

2020 POLICY AGENDA

It is estimated that 13 – 20% of children living in the United States experience a mental health disorder in a given year, with around 10% experiencing significant impairment. Of the 10% of children aged 13-18 with a substance use disorder, about 70% have a co-occurring mental health disorder. More than 40% of Maryland children have been exposed to at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE), which impacts development and functioning and can have a lasting psychosocial impact. Despite the troubling statistics, children and youth with behavioral health needs are often faced with fewer treatment options than adults.

The Children's Behavioral Health Coalition will work in 2020 to ensure that children across Maryland have access to high quality behavioral health services and supports. Our 2020 legislative priorities are:

IMPROVE ACCESS TO AND COORDINATION OF QUALITY COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Maryland youth with commercial insurance still struggle to access timely in-network behavioral health care, and many Medicaid consumers are unable to take advantage of services that Maryland's nationally recognized public behavioral health system offers. The Behavioral Health Coalition's 2020 platform addresses these challenges through:

- >> Systemwide implementation of measurement-based care and value-based purchasing; strengthening accountability within local system management and the provider network; and ensuring integration of non-Medicaid services and systems such as housing, education, criminal justice and non-Medicaid health services in the Public Behavioral Health System.
- >> Parity legislation to include consumer payment protections for out of network care, parity compliance and data reporting.

The state must adopt the Behavioral Health Coalition's multi-pronged platform for modernizing Maryland's public behavioral health system and enact policies to ensure the appropriate enforcement of federal and state parity laws.

INCREASE SCHOOL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SUPPORTS TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES

The Kirwan Commission issued a report in January 2019 that included a comprehensive set of strategies for enhancing school-based behavioral health services, which have been shown to improve student health and educational outcomes.

In addressing the full range of Kirwan recommendations, the legislature must prioritize the adoption of, and ensure adequate funding for, those related to school behavioral health.

EXPAND ACCESS TO CRISIS RESPONSE SERVICES AND REDUCE EXTENDED STAYS AT EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

Existing behavioral health crisis response systems do not offer a comprehensive continuum of care, and options are even more limited for children and youth. This has led many parents to turn to hospital emergency departments when their child could be more appropriately served by a mobile crisis team or in a community program. This situation is creating backlogs of children with behavioral health needs in general hospitals awaiting a bed or placement in less restrictive community settings.

We must prioritize the development of a statewide comprehensive crisis response system that includes resources for children and youth.