

respond positively

address candidate challenges or concerns

When you talk with a candidate about our priorities, it's important to be prepared, whether in a public forum or private meeting. Some candidates may express reservations or opposition. If you encounter opposition, don't be defensive—and don't argue.

Respond positively. Acknowledge the candidate's concern and then make a positive point about the need for mental health care.

Pick your favorite responses below and use them to turn challenges into an opportunity for open dialogue.



Protecting public mental health services

Challenge

“We have to balance the budget and we're not going to raise taxes. Everything, including mental health, needs to take its share of cuts.”

Sample responses

“I know the budget is tight, but when children and adults get the right mental health care at the right time, they get better and stand a real chance of leading independent and productive lives. When they don't, we all pay the price in lost work time, school failure and higher public safety and emergency department costs.”

“I understand that these are tough economic times, but mental illness doesn't go away in bad times. In fact, more people than ever need help. Services need to be there to help people when they need them the most. It's an essential investment that helps to stabilize our families, our businesses and our communities.”

“I know that tough times require tough choices, but children and adults who live with serious mental illness rely on Medicaid and public mental health programs for treatment and supports. Budget cuts pull the rug out from under them. Cuts hurt everyone who needs stable services to maintain recovery. Mental health is the last place we should cut.”

“I understand that these are challenging times, but mental health needs to be protected in a time of increasing need. It's an investment that helps our families, our businesses and our communities. We know it means hard choices, but we need you to stand up for us. In the long run, it's the smart choice.”

Expanding access to mental health coverage

Challenge

“If people want mental health coverage, they can get it, but everyone else shouldn’t have to pay for it.”

Sample responses

“I understand concerns about cost, but millions of Americans live with a mental illness. Few people expect to experience mental illness, but when it hits, we expect our health plan to cover treatment, just like it does for cancer or heart disease. Mental health coverage protects our families when they need it most.”

“I understand concerns about cost, but covering mental health saves lives and saves families money. It’s the kind of help that’s especially needed in tough economic times. It also helps to create stable and healthy communities—something we all support.”

“I understand concerns about cost, but mental health coverage helps children and adults get treatment early, before a mental health condition worsens and becomes harder and more costly to treat. Effective mental health care saves lives and brings down costs.”

“I understand concerns about cost, but people affected by mental illness want to do their part, just like anyone else. When mental health treatment is adequately covered in health plans, workers with mental illness will be able to get the treatment that makes it possible for them to manage their illness and be productive.”

Ensuring effective mental health services are available

Challenge

“We can’t cover everything. What services are the most important?”

Sample responses

“We want to see proven, cost-effective mental health services, especially programs that serve children and adults with the most severe mental illness, as a top priority. Some examples are housing, crisis services, intensive home and community-based services for children and adults, hospital care, case management, medications and peer support services. The right treatment at the right time helps children and adults get on with their lives—and we all benefit.”