents that is family-focused and community-based.
- Access to safe and stable housing for people with behavioral health challenges, including those who are chronically homeless.
- Effective re-entry planning and follow-up for people released from both behavioral health hospitalization and the criminal justice system.
- Problem solving or specialty courts, including mental health and drug courts, in all judicial districts to provide needed treatment and avoid inappropriate entry into the criminal justice system.
- Health education – from early childhood throughout life – that integrates all aspects of social, emotional and physical health and wellness.
- Efforts to decrease the stigmatization of, and normalize, behavioral health problems and care.

In addition, the LWWUS Board recommends a concurrence with the LWW Colorado position on Behavioral Health including amending the **LWWUS**

Health Care position to include the following as the second sentence under Basic Level of Quality Care:

Every U.S. resident should have access to affordable, quality in- and out-patient behavioral health care, including needed medications and supportive services that is integrated with, and achieves parity with, physical health care.

The following information is being sent in compliance with LWVUS Bylaws, Article XII, Sec. 2. Program (c):

Arguments that support a Concurrence on Behavioral Health:

- The existing LWVUS Health Care Position, written in April 1993, mentions “mental health care” only as the last item in a list of types of care to which U.S. residents should have access.
- Behavioral Health - today’s nationally recognized term - includes both Mental Illnesses and Substance Use Disorder.
 - Mental illness is a brain disorder and refers to a wide range of mental conditions; 50% of lifelong mental illnesses are present by age 14.
 - Substance use disorder is defined as both substance addiction and clinically significant substance abuse; addiction means a brain change – a brain disorder.
- This concurrence supports Integrated Care – Behavioral Health care offered in the same place as primary care; people are more likely to start and complete behavioral health therapy when it is integrated, i.e. offered in the same place as their primary care.
- With this concurrence, the League at all levels will be able to advocate for effective Behavioral Health treatment and care.

Arguments that oppose a Concurrence on Behavioral Health

- Leagues members should examine the issue of Behavioral Health by the traditional study method.
- Leagues have been able to advocate for mental health issues using the existing LWVUS Healthcare Position.

Rationale for using Convention concurrence to adopt these positions:

Concurrence at Convention is a valid method of developing new League positions and over the years it has been used to adopt new positions ranging from the Violence Prevention position in 1994 to Human Trafficking in 2014. It is particularly useful for issues that are easily understood and where traditional local-League based studies could be expected to reach the same conclusion as the proposed concurrence. The League's Bylaws provide the authority for the adoption of positions by concurrence.

Background information can be found at:

<http://lwvcolorado.org/lwv/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/BehavioralHealthStudyMaterials2015.pdf>