

The Maryland Coalition on Mental Health and Aging

Working to improve the landscape of behavioral health for older adults and their care partners

According to the U.S. Census, an average of 10,000 Americans will turn 65 each day through 2030. In Maryland, the fastest growing segment of the population are individuals between the ages of 80 and 84. This cohort will grow by 136% from 2015 to 2040. As ages rise, so does the rate of late life behavioral health disorders. Mental illness, substance use disorders and neurocognitive disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease, impact an estimated 1 in 3 older adults and Maryland is ill equipped to meet this unprecedented spike in need. It is time we all learn about keeping our aging brains healthy.

The Maryland Coalition on Mental Health and Aging brings together individuals, advocates and professionals representing multiple organizations and state agencies to focus on multi-faceted concerns regarding a wide range of aging and behavioral health disorders including loneliness and caregiver stress.

A HISTORY OF SUCCESS

For more than twenty years, the Maryland Coalition on Mental Health and Aging has advanced education, facilitated network development and led public policy and advocacy initiatives resulting in a number of achievements to benefit older adults with behavioral health needs and their care partners:



Secured behavioral health education requirements for staff in Maryland's 227 nursing homes and 1,563 assisted living residences



Developed geriatric behavioral health:

- Curriculum used for professional training in Maryland's Departments of Health, Aging and Human Resources
- Education and resource publications, including a comprehensive guidebook, with a distribution of more than 100,000 across the state
- Website dedicated to aging and behavioral health education and resource information (visit "Vibrant Aging" www.mdaging.org)
- Tailored presentations delivered to more than 10,000 Marylanders through conferences, trainings, forums and events targeting the public and professionals



Improved linkages across the aging, disability and behavioral health systems through the establishment of regional Older Adult Behavioral Health Specialists



Improved the ability of local professionals to receive Geriatric behavioral health technical support, case consultation and resources to prevent unnecessary hospitalization and nursing home placement

MORE WORK NEEDED

Record breaking rates of late life behavioral health needs are emerging at the same time that professionals providing geriatric specific services are in decline. Hospitals, long term care facilities and communities are struggling to find and provide appropriate services to support the mental and emotional wellbeing of older adults (and their caregivers) who are suffering. Stigma surrounding both aging and behavioral health continues to be a primary barrier to assessment, treatment and recovery services for this unique population. The Mental Health and Aging Coalition will continue a robust agenda of advocacy and education to:

- Grow the network of geriatric trained behavioral health professionals to provide community based care
- Address reimbursement barriers to appropriate behavioral health care
- Develop geriatric behavioral health competencies for health and human service professionals
- Promote early identification, intervention and recovery from behavioral health disorders
- Resolve inappropriate placements and disruptive transfers of older adults with complex somatic and behavioral health problems who do not "fit" in traditional acute and long term care settings
- Ensure safety and quality of care to vulnerable older adults with mental illness, substance use disorders and neurocognitive problems

PARTNERSHIP PARTICIPANTS

The Maryland Coalition on Mental Health and Aging benefits from the clinical and technical expertise, institutional knowledge, grassroots support and collaborative nature of our participants. We use networking, advocacy and public awareness to tackle ever growing challenges to older adults and their care partners struggling with behavioral health needs. Our bi-monthly meetings welcome all individuals and organizations interested in the safety, health and quality of life for older Marylanders.

Over the years, we have appreciated partnerships and representation from:

Mental Health Association of Maryland
State and Local Departments of Human Resources, Health, Aging and Disability Services
Older Adult Behavioral Health PASRR Specialist Project
Maryland Association of Area Agencies on Aging
Alzheimer's Association Maryland Chapter
ProBono Counseling Project
Maryland State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program
AARP Maryland
Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network
On Our Own of Maryland
NAMI
University of Maryland Geriatrics and Gerontology Education and Research Program
Catholic Charities
Levindale Hebrew Geriatric Center and Hospital
NASW Maryland
SAFE: Stop Abuse of Elders
Health Care for the Homeless
PEERS: Seniors in Partnership
MedStar House Call Program
Johns Hopkins Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program
The Coordinating Center
Partners in Care
CHAI, Comprehensive Housing Assistance Inc.
Affiliated Sante Group