



# **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:**

## ***Outpatient Behavioral Health Clinic Open Access Pilot Project***

*For Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Howard County,  
and Carroll County*

**Release Date: June 28, 2023**

**Pre-Proposal Conference: July 7, 2023 at 2:30 p.m.**

**Proposal Due: July 28, 2023**

**Anticipated Award Notification: September 22, 2023**

**Anticipated Contract Start: January 2024**

### **Issued by:**

Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Inc.  
100 South Charles Street, Tower II, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

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# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

## ***Outpatient Behavioral Health Clinic Open Access Project***

### **I. Overview of the Project**

#### **A. OVERVIEW OF BHSB**

Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Inc. (BHSB) is a non-profit organization tasked by Baltimore City to manage the city's public behavioral health system. As such, BHSB serves as the local behavioral health authority for Baltimore City. In this role, BHSB envisions a city where people live and thrive in communities that promote and support behavioral health and wellness.

BHSB is committed to enhancing the behavioral health and wellness of individuals, families, and communities through:

- The promotion of behavioral health and wellness prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery;
- The creation and leadership of an integrated network of providers that promotes universal access to comprehensive, data-driven services; and
- Advocacy and leadership of behavioral health-related efforts to align resources, programs, and policy.

BHSB is committed to promoting behavioral health equity in Baltimore City by ensuring that the behavioral health provider network is culturally and linguistically responsive to the diverse populations served; reducing behavioral health care access barriers for populations known to experience discrimination and marginalization; and supporting communities directly to develop services that are responsive to their unique strengths and needs.

#### **B. OVERVIEW OF PROJECT**

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), BHSB is seeking 16 community-based outpatient behavioral health clinics in Baltimore City or Baltimore, Carroll, or Howard Counties to participate in an Open Access program to expand access to services for people in immediate need of care.

The Open Access pilot is part of a larger initiative to strengthen the services and infrastructure of behavioral health crisis services in Maryland. The Open Access model is essential to increase the system capacity to prevent behavioral health crises and address crisis situations within existing outpatient clinic settings by providing people with the means to immediately access services in these settings.

The Open Access program will provide technical assistance and training (provided by the Open Access program management consultant, CMAG & Associates), and seed funding to behavioral health clinics or practices that want to expand or begin to offer same day-open access accessibility (virtual or in person) for immediate-need behavioral health services, thus reducing delays in care and over-use of Emergency Departments (EDs).

The goals of the Open Access program are:

1. Resolve immediate behavioral health needs for adults and children, preventing further escalation and the need for more intensive services. The program will expand access to same-day services for immediate behavioral health needs offered virtually and in person.
2. Allow community-based behavioral health practices to see the benefits of Open Access. The data indicates that implementing Open Access results in: (1) better utilization of existing provider and staff capacity; (2) reduced average client wait time; (3) increased average intake of clients; and (4) increase in provider practice net income. By establishing and quantifying the value proposition, payers will notice that covering and providing sufficient reimbursement for Open Access for immediate-need services is a higher-value approach to care.
3. Position community-based behavioral health providers to be able to bill Medicaid and other payers for this enhanced access to services, to sustain their Open Access hours even after their participation in the pilot program. BHSB's review of Medicaid claims data shows that few providers bill for same-day appointments. The Open Access program will create an opportunity to understand why this funding stream is not fully utilized, and to advocate for changes to make Medicaid reimbursement more accessible to providers offering Open Access services.
4. Demonstrate the demand for Open Access services in the region and advocate for Open Access at more clinics.

## **C. SCOPE OF SERVICE**

### **Overview**

The Open Access Pilot Project will provide funding to outpatient behavioral health programs to support flexible scheduling for immediate-need clinical appointments for consumers not connected to care who present with an urgent behavioral health need. Scheduling will allow for a virtual or in-person appointment on a same day or next day basis. The array of services includes counseling, screening, de-escalation and stabilization support, assessment, prescribing if appropriate, and facilitating engagement in ongoing treatment.

### **Service Description**

The Open Access Pilot Project will provide technical assistance, training, and seed funding to behavioral health clinics or practices that want to expand or begin to offer same day open access accessibility (virtual or in person) for immediate-need behavioral health services, thus reducing delays in care and over-use of Emergency Departments (EDs).

