

# Press Release ...



*...from State Representative Sara Feigenholtz*

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz

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## **Feigenholtz Legislation Addressing Heroin and Opioid Epidemic Through New Programs Becomes Law**

**Springfield, Ill.** – Legislation sponsored by State Representative Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, creating early mental health and addiction treatment programs became law on Wednesday.

The legislation, Senate Bill 2951, requires the Department of Healthcare and Family Services to create two new pilot programs for Medicaid beneficiaries. The first program provides community-based treatment of mental health conditions to youth and young adults. The second program creates programming for the treatment of youth and young adults with substance use disorders.

“75% of mental health conditions begin before age 24,” said Feigenholtz. “Providing early treatment focusing on youth is a crucial addition to our state’s mental health treatment programs that previously focused only on adults.”

Mental health treatment practitioners have observed that most individuals who have a serious mental illness (such as bipolar disorder, major depression, and schizophrenia) typically experience the first signs of illness during adolescence or early adulthood. Yet there are often long intervals between the onset of symptoms and diagnosis, referral, and treatment. These new programs will create evidence-based treatments for first episodes of mental health problems.

Proactive treatment of substance use disorders allows for early intervention, which can prevent reuse and overdoses. Overdose deaths from opioids in Illinois rose 82% between 2013 and 2016, and nearly one million Illinoisans, including children and adults, have a substance use disorder.

“This bill is a game changer for young people with serious mental health needs and gets them treatment at the first signs of a condition to enable wellness,” said Heather O’Donnell, Vice President of Public Policy and Advocacy at Thresholds. “Illinois will be the first state in the country to cover a treatment approach through Medicaid tailored specifically for youth and young adults in the very beginning of a serious mental health condition like bi-polar disorder or severe anxiety.”

The taxpayer costs of community substance use and mental health treatments are well below the alternatives, which often times leads people to prison, jail, or hospitalization.

This new law has received broad support from the Illinois Psychiatric Society, the Illinois State Medical Society, and the National Association of Social Workers.

For full text of SB2951, [click here](#). For more information, contact Feigenholtz's Chicago office at 773-296-4141 or [sara@staterepsara.com](mailto:sara@staterepsara.com).

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