

# Chicago Tribune

## Streamlining mental health care

*1:30 p.m. CDT, May 26, 2011*

The Tribune correctly argues that [Illinois](#) should move away from funding institutionalized [mental health](#) care and invest rather in more efficient and effective community-based services ("Unkindest Cuts," Tribune Editorial, May 23) and the budget plan offered by the Illinois House seeks more boldly to accomplish that goal.

While both the [Illinois Senate](#) and House budgets reduce the governor's proposed \$221 million budget for the state's five mental health institutions--which is \$18 million above last year's budget for those facilities --the House's proposal cuts institutional operations far deeper.

The Senate slices \$11 million from the governor's budget while the House cuts \$50 million, a difference of \$29.3 million. As a result, the House budget plan, which won bi-partisan approval in the lower chamber, 83-25, plows more money into community care programs where the state can get more bang for its buck.

By providing community-based care instead of funding costly institutions, we can serve more people for far less money.

While both the House and Senate must reconcile their competing versions of the budget for mental health services, we are philosophically--and fortunately-- pursuing the same fiscal strategy to provide better care at lower costs. However, we should be as bold as possible in the pursuit of that goal and the governor should follow our lead.

-- Rep. [Sara Feigenholtz](#) (D-Chicago) Chair, House Human Services Appropriations Committee