

Sangamon County Mental Health Board

What is a Mental Health Board?

A Mental Health Board, also known as a community mental health board, is a locally appointed body that oversees funding for mental health, substance use, and developmental disability services. More than 90 counties and townships across Illinois have already established mental health boards under the Community Mental Health Act. Mental Health boards are authorized under Illinois law to levy a dedicated property or sales tax, the current recommendation for Sangamon County is a 0.5% sales tax (5¢ per \$10 purchase). These funds would then be used to support local programs and providers in Sangamon County. As a public body, the board gives residents a voice in reviewing and guiding how these funds are allocated.

What Has Sangamon County Done So Far?

- **Created a Mental Health Commission:** The Sangamon County Board formed a Mental Health Commission to study the need for a Mental Health Board.
- **Expert Analysis Completed:** The Mental Health Commission gathered input from medical professionals, mental health providers, law enforcement, educators, and community organizations, and conducted a full review of current gaps in services and coordination. Their findings and final recommendation were delivered to the County Board
- **Approved a binding Referendum for March 2026:** The County Board approved a binding referendum on the March 2026 Primary ballot, allowing residents to decide whether to create and fund a Mental Health Board dedicated to improving local mental health and addiction services.

Key Dates & Timeline

- **February 5, 2026:** Early voting begins.
- **March 17, 2026:** Election Day. Voters will decide whether to establish a Mental Health Board in Sangamon County.

What Could a Mental Health Board Fund?

If approved by voters, a Sangamon County Mental Health Board could help support:

- **Expanded mental health services** for children, adults, and seniors.
- **Substance use treatment programs** to address prevention and recovery needs.
- **Crisis response and suicide prevention services.**
- **Support for developmental disabilities services.**
- **Partnerships with law enforcement** to improve crisis intervention and reduce repeat encounters.
- **Community-based initiatives** that keep people healthier and reduce pressure on emergency rooms, jails, and schools.

Citizen Efforts to Approve the Mental Health Board

A citizen-led campaign committee, “Vote Yes for Mental Health,” has been formed to advocate for the approval of a Sangamon County Mental Health Board. The committee is led by Satch Pecori, of Hanson Professional Services, and Ryan Croke, who serves in the Governor’s Office. The group plans to host community events and lead public education efforts to inform voters about the benefits of a mental health board.

I don't normally vote in primaries because I don't want to declare a party. Can I vote just on this nonpartisan referendum?

Yes, you can. You can request a nonpartisan ballot in advance or on Election Day at your polling place.

What is the question I will see on the ballot?

PROPOSITION TO FUND A MENTAL HEALTH BOARD

To pay for mental health purposes, shall Sangamon County be authorized to impose an increase on its share of local sales taxes by one-half (1/2) percent?

This would mean that a consumer would pay an additional \$0.50 in sales tax for every \$100 of tangible personal property bought at retail.

“What exactly is this tax, and how much will it cost me?”

It's a small sales tax increase — 50 cents for every \$100 spent on taxable items. For most households, this amounts to just a few dollars a month and is spread out over everyday purchases rather than coming all at once.

“What will the money actually be used for?”

The money stays in Sangamon County and can only be used for mental health–related purposes, including mental health treatment, addiction services, and crisis response.

Crisis response means having trained professionals who can respond to mental health emergencies — often alongside or instead of police — to de-escalate situations, connect people to care, and reduce unnecessary trips to jail or the emergency room.

Funds may also be used to support public safety, law enforcement, and social service partners who are responding to mental health needs in the community.

“Why do we need this? Don't we already fund mental health?”

Sangamon County currently has no dedicated local funding source for mental health services. That means services are inconsistent and often reactive. Most Illinois counties already have a mental health board funded this way — this referendum simply brings Sangamon County in line and allows for planned, locally controlled investment.

“Will this raise my property taxes or affect groceries?”

No. This measure does not raise property taxes, and groceries and medicine are excluded from the sales tax. The increase applies only to taxable retail purchases.

“How do I know the money won't be misused?”

Funds are overseen by a locally appointed mental health board, with required public meetings, budgeting rules, and audits. By law, the money can only be spent on mental health-related purposes — including services that support public safety and social services — and cannot be diverted for unrelated county expenses.

Who will comprise the mental health board?

Mental health professionals, not politicians, appointed by the County Board Chair.