

## Sample 2020 Presidential Candidate Questions about Mental Health

Presidential candidates are making frequent visits to NH in preparation for our first in the nation Presidential Primary, which will be on February 11, 2020. Please consider attending candidate forums to ask questions about their positions on issues relating to mental health, including substance use disorders. Sample statements for how you might personalize these suggested questions are written in italics.

*1. I am unable to find a psychiatrist who can see my daughter without a 6-month wait. One in five adults experienced a diagnosable mental illness within the past year, yet we face a national shortage of mental health providers and psychiatrists, in particular.* **What will you do to encourage medical students to enter into psychiatry?**

*2. Even with the new parity laws, I still am allowed only 12 therapy appointments for treatment of my mental illness per year. Mental health parity is when health insurance offers treatment for mental illness, including substance use disorder, that is considered equal to that offered for physical illness.* **How will you enforce mental health parity?**

*3. My son has an opioid addiction and bipolar disorder and finding treatment is very difficult. Many people become addicted to drugs or alcohol when they are struggling with mental illness. We have an epidemic of substance abuse right now.* **What will you do to increase the availability of specialized treatment of co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorder?**

*4. I did two tours of duty in Iraq and have since been diagnosed with PTSD. In New Hampshire, less than one third of veterans receive treatment at the Veterans Administration—some by choice, and some by matters of access.* **As president, what would you do to increase mental health treatment within the community for our vets and their families and caregivers?**

*5. My brother is in jail and receiving no treatment for his bipolar disorder. It is estimated that there are ten times more people with serious mental illness in jail and prison (approximately 350,000 people) than in state psychiatric hospitals (approximately 35,000 people).* **What steps will you take to ensure that we are not jailing people who would be better served with mental health treatment?**

*6. It took me years before I asked my doctor about my mental health. Silence and stigma often get in the way of people asking for help with mental illness.* **Do you have a friend, colleague or family member who has experienced a mental health or addiction crisis? If so, how did it impact you?**

*7. My family is always researching new treatment options for my daughter, who has schizophrenia. Research funding for mental illness has lagged far behind that for other disease states.* **As president, would you advocate for increased funding for mental health research through the National Institutes for Mental Health?**

*8. Suicide is a leading cause of death in NH and the US, and a significant public health issue. Currently the National Suicide Prevention Hotline Act is before Congress which would create a 3-digit hotline for suicide and mental health crisis calls and increase funding for suicide prevention.* **As President would you sign this bill and what additional steps, if any, would you take to prevent suicide in the US?**

*Find Help, Find Hope.*

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