



Summary of BHA COVID-19 Survey Report

July 29, 2020

Purpose

The survey was conducted to learn more about client well-being and current access to behavioral health services and supports during the COVID-19 pandemic in Maryland. The primary focus of the survey was on the changes occurring in the treatment, recovery, and other behavioral health service system as a result of COVID-19.

Survey Administration Methods

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) partnered with the University of Maryland to administer an online, anonymous survey of Public Behavioral Health System (PBHS) stakeholders. The survey was conducted from May 26, 2020, through June 5, 2020. Two primary methods were used to invite PBHS stakeholders to participate in the survey: (1) many organizations were contacted that represent PBHS stakeholders, and they were asked to complete the survey, as well as to distribute the survey link to individuals within their organization; and (2) a provider alert was also disseminated through Optum Maryland. A total of 856 survey responses were received. Provider agencies gave their impressions on issues surrounding client access to services and well-being while in care.

Key findings

- Fewer new individuals are accessing behavioral health treatment services in Maryland.
- A majority of support or advocacy organizations indicated an increase in contacts from individuals and families seeking support from them.
- Telehealth is important to those served, both clinically and for safety reasons. Benefits include better attendance and participation, greater willingness to reach out the provider when help is needed, elimination of transportation barriers, and allows for frequent check-ins.
- The inability to use telehealth or unwillingness to use it was a barrier for some participants.
- Most participants indicated medications were being taken as prescribed.
- A significant percentage of clients were identified as experiencing anxiety, depression, and/or a sense of loneliness or social isolation.
- Lack of financial resources was a concern.

Next Steps

Based on survey results, BHA has taken steps to address problems identified. Projects include:

- MD Mind Health, a text messaging service that sends supportive messages to those who opt in
- Open for Business public awareness campaign to inform the public that treatment services are available
- Telehealth treatment locator available through BHA website
- Resource list of virtual self-help and other supports
- Resource guide for those experiencing grief and loss
- Training for providers re: telehealth best practices
- Exploring funding to support telehealth hardware and software

BHA is grateful to those who completed the survey. BHA would like to repeat the survey in late summer 2020 to continue to understand the impact of COVID-19 on those BHA serves.