COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

DEFINITIONS

Behavioral Health Crisis: Any event or situation associated with real or potential disruption of stability and safety as a result of behavioral health challenges or conditions.

Behavioral Health Crisis System: An organized set of structures, processes and services that are in place to meet all the urgent and emergent behavioral health crisis needs of a community, as soon as possible and for as long as necessary.¹

Community: A specific group of people, often living in a defined geographic area, who share common culture, values, norms or circumstances, and who are arranged in a social structure according to relationships developed over time.² Defining communities by zip code, for example, can identify marginalized groups for whom social determinants of health result in disparities in health equity.³

Community Engagement: Process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people, who comprise a community, to address issues affecting the well-being of those people.⁴

GBRICS community engagement will center on individuals and families, while also working with and through ‘channels’ for community-wide engagement and culture change.

Engagement: Individuals, families, their representatives, and professionals working in active partnership at various levels—direct services, organizational design and governance, and policy making—to shape, improve, and sustain GBRICS.⁵

Greater Baltimore Regional Integrated Crisis System (GBRICS): A five-year $45 million initiative to expand and strengthen the behavioral health crisis system across Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Howard County, and Carroll County.

Health Equity: The state in which everyone has the opportunity to attain full health potential, and no one is disadvantaged from that due to social position or other socially-defined circumstances.⁶
BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. GBRICS will be more effective and more trusted if:
   - Power to design and implement GBRICS is shared with the community, including people with lived experience and their family members, to reflect their unique expertise
   - It is built to be a system of care that is meaningful to the people who use it

2. GBRICS community engagement will be:
   - Grounded in an evidence-based framework for working in active partnership with community
   - Informed by data and lessons from the community engagement efforts of other groups

PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. We will build true community partnerships for GBRICS, involving:
   - Mutual learning, deliberate attention, active listening, and respectful collaboration
   - Being guided by trusted leaders who know their community
   - A variety of culturally and geographically responsive strategies
   - Building trust and relationships, with authenticity and transparency about what we are doing and learning, including what is and is not possible and why
   - Long term commitment and follow through with communities, in and beyond the first five years

2. We will respect communities’ diverse characteristics yet honor the spirit of our shared humanity by:
   - Recognizing the historical harms and breaches of trust that have occurred throughout the region and using an equity and anti-racist lens in conducting community engagement
   - Acknowledging the power to act in one’s own interest is the right and responsibility of all people
   - Ensuring that people representing GBRICS in the community are trained in trauma-informed approaches, to be aware of our own biases and the value of emotional intelligence

3. We will engage communities in a dialogue about behavioral health crisis and seek to raise public awareness and reduce stigma associated with behavioral health

RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL LEARNING:


Roadmap to the Ideal Crisis System. Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry/National Council on Behavioral Health (March, 2021)

1 First two definition are from Roadmap to the Ideal Crisis System. Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry/National Council on Behavioral Health (March, 2021)
2 Based on definition from the CDC. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/terminology.htm
4 Based on definition from Principles of Community Engagement, First Edition. CDC/ATSDR Committee (1997)
5 Based on definition from Carman, et al, Patient and Family Engagement: A Framework Health Affairs, 32 (2013)
6 Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine