



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

**Behavioral Health Administration**

Aliya Jones, M.D., MBA  
Deputy Secretary Behavioral Health  
55 Wade Ave., Voc. Rehab., SGHC  
Catonsville, MD 21228

March 10, 2022

Dear Behavioral Health Partners:

Daylight Saving Time is just a few days away and, as we enter mid-March, we begin to anticipate spring just around the corner. The longer daylight hours brighten our days as well as our spirits.

With COVID-19 health metrics continuing to decline in Maryland, there is great cause for resuming many of our pre-pandemic activities. That said, I encourage you to continue to get vaccinated or boosted and follow CDC guidelines to keep yourselves, your families, communities, and those served healthy and well.

The March Madness kickoff on the 13th reminds us of the 2022 legalization of all sports betting. March is recognized as **Problem Gambling Awareness Month**. I encourage you to be proactive in recognizing the signs of problem gambling in your patients and throughout your community and to make available the needed support to help individuals get the treatment needed. There was a 44 percent increase in those receiving gambling-related treatment services in our system from 2018 to 2021. Please, stay vigilant as you provide care and support to those who use your services. This year's theme is **Know your Limit, Stay Within It**.

Some useful and shareable information can be found at the National Council on Problem Gambling's webpage: [responsibleplay.org](https://responsibleplay.org). Bringing awareness to the issues of problem gambling can help individuals seek help to improve their mental health, as well as their family relationships and financial situation. Please share the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling helpline, 1-800-GAMBLER. The helpline is open 24/7, is free, and provides confidential services to anyone who may be struggling due to problems associated with gambling. You may also want to revisit their website at [helpmygamblingproblem.org](https://helpmygamblingproblem.org).

With the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, I want to take this time to assure our affected communities that we stand with them in solidarity. The war in Ukraine is extremely disturbing and can bring great sadness to our Maryland communities. Like many tragedies and disasters, it is traumatizing to all of us, and can also cause stress to our children. I would like to encourage each of us to be supportive and responsive to this latest challenge to our mental health. Please reshare the mental health supports found on our webpage [Mental Health Supports During the](#)

Monthly BH Partner Letter  
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[COVID-19 Crisis](#) and share the attached information from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's "Disaster Distress Helpline" to assist our communities with access to crisis counseling.

Best regards,

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

cc: Attachment