

# Shrinking Services

## *How community support can reverse the trend*

America's health care system is a hot topic of discussion both in the news media and around the water cooler these days. Most realize that something seems to be broken. However, few are aware of the complications that the system's problems cause for the behavioral health care field.

As more Americans are living without health care coverage, the amount of unreimbursed care is rising at an alarming rate. For organizations like Coleman, there are plans in place to subsidize the partial cost of behavioral health care for uninsured clients through avenues such as endowments and funds raised through enterprise companies. However, as the number of uninsured clients rises, the amount of funding available to cover the cost of their care is not rising at the same rate.

This imbalance results in the provision of a significant amount of unreimbursed care. Organizations begin to go in the red trying to sustain their levels of services and keep their operation running smoothly. Some behavioral health providers are implementing cuts in the services provided to the uninsured or underinsured. This is a dangerous situation for our country, as those who need treatments and medication can no longer receive the help they need to stay healthy.

As the stigma surrounding behavioral health slowly diminishes in America, people have become more aware of the concerns surrounding the level of care that citizens receive. In July, the Senate approved a bill that will phase out Medicare's higher co-pays for mental health services, bringing them in line with co-pays for physical health care services. In the past, Medicare has required 50 percent of a co-pay for mental health services, compared to 20 percent for other health care services.

This is an important step in the behavioral health care of our country's seniors. It is imperative, however, that support for non-seniors is improved as well.

As a concerned citizen, there are ways to help support behavioral health care providers in your area. On November 4, residents of [Portage](#) and [Stark](#) Counties will both have a levy on their ballot to support mental health services in their counties. Both levies (Issue 65 in Stark and Issue 36 in Portage) will not raise taxes, but will provide much-needed funding to behavioral health providers to keep operating at their current levels of service. Please help spread the word in your community regarding the importance of these levies to the families and individuals struggling with behavioral health challenges.

If you'd like to help support Coleman directly, there are a variety of giving options set up through Coleman Foundation. Please visit [www.coleman-foundation.com](http://www.coleman-foundation.com).