Open Access appointments will be available to the general public. Open Access clinics are responsible for their own marketing and can use seed money to support marketing efforts. In addition, once Open Access appointments are available, the days and hours will be listed on the Call 988 website, [www.988helpline.org](http://www.988helpline.org).

The 988 Regional Helpline will refer consumers to the Open Access appointments through a secure on-line portal. The clinic must provide accurate and timely updates of any changes in the hours or availability of open access appointments to the 988 Call Center.

### Deliverables

Participating clinics will:

- Identify and submit in writing to the Open Access program management consultant and BHSB the names and roles of members of a project team including executive leadership, clinical leadership, and operations leadership (particularly regarding phone system/front office staff) with the authority to institute changes to support an open access model at the clinic location. The implementation team should be established within the first 30 days of the award.
- Participate in an assessment process with the Open Access program management consultant within 60 days of award and develop a work plan within 90 days of award. The workplan will include clinic infrastructure changes, operating procedures (including phone system and front office procedures), and cost estimates associated with offering Open Access within 6 months of the award.
- Work with the Open Access program management consultant to schedule staff training to build necessary skills and competencies (including change management) within 3 months of the award with the expectation to implement and complete staff training within 6 months of the award.
- Work with the Open Access program management consultant to identify and report in writing to BHSB anticipated current and future workforce needs, anticipated challenges for recruitment and recruitment strategies. The workforce needs should be reported in the organizational assessment and workplan within 6 months of the award and in the final sustainability report.

- Work with the Open Access program management consultant to identify the optimal number of days and/or hours per week to offer open access appointments to meet consumer demand at the clinic location. Clinics will report this information and the justification for the days/hours offered to BHSB. The clinic will offer Open Access appointments within 6 months of the award according to the day and hours identified. If there are adjustments made in the days and hours of Open Access, this will be reported to BHSB.
- Collect the following data in a template provided by the Open Access program management consultant. Clinics will provide baseline data to the consultant at the time of the consultant's initial assessment and monthly thereafter. The consultant will provide any technical assistance needed to collect this data. The consultant will provide this data to BHSB and the evaluation team. Data to be collected includes:
  - Number of same day appointments offered;
  - average client wait time to first appointment;
  - average client wait time to second appointment;
  - average client wait time to first prescriber visit;
  - total number and average number of clients served through open access per week;
  - total provider hours devoted to open access per week;
  - total billable encounters served through open access per week; and per month;
  - number of clients who completed the appointments provided in their initial authorization;
  - number of clients with insurance barriers; and
  - consumer satisfaction survey (questions provided by the consultant - can be added to your standard consumer satisfaction process).
- Complete the sustainability plan template provided by the Open Access program management consultant (including setting goals such as number of Open Access appointments available, number of Open Access appointments completed, number of call center referrals completed, and ongoing staffing models) for continuing the open access model at the end of the program year. Clinics are required to report to BHSB progress made on the sustainability plan goals at 6 months of award, at the end of the program year, and at 18 months (after the award has ended).
- Provide at least 30 days notification of any changes in the days and/or hours of open access appointments to the 988 Regional Helpline prior to making changes.
- Agree for BHSB to describe the program progress in funding reports or other materials.
- Agree to provide Open Access services for people with all insurance types that the clinic currently accepts (including uninsured consumers covered by

the Public Behavioral Health System and undocumented consumers if the clinic currently serves these consumers).

- Send at least one representative from the project team to quarterly learning community meetings with other Open Access program participants to share implementation strategies.

#### **D. FOCUS POPULATION**

This program will specifically work with outpatient providers that operate in the public behavioral health system in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll County, or Howard County. This region has a combined population of 1.94 million residents, 30% of the state's population. The region includes urban, suburban and rural areas, and is racially and economically diverse.

Clinics participating in the Open Access program will need to provide open access services for people with all insurance types that the clinic currently accepts, including uninsured consumers covered by the Public Behavioral Health System and undocumented consumers if the clinic currently serves these consumers. It is expected that applicants will identify what insurances their clinics currently accept at time of application submission, and how they are currently reimbursed for undocumented individuals if that is population of people their clinic serves. Preference will be given for clinics that accept a wide range of insurers and for those that work with uninsured or undocumented individuals.

