



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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

### **Behavioral Health Administration**

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September 9, 2021

Dear BH Partners:

As we begin to embrace the fall season that will soon be upon us and the flu season along with it, we are reminded of the importance of getting vaccinated. With the delta variant of COVID-19 spreading more easily and continued elevated COVID-19 community infection rates, it is important to get vaccinated for both COVID-19 and the flu.

With schools going back to in-person classes, we encourage providers to assist their younger patients (those 12yo and up) to get vaccinated. This can provide better protection for everyone in the household, particularly older and chronically ill individuals. Vaccinating children protects them if an adult in the household contracts COVID-19 and can also help prevent the spread of COVID-19 throughout their school. The Food and Drug Administration has granted full approval for the Pfizer vaccine for individuals ages 16 and older, and the emergency use authorization for the Pfizer vaccine also remains in effect for individuals ages 12-15. All Marylanders age 12 and older are eligible for vaccination.

Governor Larry Hogan announced today that the State of Maryland is immediately authorizing COVID-19 booster shots for all Marylanders 65 and older who are living in congregate care settings, including nursing homes, assisted living facilities, residential drug treatment centers, and developmentally disabled group homes.

- The following facilities or their COVID-19 vaccination clinical partner, if the facility is incapable to administer COVID-19 vaccines, shall offer the opportunity to each resident to receive an additional dose of a COVID-19 vaccine; or the first or single shot of a COVID-19 vaccine if the resident has not received a COVID-19 vaccine previously.
- “Residential Drug Treatment Centers” licensed under COMAR 10.63.03.11, COMAR 10.63.03.12, COMAR 10.63.03.13 and COMAR 10.63.03.14.

As a result of the challenges that COVID-19 continues to pose for public health, on August 25th the bi-weekly webinars by Maryland’s Primary Care Program resumed. These webinars are for all healthcare providers to review current guidance, provide additional information which may

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assist them in maintaining the health and safety of their patients and, of course, answer any additional questions.

BHA, in partnership with the University of Maryland, is sponsoring a training for Opioid Treatment Programs and residential providers on September 22. Please see the attached flyer for more information and encourage your staff to participate.

With the recent events associated with our withdrawal from Afghanistan, U.S. military personnel, veterans, and their families may be experiencing mixed emotions, ranging from frustration to anger to sadness about the U.S. military withdrawal and their sacrifices in that war. It is important that, considering these events, providers make screenings for military status a top priority and, for the service members and veterans they serve, plan for ongoing follow-up, and provide additional supports, as needed. [Maryland's Commitment to Veterans](#) is collaborating with various organizations to host a virtual panel discussion entitled "Afghanistan: Making Sense of Service" on September 10th from 1pm to 2:30pm. There will be resources available to help with healthy processing, recovery, and normalization for those seeking help, education on moral injury, as well as panel discussions. Please see the attached flyer for details on how to join the event. Additionally, [Military Child Education Coalition has developed a resource document](#) that may be helpful during these unsettling times.

September honors and celebrates National Recovery Month, National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, and recognizes September 10th as World Suicide Awareness Day. It is a time that we share a united message that treatment works, everyone can recover, and suicide can be prevented. With educational awareness on behavioral health issues and learning the warning signs, we can be better informed to help individuals get the treatment they need and save lives. Sharing resources and providing the message of hope in recovery is being emphasized and is encouraged this month. Please revisit our website for valuable information on [when help is needed](#) and [resources for support](#).

Finally, please find attached this month's Monthly Update which will provide you with a brief status overview on many initiatives and projects we are engaged in together with our local and state partners.

As always, I am thankful for your support and continued partnership, which has allowed us to achieve much success in these initiatives and remain responsive in meeting community needs.

Sincerely,



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

Enclosure