

## HISTORY OF JACKSON COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH 708 BOARD

On July 1, 1963 the Community Mental Health Act (House Bill 708) was enacted to permit local governmental units to levy a tax and use the funds for mental health services. In the 1964 general election, voters in Jackson County authorized the County Treasurer to levy an annual tax not to exceed \$1 million for the purpose of providing mental health facilities and services in the county.

W. I. (Ike) Brandon, Jackson County Board Chairman, appointed the first seven-member board charged with administering the Act for staggered terms of 2, 3 and 4 years beginning August 11, 1965. Original Board members were Louis Wides, Kathleen Bahn, Harold O'Neil, Rev. Lenus Turley, Roxanne Crews, Dr. O. Ballesteros, and Sister Clementia.

On August 31, 1965, the 708 Board authorized its first contract for mental health services. This was with an agency which has been continuously funded ever since: initially the Southern Illinois Mental Health Clinic, later known as Southern Illinois Regional Social Services, then The "H" Group, and now a part of Centerstone. The budget for fiscal year December 1, 1965 to November 30, 1966 was for payment to the Clinic of \$31,000 and Board expenses of \$750.

When the 708 Act was first passed, it was the intent of the legislators to provide a mechanism whereby the citizens of a local governmental unit would tax themselves pursuant to referendum to use local dollars to plan and fund local community services for those with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities. Since that time the Act has undergone numerous amendments to strengthen and clarify its various provisions. Services for the alcohol and substance abuser were added to the program areas to be funded. Boards were given the authority to enter into contractual arrangements, borrow money to purchase buildings, and hire staff deemed necessary. The great majority of the changes resulted in increased responsibility to plan and fund services within the community. This in turn caused greater financial demands in many 708 areas and local boards struggled to meet their increased responsibilities under the law.

In September 1975, the legislature increased the maximum tax levy from \$1 million to \$1.5 million. The intent was to provide financial relief for existing boards by allowing them to raise their levy and to automatically include the new higher ceiling for boards created after that time.

As service demands and the need for new and innovative programming increased, the 708 Board found it difficult to fund all of the agencies without increasing the tax levy. For several years the levy was approximately \$186,000. With tax year 1981 the levy increased to \$205,000. The levy for tax year 1983 was \$230,000 and remained such through 1988. Since that time the levy has increased as follows:

Tax year 1989 – 1991	\$253,102*
1992	\$265,757

1993	\$279,044	
1994	\$292,996	
1995	\$307,645	
1996 – 1998	\$310,645	
1999	\$313,858	
2000	\$329,550**	
2001	\$321,278	
2002	\$330,916	
2003	\$364,008	
2004	\$385,848	
2005	\$389,048	
2006	\$391,822	
2007	\$347,309	
2008	\$390,031	
2009	\$225,221	
2010	\$247,786	
2011	\$279,344	
2012	\$278,916	
2013	\$286,581	
2014	\$273,000	(Taxes are payable the following year)

\* The amount actually received for tax years 1989 and 1990 was several thousand dollars less than anticipated. It became apparent that the County Clerk thought a second referendum was necessary to exceed the rate of 1 mil. With the assistance of an attorney, the 708 Board was successful in getting the 1991 rate increased to 1.5 mils without a subsequent referendum.

\*\* The County Board approved a mental health tax levy of \$329,550 for tax year 2000; however, the 708 Board was later notified that the County had over estimated the Equalized Assessed Valuation during the budget process and to expect a shortfall. The actual amount received was \$320,134.29.

Because of problems with the levies for tax year 2000, the County Board set levies for tax year 2001 at approximately the amount extended the previous year. The implementation of Tax Caps (Property Tax Extension Limitation Law - PTELL) has made it extremely difficult to increase the mental health levy.

Since its inception, the 708 Board has strived to improve the quality of mental health service in Jackson County while assuring delivery of those services in a cost-effective and accountable way to both the service recipient and the taxpayers of the County.