#### **E. STAFFING REQUIREMENTS**

Operational and clinical leadership must be available to work with the Open Access consultant to implement the program. The clinic must provide enough clinical staff to meet the demand for Open Access services as determined in conjunction with the consultant. Operations staff must be available to develop workflows to ensure that consumers are able to reach staff by phone to schedule same day/next day appointments. Sufficient administrative and IT support staff must also be made available to meet the needs of the project.

#### **F. FUNDING AVAILABILITY**

Funding is available in the amount of \$95,000 per clinic location to provide seed funding to support the change to an Open Access model. Clinics with more than one location may apply for multiple locations through this RFP in a single proposal. Each location could receive up to \$95,000, but it is not guaranteed that all locations will be able to participate, depending on the number of proposals received by BHSB.

This is a one-year project from January 1, 2024-December 31, 2024, during which funding can be used for:

- Personnel costs (clinical or administrative)
- Technology upgrades
- Transportation costs for clients who need transportation to appointments
- Marketing
- Other direct infrastructure costs to support the model
- Indirect costs up to 10% of salaries and fringe
- Rent/utilities/housekeeping up to 5% of salaries and fringe

## **G. Quality and Financial Review**

As part of BHSB's procurement process, internal Quality and Financial Reviews are completed to ensure there are no significant concerns with the organization(s) being recommended. Applicants should be sure to provide the most recent available versions of all requested documentation with their RFP application in order to ensure this is a smooth process.

## **H. CONTRACTING WITH BHSB**

Applicants selected through this process will enter into a contractual agreement with BHSB. Following a notification of selection, BHSB will issue a Letter of Award that provides details about the contract and the process for executing it. Selected organizations will be required to submit a new budget on BHSB's budget form, which will be reviewed for allowable costs under the grant.

Please note that applicants may be asked to change their budgets and/or details of their proposals even if the proposal were selected for funding. Applicants new to BHSB's contract process are encouraged to review relevant forms available on our website here: <https://www.bhsbaltimore.org/for-providers/forms-for-providers>.

### Contract Type and Payment

The contract and payment type that will result from this procurement is described below. Applicants are encouraged to consider whether their organization will be able to operate with this payment mechanism before applying for these funds.

- Cost Reimbursement – Advance Basis
  - Vendor receives payment in advance of incurring and reporting costs based on a pro-rated budget (e.g., 1/12<sup>th</sup> of budget each month).

BHSB issues payments once per month. Applicants should note that submitting required documents and reports late can result in delayed payment.

### Contract Monitoring and Technical Assistance



Selected applicants will be required to submit regular Program and Financial reports to BHSB using an electronic contract management system. BHSB will review these reports to monitor progress and contract compliance throughout the contract term.

**Program Reports** include an update on progress toward deliverables (e.g., number of people served, number of services delivered, etc.). Some program reports may also require organizations to attach a data report with additional information (e.g., consumer demographic information, process and/or outcomes data, etc.). BHSB monitors progress on these reports throughout the contract term and may offer technical assistance and support if deliverables are not being met.

**Financial Reports** are required to generate payment and involve submitting actual expenditures or invoices (depending on the contract type) and to monitor spending compared to the budget or award amount. If organizations are spending more or less than expected awarded throughout the contract term, BHSB may offer technical assistance and support to ensure the funding covers the contract term fully and may reduce funding if all funds are not likely to be expended by the end of the contract term.

Please note that submitting Program or Financial Reports late can result in delayed payment.

#### Verification of Services

BHSB audits all contracts to review whether the requirements set forth in the contract were completed as reported and that relevant federal, state, and local regulations were followed. This generally occurs after the conclusion of the contract period. Audits may be conducted remotely through a review of documents submitted to BHSB or on-site at the organization's location.

Applicants should be aware of best practices in documenting both programmatic and financial activities to aid in an efficient audit.

## II. Overview of RFP

### A. PURPOSE OF RFP

The purpose of this RFP is to select 16 community-based outpatient behavioral health clinics in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll County, or Howard County to participate in an Open Access pilot to expand access to services for people in immediate need of care.

### B. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must meet all the criteria outlined below to be considered eligible to be selected through this RFP process:

- Outpatient behavioral health clinics are eligible to apply (OMHC, OTP, FQHC, IOP/OP, private practices, etc.)
- Pilot location must be in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Howard County, OR Carroll County.
- Multiple locations within the same agency may receive funding.
- Applicants who participated in previous Open Access pilot cohorts may apply for funding for additional locations. Locations that have already received funding in previous Open Access cohorts are not eligible. To be eligible for additional locations, the previous Open Access location must:
  - Be currently providing Open Access appointments through the 988 Helpline at the location that participated in previous round of funding.
  - Have met all deliverables during the previous round of funding.

