

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

about

Behavioral Health in Maryland



What is behavioral health?

Behavioral health disorders include the full range of mental illnesses and substance use disorders, including gambling and other addictions. These illnesses affect millions of children and adults in the United States every year.

What is a mental health disorder?

Mental illnesses are conditions that affect a person's thinking, feeling, mood or behavior, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia. Such conditions may be occasional or long-lasting (chronic) and affect someone's ability to relate to others and function each day.ⁱ

What is a substance use disorder?

Substance use disorders occur when the recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs (illicit or legal) causes clinically and functionally significant impairment, such as health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home.ⁱⁱ

How common are these illnesses?

More than 50% of individuals will be diagnosed with a mental illness at some point in their lifetime. 1 in 5 Americans, whether children or adult, will experience a mental illness in any given year. 1 in 25 Americans lives with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression.ⁱⁱⁱ

In 2014, approximately 21.5 million Americans aged 12 or older had a substance use disorder in the prior year. Of these individuals, 14.4 million had an alcohol use disorder and 4.5 million had an illicit drug use disorder. An estimated 2.6 million had both an alcohol use disorder and an illicit drug use disorder in the prior year.^{iv}

Is recovery possible?

Yes! Individual paths to recovery differ, and packages of treatments and supportive services for mental health and substance use disorders should be tailored to fit individual needs. For many people with behavioral health disorders the most effective approach often involves a combination of counseling and medication. Supportive services such as case or care management and peer support can also play an important role in promoting health and recovery.

Treatments and supportive services are provided in a variety of locations, including: specialty community behavioral health centers, substance use disorder rehabilitation programs, hospitals, support groups and peer-run organizations, community- and faith-based organizations, schools, jails and prisons, via telehealth or home-based services and primary care programs.

ⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.samhsa.gov/disorders/substance-use>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>

^{iv} <https://www.samhsa.gov/disorders>

Maryland Statistics – An Urgency to Respond

Maryland overdose deaths increased in 2017 for the seventh year in a row, reaching an all-time high of 2,282. Eighty-eight percent of these deaths were opioid-related, which increased by eight percent over the previous year. The rate of these deaths increased again over the first three months of 2018.

Maryland suicides have also increased over the years, with rates that are now 8.5 percent higher than they were in 1999.

Demand for mental health and substance use treatment services has steadily increased since 2008, with over 260,000 Maryland children and adults now using and depending on the state's public behavioral health system.

We have made progress

Maryland has taken important steps in recent years to address the unmet need. The HOPE Act of 2017 established a series of greatly-needed and long-overdue funding increases for community behavioral health treatment, and 2018 saw the enactment of legislation to expand crisis response and telehealth services, increase reporting of children's behavioral health data, and improve the delivery of behavioral health care in primary care settings.

Urgent challenges remain

Despite our recent progress, many Marylanders remain unable to access affordable and efficient behavioral health services when and where needed.

- Commercially-insured individuals seeking community behavioral health treatment are being forced to access care out-of-network at a rate nearly twice the national average
- Our community behavioral health providers lack the capacity and support to meet the growing demand
- The state's crisis response system exists as an underfunded patchwork of services from one jurisdiction to the next
- The system of care for children is inadequate
- Maryland's primary care system is not adequately structured to address the behavioral health needs of its patients

People in need of mental health and substance use disorder treatment struggle to access services regardless of where they turn.

Profiles from Maryland's Behavioral Health COMMUNITY

PROFILE #1

Consumer

"Behavioral health treatment has meant being able to hold down a full time job, having a happy marriage, and most of all it means being alive. Without treatment I would likely have died by suicide or alcoholism."

–Sara, Baltimore City

PROFILE #2

Parent of school-aged child

"Without behavioral health treatment for my family, I don't know where we'd be today."

–Linda, Somerset County

PROFILE #3

Community behavioral health provider

"Every day, I see how the services we provide allow people with behavioral health disorders to lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives. We must ensure behavioral health treatment is accessible to Marylanders across the state."

–Shannon, Frederick County