

Narrative for “Grading the States: A Report on America’s Health Care System for Serious Mental Illnesses - NAMI 2006”

- On a state-by-state basis, the 250-page report demonstrates for the first time in detail what a presidential commission has called a “system in shambles” and the National Institute of Medicine recently reported as the “chasm” between promise and practice. Five states receive grades in the B range. Eight receive Fs.
- Each state is scored on 39 specific criteria. State narratives include additional information, context and potential news stories. The report covers issues being considered today by governors and state legislatures, involving Medicaid, budget surpluses, budget cuts, and cost-shifting. Federal investigations or audits and court orders are included; all factors that are driving changes.
- Nine governors and one state first lady receive specific praise. State analyses include lists of “Innovations” and “Urgent Needs.” Although grades in most cases are disappointing, there is some encouragement in the level of creativity many states are exhibiting in trying to address the challenges of the current environment: e.g., emerging public-private partnership, public trust, and alternative finance models. Policy recommendations include investment in recovery-oriented, evidence-based practices and linking funding to performance and outcomes.
- Each state also is ranked on a “Family and Consumer Test Drive” of each state mental health agency’s Web site and telephone system for access to basic information—a unique human interest story. 80% of states received less than half of the total possible score. In one case, a state agency employee told a consumer: “No, I don’t want to help you.”