



**DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES**

Summary Report
Behavioral Health and Developmental
Disability System Improvement
Recommendations

Prepared for the BHSFG Commission

09/01/2023

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Overview	3
Background.....	3
Request for Information (RFI)	4
Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Service System Impact Form	4
Improvements to Behavioral Health and Developmental Services in Montana RFI	4
Categorization and Summary	6
Summary of Responses.....	7
Category: Workforce	7
Workforce Recommendations:.....	7
Category: Crisis Response.....	8
Crisis Response Recommendations:	8
Category: Service Capacity.....	9
Service Capacity Recommendations:	9
Category: Funding	10
Funding Recommendations:.....	10
Category: Other	11
Other Recommendations:.....	11

Overview

Background

Governor Greg Gianforte signed [House Bill 872](#) into law on May 22, 2023, providing a \$300 million, generational investment to reform and improve Montana's behavioral health and developmental disabilities service systems. Proposed by the governor in his Budget for Montana Families, this historic investment will expand intensive and community-based behavioral health care and developmental disabilities services across Montana.

Per HB 872, eligible uses of the \$300 million include:

- Medicaid and CHIP matching funds for payments made to behavioral health settings,
- Medicaid and CHIP matching funds for payments made to intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities,
- statewide community-based investments to stabilize behavioral health and developmental disabilities service providers and delivery, increase and strengthen the behavioral health and developmental disabilities workforce, increase service capacity to meet identified behavioral health and developmental disabilities services demands, and increase opportunities for Montanans to receive integrated physical and behavioral health care,
- acquisition of new or remodeling of existing infrastructure or property to support the establishment of behavioral health settings and intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities, and
- planning, operation, or other contract expenses associated with intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities; and planning, operation, or other contract expenses associated with behavioral health settings.

House Bill 872 established a *commission* that is charged with recommending to the governor on how the \$300 million investment is expended. In addition to the governor, the commission will submit reports of its recommendations to the Office of Budget and Program Planning and to the legislative fiscal analyst. The recommendation report must include one or more of the following:

- the amount of funding required for the initiatives and
- initiatives that address behavioral health,
- initiatives that assist those with developmental disabilities,
- outcome measures, as defined in 2-15-2221,
- output measures, as defined in 2-15-2221, or
- performance measures, as defined in 2-15-2221.

In preparation for and support of the commission, the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) asked the public for information to assist in developing near-term and long-term strategies to strengthen the continuum of behavioral health and developmental disability services to Montanans.

Request for Information (RFI)

DPHHS solicited information and feedback from stakeholders across Montana, including patients, family members, advocates, and/or providers. The Department and the BHSFG Commission will use the feedback to better understand challenges and develop potential initiatives. RFI responders provided information by completing the *Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Service System Impact Form*, by responding to *Improvements to Behavioral Health and Developmental Services in Montana Request for Information*, or by emailing the department directly.

Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Service System Impact Form

The Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Service System Impact Form was an easy-to-use online form which includes the following questions/information prompts:

1. "What do you see as the greatest opportunity to rapidly impact the behavioral health services in Montana?",
2. "What do you see as the top challenges with behavioral health service delivery in Montana?",
3. "What do you see as the greatest opportunity to rapidly impact the developmental disabilities service system in Montana?", and
4. "What do you see as top challenges with developmental disabilities service system in Montana today?"
5. 'Other comments?'

As of August 2, 2023, 95 individuals or organizations gave recommendations and/or comments via the form. To see all responses via a downloadable, searchable, sortable excel see the BHSFG [website](#).

Improvements to Behavioral Health and Developmental Services in Montana RFI

The Improvements to Behavioral Health and Developmental Services in Montana RFI is a formal request for information issued via the state's electronic procurement software. This RFI sought input on actions that could be taken in calendar years 2023, 2024, and 2025 that would provide stabilization, improvement, or increases in quality services available to individuals with a behavioral health and/or developmental disability diagnosis. The RFI included following questions/information prompts:

Please answer the following questions regarding behavioral healthcare services:

- 1) What are the top three challenges with outpatient (including intensive outpatient) behavioral health service delivery in Montana today?
- 2) What are the top three challenges with inpatient behavioral health service delivery in Montana today?
- 3) In addition to Medicaid provider rate increases currently being implemented by DPHHS, what do you see as the greatest opportunity to rapidly impact behavioral health services in Montana?
- 4) How can investments in the following play a role in improving behavioral health in Montana:
 - a) peer support specialists,
 - b) community health workers, and
 - c) direct care workers.
- 5) Provide any additional comments about what is needed to benefit behavioral health service delivery in Montana.

Please answer the following questions regarding services for individuals with developmental disabilities:

- 1) What are the top three challenges with developmental disabilities service delivery in Montana today?
- 2) In addition to the provider rate increases currently being implemented by DPHHS, what do you see as the greatest opportunities to rapidly impact developmental disabilities services in Montana?
- 3) How can investments in the following play a role in improving developmental disabilities services in Montana:
 - a) peer support specialists,
 - b) community health workers, and/or
 - c) direct care worker.
- 4) Provide any additional comments about what is needed to benefit developmental disabilities service delivery in Montana.

Please answer the following questions regarding workforce and consumer/client access:

- 1) What policies or process changes would encourage greater behavioral health and/or developmental disabilities service provider participation in Medicaid and CHIP?
- 2) What policies would best incentivize behavioral health and/or developmental disabilities service providers to train and practice in rural and other underserved areas?
- 3) What policies could improve and ensure equitable access to and quality of care in behavioral health and/or developmental disabilities services for minority populations and geographically underserved communities?

- 4) Provide any additional comments about what is needed to improve workforce and access in the behavioral health and/or developmental disabilities service system in Montana.

