



**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 3rd 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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