

2017 POLICY PRIORITIES

*Advancing Behavioral
Health and Wellness*



Behavioral Health System
Baltimore



- **IN 2017**, Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) will dedicate energy and resources to advancing the following policy recommendations.

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

BHSB will promote evidence-based policies, programs and practices that strengthen and expand prevention and early interventions to reduce risk, increase community resilience and improve behavioral health and wellness.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase community resources for prevention and wellness interventions, focusing on reaching people in community settings, such as schools, workplaces and recreation centers.
- Enhance and increase opportunities for community input into alcohol outlet locations and practices to create healthier communities.
- Increase the availability of screenings for behavioral health and strengthen the implementation of early intervention services in community settings.

TREATMENT AND RECOVERY SERVICES

BHSB will advance policies, programs and practices that promote access to comprehensive, integrated community treatment and a full array of support services for people with mental health and substance use disorders.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a comprehensive, integrated crisis services system that supports 24/7, on-demand access to immediate and ongoing care.
- Promote a range of public health interventions, including the acceptance and expansion of harm reduction and housing first strategies.
- Ensure peer support services are integrated into the behavioral health continuum and identify sustainable funding sources, such as Medicaid, to expand and sustain peer support services.
- Expand access to all types of medication-assisted treatment for people with substance use disorders.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

BHSB will identify and promote criminal justice system reforms that redirect spending for incarceration toward the behavioral health system and support public health interventions to improve access to treatment and rehabilitation services.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promote de-escalation and diversion strategies, including alternative police responses to identify people who would be better served in the behavioral health system than the criminal justice system.
- Provide accessible mental health and substance use disorder services that are strengths-based and recovery-oriented for people who are incarcerated in adult or juvenile correctional facilities.
- Increase access to re-entry supports for people exiting jail or prison and reduce barriers to accessing health care, employment, education and housing for people with criminal backgrounds.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE

BHSB will advocate for policies and reforms that promote parity and strengthen the behavioral health system infrastructure and workforce.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure adequate reimbursement rates for community-based behavioral health providers to ensure there is sufficient funding to meet programmatic needs.
- Strengthen the development and financing of a behavioral health workforce that is trained in trauma-informed care, culturally and linguistically competent and responsive to the needs of Baltimore City residents.
- Support data sharing across systems to improve services at the individual level and identify service gaps and align funding and resources to address Baltimore City residents' needs.

For more information, contact Adrienne Breidenstine

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Baltimore

ABOUT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM BALTIMORE

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization established by Baltimore City to perform the governmental function of managing Baltimore City's behavioral health system—the system of care that addresses emotional health and well-being and provides services for individuals with substance use and mental health disorders. As such, BHSB serves as the local behavioral health authority for Baltimore City and works to improve access to a full range of quality behavioral health services and advocate for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery to help build healthier individuals, stronger families and safer communities in Baltimore City.

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