## PROPOSAL TIMEFRAME AND SPECIFICATIONS

### 1. Timeline

Release Date:	June 28, 2023
Pre-Proposal Conference:	July 7, 2023 at 2:30 p.m.
Proposal Due:	July 28, 2023
Anticipated Award Notification:	September 29, 2023
Anticipated Contract Start:	January 1, 2024

### 2. Pre-Proposal Conference

**Date:** July 7, 2023

**Time:** 2:30 am

**Location:** Microsoft Teams meeting - Join on your computer or mobile app

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

**Or call in (audio only):** +1 443-819-0973,,415226696#  
Phone Conference ID: 273 243 865 251

*Please join five minutes early to leave time to troubleshoot. If you have any problems accessing the meeting, please contact [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org).*

All questions related to this RFP should be submitted in advance to [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org) no later than the close of business on **July 11, 2023**. There may be time at the end of the meeting to ask additional questions, depending on the number of questions submitted.

Questions posed prior to or during the Pre-Proposal Conference and BHSB's responses will be posted on BHSB's website at <https://www.bhsbaltimore.org/for-providers/funding-opportunities/> by **July 18, 2023**.

The questions and answers will also be emailed to all individuals who submitted questions. If you would like to be emailed this document but do not have a question, please let the Procurement Lead know by emailing [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org).

*Questions received after this conference cannot be answered.*

### **3. Proposal Due Date, Time, and Location**

BHSB uses Survey Monkey Apply (SM Apply) to manage applications. All proposals must be submitted through this system. Applicants must register with the system ahead of time and submit narrative and supporting documents directly through the system. You are able to save your application and continuing working on it before submitting it. BHSB encourages all applicants to test this system well in advance of submitting proposals.

Applicants can access SM Apply here: <https://bhsb.smapply.org/>

All proposals must be received no later than **12:00 pm (noon) EST on July 28 2023**. All submitted proposals become the property of BHSB. If you are having technical troubles related to submitting your proposal, contact BHSB before the due date/time at [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org)

*1. Proposals submitted after the due date/time cannot be considered.*

### **4. Authorized Contact**

Applicants are advised that the authorized contact person for all matters concerning this RFP is Kelsi Loos whose contact information is listed below.

Kelsi Loos, Procurement Lead  
Email: [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org)

**5. Anticipated Service Term:** January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024.

### **C. AWARD OF CONTRACT**

The submission of a proposal does not, in any way, guarantee an award. BHSB is not responsible for any costs incurred related to the preparation of a proposal in response to this RFP. BHSB reserves the right to withdraw an award prior to execution of a contract with a selected applicant in BHSB's sole and absolute discretion.

Prior to selection, BHSB will conduct a risk assessment process that includes a review of financial and quality documentation.

BHSB will select the most qualified and responsive applicants through this RFP process. BHSB will enter into a contract with selected applicants following the notification of award. All selected applicants must comply with all terms and conditions applicable to contracts executed by BHSB.

### **D. RFP POSTPONEMENT/CANCELLATION**

BHSB reserves the right to postpone or cancel this RFP, in whole or in part.

### **E. APPLICANT APPEAL RIGHTS**

Applicants may file an appeal within five days of notification of non-selection. BHSB will review the appeal, examine any additional information provided by the protesting party, and respond to the protestor within ten working days of receipt of the appeal.

### **F. GOVERNING LAW AND VACCINATION MANDATES**

The applicant acknowledges and agrees that BHSB is a federal contractor for purposes of Executive Order 14042, Ensuring Adequate COVID Safety Protocols for Federal Contractors (the "Order"). The applicant and its subcontractors shall comply with the Order and all other applicable mandates, rules, laws, and regulations (collectively, the "Requirements"). Upon request by BHSB, selected applicants shall promptly provide evidence of compliance with the Requirements and shall promptly take such further actions as may be requested by BHSB with respect to the Requirements and/or the resulting Contract. The applicant and all of its subcontractors shall, for the duration of the resulting Contract, comply with all guidance for contractor and subcontractor workplace locations published by the

Safer Federal Workforce Task Force. These requirements shall be incorporated into all subcontracts of Sub-Vendor.

