



**2021 SESSION  
SUMMARY**  
MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF MARYLAND



Maryland Philanthropy Network | Health Funders and Public Policy Affinity Groups | May 13, 2021

# Behavioral Health Impact of COVID-19

- Up to 40% of Marylanders report feeling anxious or depressed as a result of the pandemic
- Maryland's crisis helpline saw dramatic increases in calls (61%), texts (47%), and chats (154%) in the last quarter of 2020 compared to a year earlier
- Maryland drug- and alcohol-related deaths jumped by more than 12% through the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2020 as compared to a year earlier
- A study of over 69 million patients in the U.S. indicates a significantly higher likelihood of developing a mental illness within 3 months of COVID-19 diagnosis
- As with COVID-19, Black and brown individuals, older adults, lower socioeconomic groups of all races and ethnicities, and health care workers are disproportionately impacted



*Meeting the increased demand requires a comprehensive strategy, smart investment, and an efficient use of resources.*

- Increase funding for and accountability in Maryland's **public behavioral health system**
- Preserve access to **telehealth** beyond the pandemic
- Reduce **health disparities**
- Enhance **school behavioral health** supports
- Address increases in **overdose and suicide** rates
- Expand access to **crisis response** services

# Public Behavioral Health System

## ***Funding***

- Effective January 1, 2021, state funding for community mental health and substance use treatment **increased by 3.5%**

## ***Accountability and Oversight***

- **Emergency legislation** (SB 638 | HB 919) authorizes the Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA) to levy penalties against the state's administrative services organization
- Maryland Department of Health (MDH) must provide providers with information needed to reconcile **claims histories**, secure a **neutral third party** to oversee reconciliation and mediate disputes, and file ongoing **status updates** on Optum's functionality

# Telehealth

## ***Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021 (SB 3 | HB 123)***

- Retains **coverage for audio-only telehealth** in Medicaid and commercial markets through June 2023
- Requires **reimbursement for telehealth services at the same rate as in-person services** in Medicaid and commercial markets through June 2023
- **Removes all originating and distant site restrictions** so people can receive telehealth wherever they're comfortable and providers can deliver services from wherever is appropriate
- Expands the definition of telehealth to include **remote patient monitoring** services
- Allows reimbursement of behavioral health programs for **telehealth services delivered by peers and paraprofessionals**, two critical sectors of the behavioral health workforce
- Permits psychiatrists and psychiatric nurse practitioners to participate via telehealth on **assertive community treatment (ACT) teams**
- Provides that commercial insurers **may not deny coverage for an in-person behavioral health service solely because that service may also be provided via telehealth**

# Health Equity

## ***Commission on Health Equity (SB 52 | HB 78)***

- Brings together leadership from over 20 state agencies to examine the **impact of social determinants** on the health of Maryland residents and provide recommendations to reduce health disparities

## ***Data and Training (SB 565 | HB 309 and SB 5 | HB 28)***

- Requires collection and publication of data on the racial and ethnic composition of Maryland's health care workforce and health data generally that includes **race and ethnicity information**
- Requires **implicit bias training** for health occupation license or certificate renewal

# Crisis Services

## ***BH Crisis Response Grant Program (SB 286 | HB 108)***

- Extends grant funding, allocating an additional **\$5 million per year** through FY25

## ***RELIEF Act (SB 496)***

- **\$15 million** for crisis response services included in state COVID relief package

## ***Raising Awareness at Colleges/Universities (SB 405 | HB 466)***

- Requires higher education institutions to include crisis hotline **information on student identification cards**

# Overdose and Suicide Prevention

## ***Suicide Fatality Review Committee (DID NOT PASS)***

- SB 168 | HB 209 would have established a committee to review factors contributing to suicide deaths and develop suicide prevention strategies

## ***Overdose Prevention Sites (DID NOT PASS)***

- SB 279 | HB 396 would have allowed community-based organizations to establish OPS at up to six locations around the state

## ***Good Samaritan Protections (DID NOT PASS)***

- HB 212 would have expanded certain immunities against arrest and prosecution for bystanders seeking medical assistance for an individual experiencing an overdose

# Children, Youth and Families

## ***Blueprint for Maryland's Future (HB 1300 (2020))***

- Dedicates staff at the Maryland State Department of Education to coordinate with school behavioral health services coordinators
- Requires **training of school personnel** in all schools to recognize student behavioral health concerns
- Requires **development of protocols** to support students in need of behavioral health services
- Requires each local school system to develop and implement systematic **screening to identify students with behavioral health needs**
- Establishes a process to develop and fund **community-partnered school behavioral health programs** across the state

# Children, Youth and Families

## ***Access to Data (SB 520 | HB 1243)***

- Expands **annual data collection** to provide additional substance use disorder information, data on access to telehealth services, and a demographic breakdown to allow for an analysis of racial and ethnic disparities in service delivery

## ***Voluntary Placement Agreements***

- Budget language calling for a cross-agency, multi-stakeholder **review of the VPA process**
- **Parent retains legal custody of their child** while local department of social services is given responsibility to determine most appropriate out-of-home placement based on treatment recommendations

# Older Adults

## ***Cognitive Health Plan for Older Marylanders***

- Budget language requesting the Maryland Department of Aging and the Maryland Department of Health to submit a report – in alignment with a federally required State Plan on Aging – detailing the anticipated **cognitive and behavioral health needs of Maryland's aging population** and a plan to meet those needs

## ***Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia***

- Several bills requiring increased **training and staffing requirements** for programs serving individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia
- SB 313 requires the state to include information about dementia in public health **outreach and education materials**

# Behavioral Health and Justice Systems

## ***Behavioral Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence***

- Charged with implementing system changes to divert individuals with serious mental health and substance use disorders away from the criminal justice system
- Amended to include language requiring the Center to carry out its duties with an eye toward equity and a focus on reducing racial disparities in the criminalization of individuals with behavioral health disorders

## ***Juvenile Justice (SB 853 | HB 1187)***

- Extends the work of the Juvenile Justice Reform Council for another year

# For More Information

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