



# Children's Behavioral Health Coalition

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## 2023 Youth Crisis and Suicide Prevention Platform

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Maryland can prevent lengthy, unnecessary hospital stays for youth and reduce youth suicide by expanding access to behavioral health services and supports that keep kids out of crisis, support mental wellbeing, and address substance use disorders.

### **RESTORE HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED HIGH-FIDELITY WRAPAROUND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH HIGH INTENSITY NEEDS**

Maryland has lost ground in building a system of care for children and youth while the need has escalated. Services are not available to many families, and especially for Black and brown youth. High-Fidelity Wraparound offers care coordination through a centralized care management entity and a variety of formal and informal supports that keep youth with intensive behavioral health needs in their homes and out of the hospital. To ensure that High-Fidelity Wraparound, the gold standard in care, is readily available to youth with high intensity needs, [Maryland must improve the performance of its existing community-based programs by passing legislation to increase access to and utilization of these effective, outcome driven models.](#)

### **INCREASE COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY-BASED TREATMENT BY EXPANDING MARYLAND'S NETWORK OF CERTIFIED COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINICS (CCBHCS)**

CCBHCS are federally designated, proven models that provide a comprehensive range of outpatient mental health and substance use treatment, care coordination with other providers and services, and connection to other systems and supports. States that have implemented CCBHCs broadly have seen increased access to care and reductions in emergency department and inpatient utilization. [CBHC urges the Maryland Department of Health to develop and advance a plan to expand the state's network of CCBHCs.](#)

### **ADOPT YOUTH-CENTERED PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS**

A recently released 2022 interagency report highlighted the important role of prevention and early intervention programs, using the integrated youth mental health model, and which are youth-led and co-designed. These programs are an innovative approach to eliminating stigma and other barriers that discourage youth from accessing behavioral health care and other resources that can divert youth from the juvenile justice system. [The report recommended that Maryland explore youth co-designed integrated behavioral health models as a way of reducing juvenile justice involvement, including a multi-layered group to start the planning and development process, which CBHC fully supports.](#)

### **ELIMINATE INEQUITABLE ACCESS TO CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS**

LGBTQ youth routinely experience harassment or assault in schools, report higher levels of depression and suicidal ideation than their peers, and routinely lack access to gender affirming care that is essential to their wellbeing. Many of these youth cite the role of gender affirming support systems, and access to gender

affirming care, as directly linked with improved mental health outcomes. [CBHC supports policies which reduce discrimination and increase access to care for LGBTQ youth, and again urge the General Assembly to pass the Trans Health Equity Act.](#)

### **ENSURE CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN THE MEDICAID PROGRAM HAVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE PRIMARY CARE SERVICES THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO MARYLANDERS WITH COMMERCIAL INSURANCE OR MEDICARE**

The Collaborative Care Model is a validated, evidence-based approach that efficiently integrates physical and behavioral health in primary care settings, improves outcomes, and saves money. Children and youth in Maryland continue to be unfairly denied access to this effective service delivery model despite clinically significant improvement in mental health symptoms among those served by Maryland's Medicaid pilot. [The General Assembly must pass legislation requiring Medicaid reimbursement for the Collaborative Care Model.](#)

## **Other Ongoing CBHC Efforts**

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In addition to the legislative priorities above, CBHC is working to inform a variety of ongoing efforts to ensure these initiatives and processes adequately address needs specific to youth and families.

### **ENSURE MARYLAND'S INVESTMENT IN CRISIS RESPONSE SERVICES MEETS THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES**

We are working to ensure the unique needs of children and youth are addressed in the state and regional efforts to expand Maryland's crisis response system, including: full access to all types of services, separate space capacity where appropriate and staff who are dually trained for adults and children, availability of home-based crisis services, established relationships with child serving agencies, separate network adequacy parameters, and the expansion of comprehensive Mobile Response & Stabilization Services (MRSS) in each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions.

### **IMPLEMENT SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH AND YOUTH EXECUTIVE FUNCTION PROGRAMMING**

A priority goal in implementing the school behavioral health enhancements from the Blueprint for Maryland's Future is advancing awareness and school adoption of [BrainFutures'](#) recommendation that all schools adopt classroom-based youth executive function (EF) skills training programs. These programs build necessary skills for learning of focused attention, inhibitory control, cognitive flexibility and working memory. EF interventions help address neurological deficits resulting from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), benefit all students in a classroom, and yield the largest gains in students with the greatest need.

### **EXPAND EARLY CHILDHOOD SUPPORTS**

CBHC supported passage of legislation in 2022 establishing the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Support Services Program. We are monitoring implementation of this critical program and supporting a variety of partnering organizations' advocacy efforts, including expansion of therapeutic nursery programs and reimbursement for evidence-based practices specific to this age group.