



# Mental Health and Aging Coalition

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The Maryland Mental Health and Aging Coalition (MHAC) is comprised of representatives from aging and behavioral health consumer, family and professional associations, and related government agencies, all working together to improve the quality and accessibility of mental health and substance use services for older Marylanders.

There are many behavioral health challenges specific to the state's older adult community. Services need to be affordable, accessible, and suited to meet the growing needs of this booming and diverse population. Care must be available regardless of whether individuals are aging in place at home or living in a residential facility. As people age or as their required level of care changes, individuals should have a range of available care options, with a focus on reducing transitions, supporting aging in place, and maintaining dignity and autonomy.

## 2023 Policy Priorities

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### **ENSURE COMPREHENSIVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE CARE FOR ALL OLDER ADULTS WITH COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEEDS**

#### **Interagency Coordination**

A 2021 state interagency report documented the rapidly expanding behavioral health needs of Maryland's older adult population, as well as the limited availability, scope and capacity of behavioral health and aging services across the state. The report also indicated a troubling lack of communication and coordination across agencies, and a need for a multi-year plan for cognitive and behavioral health needs of Maryland's older adult population. Maryland should take bold steps toward making Maryland an Age Friendly Community to promote livability and thriving communities for older adults with mental and cognitive health concerns. This would be a cross-sector, state-led strategic planning resource that can help transform the infrastructure and coordination of services for our aging population. **We will urge the new Governor to take bold steps toward making Maryland an Age Friendly Community, with focused attention to cognitive and behavioral health.**

### **PROTECT THE SAFETY, DIGNITY AND AUTONOMY OF OLDER ADULTS BY CENTERING THEIR CAPACITY FOR CHOICE, CARE, AND APPROPRIATE COMMUNITY SUPPORTS**

#### **Mental Health Advance Directives**

A mental health advance directive (MHAD) is a legal document that allows a person with a mental illness to state their wishes and preferences in advance of a mental health crisis. These documents provide for more patient-centered care and can help resolve crises more quickly, appropriately, and without coercion. Unfortunately, despite the benefits of MHADs and widespread support for their use, the rate of usage in Maryland remains frustratingly low. **MHAC will work this year on strategies to increase awareness and utilization of MHADs.**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/>

<sup>2</sup> 2022 Leg: SB994

## **Misuse of Antipsychotic Medication in Residential Care Settings**

The New York Times [published a report](#) last fall highlighting the overprescribing of antipsychotic medications in nursing homes across the country. Since then, several states have pursued strategies to reduce the misuse of these medications in residential care settings for older adults, including expanding informed consent requirements<sup>3</sup>, expanding reporting requirements<sup>4</sup>, and creating new safeguards<sup>5</sup> related to the prescribing of antipsychotic medications. **MHAC will pursue budget language to require more thorough reporting on usage from nursing homes, assisted living centers, and community providers, to bolster advocacy efforts in the years ahead.**

## **MODERNIZE MARYLAND’S PRE-ADMISSION SCREENING AND RESIDENT REVIEW (PASRR) PROGRAM TO REDUCE OVERRELIANCE ON INSTITUTIONAL PLACEMENT.**

### **PASRR Modernization**

Maryland’s federally mandated Pre-Admission Screening and Resident Review (PASRR) program screens individuals referred for placement in nursing facilities to ensure the appropriateness of those referrals. The program, intended to prevent unnecessary institutionalization of older adults, is woefully antiquated. At the request of MHAC, the legislature adopted budget language requiring a review of the Maryland PASRR program, including recommendations for improving program efficiency. **MHAC will review and work to advance the recommendations outlined in the report, which are likely to include implementation of a new data management system, promulgation of new regulations, increased funding for PASRR compliance staffing, and more.**

## **SUPPORT BROADER BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM REFORM EFFORTS**

In addition to the older adult-specific priorities outlined above, MHAC supports those advocacy priorities of the Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition that will positively impact the mental health and substance use needs of older Marylanders.

<sup>3</sup> [CA Informed consent legislation](#)

<sup>4</sup> [NJ Required reporting of antipsychotic prescribing](#)

<sup>5</sup> [OK Legislation](#)