



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Secretary

Behavioral Health Administration

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Deputy Secretary Behavioral Health
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December 21, 2021

Dear Behavioral Health Partners:

We will soon close out 2021 and ring in the year 2022! I would like to take this time to thank you and congratulate you on weathering the continued storm that is the Covid pandemic and meeting the many other challenges that confronted us throughout this past year. Without reservation, each of you remained steadfast to meeting the needs of our behavioral health community, and for that I remain grateful. I would also like to extend this public appreciation to the BHA team. Thank you.

I would like to take this time to highlight some of the accomplishments of the Behavioral Health Administration, most of which would not be possible without the partnership that we have with our providers and stakeholders.

State Opioid Response (SOR) - BHA secured a second \$50 million State Opioid Response grant (SOR II) from SAMHSA that developed new services, expanded and/or sustained SOR I grant services. SOR II grant is supporting many activities, including:

- Crisis beds
- 211 Maryland Crisis Hotline
- Medication-assisted treatment in detention centers
- SBIRT projects: Statewide Training, Maryland Primary Care Program, Fidelity & Quality Assurance Consultative Services and Emergency Department MAT Pilot
- Peer Certification Expansion Fund
- Young Adult Recovery Housing
- Native American and Tribal Communities
- Workforce Development: HBCU Behavioral Health Student Expansion Program

Maryland's 1915c Waiver for Individuals with Brain Injury was renewed for five years. The Brain Injury Waiver renewal will continue to provide residential habilitation, day habilitation, supported employment, individuals support services, medical day care, and case management to Marylanders with Brain Injury who meet technical, medical, and financial eligibility. The program was created in 2003 and completed a successful renewal for five years in 2021.

Behavioral Health Equity Work – the Behavioral Health Equity Workgroup was featured in the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD)'s monthly email: [State Spotlight: Maryland's Behavioral Health Equity Workgroup Poised to Make Meaningful Change.](#)

We developed a **toolkit, "Keeping Our Kids Safe," to address youth suicides**. This toolkit has been created primarily for professionals and adults who work with youth and contains resource sheets around risk factors, protective factors, lethal means safety, and other vital topics. Download the toolkit [here](#).

In collaboration with the Department of Labor and the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, BHA facilitated **Certified Peer Recovery Specialist training for incarcerated citizens** behind the fence at both Maryland Correctional Institute for Women and Dorsey Run Correctional Facility.

Operation Roll Call: Developed by BHA's Maryland's Commitment to Veterans (MCV) program; veterans and their families can opt in to receive a check-in call once or twice a week from a resource coordinator; after three failed attempts an emergency contact is called. **This project saw a 92% increase in utilization in 2021.**

Operation Courage: a support services program designed to address the long-term mental health care needs of frontline workers and first responders. A messaging campaign reached the entire state of Maryland, from the Eastern Shore to Garrett County. The radio campaign yielded 27,910,400 impressions. The digital component of the campaign was equally impressive, yielding 17,512,787 impressions and 241,313 clicks to the Operation Courage website.

During 2021 the [BHA/MedChi Behavioral Health Webinar Series: Helping the Helpers and Those They Serve](#) held **21 webinars for behavioral health and medical health care workers of all disciplines**, designed to enhance both health care worker self-care and resultantly the care they provide, as health care workers combat numerous stressors including the COVID-19 pandemic, social justice issues, and other stressors that can potentially impact delivered care. The next webinar on January 13 is Cultivating Compassion and Resilience for Yourself and Those in Your Care. [Register here](#).

MD Mind Health: A text program through Maryland 211 wherein by texting "**mdmindhealth**" to **898211**, individuals can opt-in to receive caring messages to promote social connectedness and mental wellness. This service expanded to reach Spanish speakers through MDSalud. A new service for adolescents and young adults launched December 10. By texting "MDYoungMinds" to 898-211, individuals will receive caring and positive messages geared to behavioral health issues among adolescents and young adults.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) Work: BHA's participation in the NGA workgroup was featured in the [State Actions to Prevent and Mitigate Adverse Childhood Experiences](#) report, which highlights the more recent work to prevent and mitigate adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and to implement trauma-informed practices at the state level. Maryland along with eight other states — Alaska, California, Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, Wyoming — were highlighted.

Telehealth Equipment Program Pilot implemented which addresses the lack of telehealth access created by the digital divide by providing behavioral health clients smartphones, tablets, and high-speed internet access for telehealth videoconferencing.

BHA developed **Specialized Residential Rehabilitation Programs** to provide 24/7 staff support for individuals with complex needs transitioning from state hospitals to residential rehabilitation programs.

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We **expanded** Maryland Coalition of Families scope so that **family peer support** could be provided to loved ones of adults with mental disorders. Family peer support had previously been limited to supporting loved ones of children with serious emotional disorders.

In addition, we expanded **specialized behavioral health assisted living programs** to new jurisdictions.

We began planning for the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder **Bed Registry and Referral Program** by meeting with key stakeholder groups, including State Agency partners, hospitals, local behavioral health authorities, community behavioral health partners, and advocacy organizations. With their partnership we expect to initiate a pilot program in the new year.

MDH has identified a need to expand the availability of **Residential Treatment Center** capacity that meets the current and evolving needs of adolescents with complex support needs. We have established a workgroup with MDH, DHS and DJS to address capacity needs, develop a rate methodology that matches support needs to reimbursement, and provide additional oversight and technical support to ensure quality in these complex services. MDH has developed a five-year grant initiative, the Adolescent Hospital Overstay Grant Program, to address the number of adolescents in hospitals that are difficult to place in residential treatment centers. MDH has identified two providers that will be expanding the services for these higher acuity adolescents. Initial placements have begun with additional capacity being phased in over the spring and summer of 2022.

Crisis Response System - Maryland Crisis Response System Workgroup, a multi-disciplinary membership of external and internal stakeholders continued to work toward a comprehensive integrated crisis response system. A framework for the crisis system was developed. BHA is expanding the crisis service system in three areas: **The development of an Urgent Care Center, the expansion of Peers in Urgent Care Centers and the launch of the Care Traffic Control Software Platform aligned with the Greater Baltimore Regional Integrated Crisis System pilot.** These local and regional approaches will enhance existing services and better coordinate care across the continuum.

Additionally, BHA and Maryland Medicaid Administration will develop, prepare for, and implement qualifying community-based mobile crisis intervention services under the Medicaid program. Maryland will integrate community-based mobile crisis intervention services into the Medicaid programs which is a critical component of establishing a sustainable and public health-focused crisis system.

Involuntary Civil Commitment - In February 2021, BHA was charged with reviewing current civil commitment laws, and examining the definition of dangerousness and grave disability. The purpose of the meetings was to review national best practices on civil commitment and develop recommendations to provide greater clarity to Maryland's civil commitment definition.

These accomplishments are just an example of our joint efforts that have enabled us to remain responsive to our communities. It also illustrates that together, working collaboratively in this community partnership, we can continue to be effective in the years to come.

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We hope that you are able to enjoy this festive season with family and friends and can enjoy the blessings that the season may bring to you and yours.

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aliya Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "J".

Aliya Jones, M.D., MBA
Deputy Secretary Behavioral Health