

2022 Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition Keep the Door Open Agenda



The Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition is a diverse mix of organizations working together to ensure individuals living with mental health and substance use disorders have access to high quality services and supports. Membership includes consumer and family advocacy organizations, peer-led groups, community behavioral health providers, professional associations, hospitals, health systems and more.

Trauma, depression, anxiety and overdose rates are at an all-time high, and demand for services continues to rise. There are many positive components of Maryland's behavioral health system, but after years of neglect and short-term fixes, our mental health and substance use infrastructure is antiquated, inflexible, and crumbling. **We can do better.**

The Behavioral Health Coalition calls on the Maryland General Assembly to take the following steps in 2022 to enhance our system of care and ensure Marylanders have access to quality mental health and substance use services when and where needed.

ENSURE A COORDINATED COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM THAT PROVIDES EQUITABLE ACCESS TO QUALITY CARE



Primary care offices, community behavioral health clinics, and our crisis response network are the roads and bridges of our behavioral health system. They are the main pathways to treatment for individuals with mental health and substance use needs. We must invest in the tools and system reforms necessary to ensure these care providers are able to meet increasing demand for high-quality behavioral health services. **The legislature must pass the Behavioral Health System Modernization Act to expand care coordination models like certified community behavioral health clinics (CCBHCs); ensure reliable reimbursement for peers, measurement-based care and crisis services; and increase access to wraparound services for children and youth.**

DIVERT INDIVIDUALS IN CRISIS AWAY FROM JAILS AND EMERGENCY ROOMS

Too often Marylanders must call police or go to hospital emergency rooms when experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis. A well-resourced crisis response system can serve as a more appropriate alternative. As the United States transitions in 2022 to a standard number for all behavioral health crisis calls (988) we must ensure our system can meet the needs of all Marylanders. **The legislature must pass legislation establishing a 988 fund to support an array of crisis services and allocate an initial investment to ensure call centers are adequately staffed and available 24/7.**



ADDRESS THE UNIQUE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Children and youth with mental health and substance use needs have fewer treatment options than adults. Prevention and early intervention programs and wraparound services for youth with intensive behavioral health needs are simply not available to many families. Appropriate home- and community-based supports for Black and brown youth are particularly limited. **The legislature must enhance Maryland's system of care for children and youth by passing the Behavioral Health System Modernization Act, supporting system reforms that are co-led and co-designed by youth and families, and reforming Maryland's broken voluntary placement agreement (VPA) process to support youth and families with the greatest level of need.**

ADDRESS THE UNIQUE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS



The number of Marylanders over age 60 will increase 30% over the next 20 years – reaching 1.8 million by 2040 – but we are not prepared to meet the behavioral health needs of this booming population. Marylanders over 65 account for the largest increase in suicide rates, the longest average length of psychiatric hospital stays, and a steadily increasing overdose rate. **The legislature must enhance Maryland's system of care for older adults by increasing behavioral health support in the state's area agencies on aging, modernizing the state's process for screening individuals referred for an institutional level of care, and implementing a recently released interagency plan to meet the behavioral health needs of this population.**

REDUCE THE HARM ASSOCIATED WITH SUBSTANCE USE

Maryland has battled a persistent overdose crisis since well before COVID-19, but pandemic-related stress, grief and despair have exacerbated these concerns. Opioid-related deaths reached a new high in 2020, a disheartening trend that has continued through the first half of 2021. We must embrace harm reduction strategies and establish innovative programming and services that guide people down the road to recovery. **The legislature must reduce the harm associated with substance use by expanding Good Samaritan protections for people who report an overdose or other medical emergency.**



The Behavioral Health Coalition benefits from the technical expertise, institutional knowledge, and grassroots supports of its member organizations. We use advocacy and public awareness to increase the power of the behavioral health community. Our unified voice is stronger than our individual organizations. We fight for the funding and system reforms necessary to ensure Marylanders get the mental health and substance use services they need to be safe and healthy.

Adventist HealthCare Behavioral Health & Wellness Services
Alzheimer's Association of Greater Maryland
American College of Emergency Physicians, Maryland Chapter
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Maryland Chapter
Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency
Arundel Lodge
Baltimore City Substance Abuse Directorate
Baltimore Crisis Response
Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition
Baltimore Jewish Council
Behavioral Health System Baltimore
Brain Injury Association of Maryland
Catholic Charities of Baltimore
Center for Addiction Medicine
Chesapeake Voyagers
Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland
Community Crisis Services
Cornerstone Montgomery
Disability Rights Maryland
EveryMind
Family Services, Inc.
Good Samaritan Hospital Division of Psychiatry
Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center
Harford-Belair Community Mental Health Center

Health Care for the Homeless
Healthy Harford / Healthy Cecil
Horizon Foundation
Hudson Health Services
IBR/Reach Health Services
James' Place Inc.
Jewish Community Services
Key Point Health Services
Legal Action Center
Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland
Maryland Addictions Directors Council
Maryland Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence
Maryland Association of Behavioral Health Authorities
Maryland Association for Partial Hospital and Intensive Outpatient Programs
Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth
Maryland Catholic Conference
Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition
Maryland Coalition of Families
Maryland & DC Society of Addiction Medicine
Maryland Hospital Association
Maryland Nonprofits
Maryland Nurses Association
Maryland Occupational Therapy Association
Maryland Public Health Association

Maryland Psychiatric Society
Maryland Psychological Association
Maryland Rural Health Association
Mental Health Association of Frederick County
Mental Health Association of Maryland
Mental Health Association of the Eastern Shore
Mid Shore Behavioral Health
Montgomery County Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
NAMI Maryland
National Association of Social Workers Maryland Chapter
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) Maryland
Office on Mental Health/Core Service Agency of Harford County
On Our Own of Maryland
Pro Bono Counseling Project
Prologue
R.I. International
Sheppard Pratt
Springboard Community Services
Totally Linking Care in Maryland
Trauma Informed, Inc
Way Station
Wells House