Seventeen individuals or organizations submitted responses to the RFI.

Categorization and Summary

Department staff reviewed the submissions and categorized the content into overarching themes including workforce, crisis response, service capacity, funding, and other. Section two of this report includes a summary of the responses according to the overarching themes.

To see all responses via a downloadable, searchable, sortable excel see the BHSFG [website](#).

Summary of Responses

Category: Workforce

Feedback included comments regarding the imbalance between skills necessary for exemplary job performance, job demands and commensurate pay; adequate job training and career development opportunities; and overall, an increase in benefits. In addition, commenters focused on recruitment and retention of competent staff, including efforts to encourage out of state providers to relocate to Montana to provide necessary services. Below are several potential focus areas for creating a more robust behavioral health and developmental disabilities service workforce.

"Our employees are thirsting for knowledge and innovation in care. Having a pool of resources specifically designated for ongoing and continued education of our direct care staff would improve care and incentivize and inspire our most valuable resource humans with a passion to serve."

Youth Dynamics

Workforce Recommendations:

- Support trained quality workforce by:
 - Increasing supported training opportunities,
 - Creating a pool of resources specifically designed for continuing education,
 - Making positive behavior reinforcement training available,
 - Funding stipends for trainees,
 - Offering incentives for trainers/supervisors, and
 - Expanding loan forgiveness and tuition assistance.
- Extend the workforce by:
 - Supporting reimbursement for community health workers,
 - Increasing telehealth access, and
 - Supporting the expansion of peer support and mentor programs.
- Authorize reimbursement levels that make direct care positions attractive and competitive.
- career pathways in more health care fields.

Category: Crisis Response

Feedback included the need for regional community-based Crisis Response Centers, reimbursement rates that allow facilities to function 24/7, additional beds to support more clients, collaboration with school districts, and Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs). A central point throughout the comments was that the current system is not working and a comprehensive approach to transitioning clients into and out of State run facilities is needed. Many responders also emphasized the need for crisis prevention services.

Crisis Response Recommendations:

- Establish a statewide crisis solution by
 - Supporting the establishment of more mobile crisis teams,
 - Investing in flexible crisis response delivery teams,
 - Expanding EMT/first responder training to support crisis intervention.
- Increase access to crisis receiving and stabilization services by
 - Funding startup grants to open or reopen services,
 - Implementing an efficient available bed locating solution, and
 - Establishing Regional Crisis Centers
- Partner with the community including:
 - K-12 school systems,
 - Local colleges and universities, and
 - Law enforcement.

Category: Service Capacity

Commenters recommended improving the continuum of care across services, including adopting a streamlined approach for patients transitioning from intensive behavioral health and developmental disabilities services to less intensive services and to consider the housing needs of these clients. There was also a focus on expanding access to care for vulnerable populations, telehealth options for clients, and early diagnosis options.

Service Capacity Recommendations:

- Expand statewide service alternatives by
 - Increasing statewide inpatient availability,
 - Expanding who can deliver inpatient care,
 - Ensuring the availability of prompt intensive outpatient services,
 - Increasing housing supports and community-based care,
 - Funding community health workers,
 - Supporting peer support and/or mentoring programs for adolescents, and
 - Supporting for flexible team-based care models.
- Create better access to services by
 - Increasing member friendly telehealth options,
 - Improving transportation availability,
 - Issuing provider grants for telehealth adoption, training, and technical assistance,
 - Increasing transitional care coordination,
 - Supporting care coordination training for healthcare professionals, and
 - Reducing or eliminating barriers to where people can access care.
- Increase integrated care settings by
 - Promoting primary and specialty care integration and Promoting integrated substance use disorder and behavioral health treatment integration.
- Improve partnerships by
 - Requiring greater continuity of care between state and local agencies, and
 - Increasing interstate partnerships.

Category: Funding

“The most recent provider rate increase have a considerable increase to Home Support Services (HHS), which will make the teams viable, but provider still lack start up costs.”

Behavioral Health Alliance of Montana (BHAM)

An overarching theme of funding related feedback is that increases in behavioral health and developmental disability funding allow for more preventative and early intervention efforts across the state. Commenters discussed the value and improvement of the current Medicaid rates and request the commission identify solutions that will ensure the Montana Medicaid program reimburses the cost of services into the future. Stable, dedicated resources to the State Hospital and other facilities to support staff and facility improvements are important to several responders. Other commenters focused on providing additional funding to the criminal justice system, community based mental health agencies, home visiting services, private crisis centers, and primary care facilities.

“A system wide evaluation of all payment sources versus ACTUAL costs (with inflation an on going consideration) is crucial.”

- Montana Primary Care Association

Funding Recommendations:

- Ensure provider sustainability by
 - Providing start-up grants
 - Increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates,
 - Adopting Medicaid payment models that continue to cover costs in the future, and
 - Implementing the CCBHC delivery and payment model.
- Create More Public/Private Partnerships
- Adopt alternative funding strategies including more flexible waivers.
- Address facility maintenance.

Category: Other

There were many responses that fit into an “other” category, including, comments regarding changes to the way clients interact with the criminal justice system and current challenges related to client and provider housing.

Other Recommendations:

- Increase funding for transportation.
- Partner with community social services.
- Increase funding for community housing supports.
- Increase training opportunities for the criminal justice system.
- Increase public awareness of services.
- Revamp current Care Coordination/Case Management/Care Management policies and rules to promote consistency, quality and align with best practices.
- Dedicate funds to review the necessity of and increase the efficiency of the prior authorization processes.
- Provide grants to help providers upgrade their billing processes and procedures. Especially relating to dually covered Medicare and Medicaid individuals.
- Invest in a provider involved full review and alignment of state rule and policies.