

2019 POLICY PRIORITIES

Advancing Behavioral Health and Wellness

Behavioral Health System Baltimore advocates for policies, practices, and programs that support positive emotional health and well-being for individuals, families, and communities. Our policy priorities include:

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Policy Recommendations

- Advance policies and system reforms that address health disparities, racism, and promote health equity for individuals, families, and communities
- Support efforts to reform the state's alcohol laws to reflect public health and public safety concerns and create healthier communities.

TREATMENT AND RECOVERY SERVICES

Policy Recommendations

- Advance the development of a comprehensive integrated crisis response system to ensure 24/7 immediate access to a full continuum of behavioral health crisis services
- Increase access to medication-assisted treatment for people with substance use disorders.
- Ensure equitable access to school based behavioral health services through the adoption and full funding of the recommendations of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (i.e. the Kirwan Commission).
- Promote a broad range of public health interventions, including the acceptance and expansion of harm reduction and housing first strategies.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Policy Recommendations

- Invest in programs that divert persons in need of behavioral health services from the criminal justice system into community-based treatment and supports. Key diversion activities include:
 - Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) Program
 - Behavioral Health Crisis Response Teams (CRTs) that include a police officer and behavioral health clinician
- 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 jails/prisons and reduce barriers to accessing health care, employment, education, and housing for people with criminal backgrounds.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE

Policy Recommendations

- Ensure reimbursement rate increases for community-based behavioral health providers established through the HOPE Act (HB1329) are included in the State's FY2020 budget
- Enhance Maryland Medicaid to provide reimbursement for peer support services, crisis services and target case management for persons with mental illness and substance use disorders.
- Build upon the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) model to support system planning and management and continue progress toward integration of behavioral health services in a more accountable system of care.