### III. Format and Content of Proposal

#### A. PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

Applicants must submit all required information using Survey Monkey Apply (SM Apply) accessible here: <https://bhsb.smapply.org/>.

*Late proposals will not be considered.*

It is the policy of BHSB to adhere to the rules and regulations in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). We do not anticipate that any proposal submitted in response to this RFP would include individually identifiable health information. However, if it does, please remember that protected health information (PHI) needs to be secured via encryption and should adhere to the Guide to IT Privacy and Security of Electronic Health Information:

<https://www.healthit.gov/topic/privacy-security-and-hipaa/health-it-privacy-and-security-resources-providers>.

#### B. PROPOSAL NARRATIVE OUTLINE AND RATING CRITERIA

The outline below shows the information being requested for applications and how points will be awarded during the review. Use SM Apply to submit your responses. See the instructions for more information about how to submit proposals.

##### 1. **Organizational Background and Capacity (15 points)**

- a. Provide an overview of your organization, including how long it has operated outpatient behavioral health services, how many locations it operates that are interested in implementing Open Access through this pilot, and the location of each clinic. Attach all relevant licenses and accreditation certificates.
- b. Describe your organization's ability to access third-party reimbursement, particularly Medicaid, for behavioral health services. Describe all payer types accepted by your organization and whether you serve uninsured and undocumented consumers.
- c. Describe whether your organization is owned and/or led by members of historically marginalized or oppressed groups, including racial and ethnic groups (i.e., African American/Black, Latinx), LGBTQIA communities, people with disabilities including behavioral health disorders, etc. BHSB awards additional points to help address systemic barriers that have led to inequity in access to funding.

##### B. **Principles and Values (10 points)**

- a. Describe how your organization's current practices ensure services are delivered in a culturally and linguistically competent manner and

responsive to the diverse communities served, including individuals for whom English is a second language.

- b. Describe your organization's experience and approach to change management. What methods are used to prepare and support staff, teams, and the organization to implement organizational change.

**C. Service Delivery (20 points)**

- a. Describe your organization's plan to provide all services as outlined in the Scope of Service section of this RFP. Include the age ranges of consumers served, the types of services that will be accessed through Open Access (e.g., mental health, substance use, integrated treatment for co-occurring disorders, family therapy, etc.)
- b. Describe how the proposed program would be responsive to the needs of Central Maryland as a whole, as well as the local neighborhood surrounding the program. Please include any attempts your clinic has made to implement Open Access in the past. What were lessons learned or what do you hope to learn?
- c. Describe your organization's ability to provide services to Spanish-speakers or other non-English speakers.
- d. Describe your organization's ability to provide services to prenatal and perinatal people.

**D. Staffing Plan (10 points)**

- a. Describe your proposed staffing pattern, including supervisors, and how it will fulfill the staffing requirements for this RFP. Include an organizational chart that shows how this program will fit into your organization's overall structure.
- b. Describe your organizational leadership's commitment to implementing Open Access, including providing both clinical and administrative leadership support to this project.

**E. Effectively Serving the Focus Population (5 points)**

- a. Describe your organization's history and expertise in serving people in crisis seeking ongoing behavioral health care.

**F. Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance (5 points)**

- a. Describe how your organization obtains and incorporates feedback from people served and other stakeholders into the development, implementation, operation, and improvement of program services.
- b. Describe your organization's capability to collect the data as outlined in this RFP. What is your experience collecting this type of data? Will you require technical assistance or additional software to be able to meet the requirements?

**G. Proposed Program Budget (5 points)**

- a. How much funding are you requesting for how many locations (e.g., \$95,000 for 2 locations, a total of \$190,000)? Include a separate budget for each location requested.

**H. Appendices**

- a. All relevant program licenses and accreditation certificates
- b. Organizational chart
- c. Most recent Administrative Services Organization (ASO) Audit and/or Accrediting Organization Site Visit Report/Audit, including any Program Improvement Plans and all Statements of Deficiencies
- d. Most recent Financial Audit and Management Letter, if applicable
- e. Most recent IRS 990 – Return of Organization Exempt from Income Taxes or most recent Tax Return
- f. Certificate of Good Standing from the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation