

# Secure Mental Health & Addiction Treatment Capacity

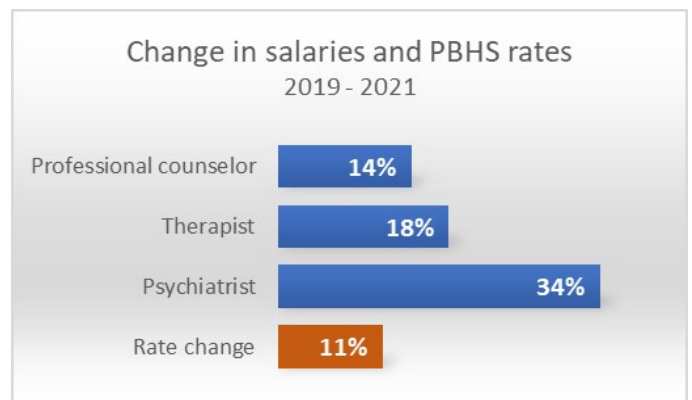


The stress and isolation of the pandemic has dramatically increased the demand for mental health and addiction treatment. Maryland's mental health and addiction treatment providers need additional funding to help meet the growing demand for services.

## A Workforce Crisis

As the country emerges from the pandemic's early phases, behavior health services face a workforce crisis as providers confront a record wave of resignations of staff across programs. At times, some staff have carried caseloads 2-3 times higher than normal, and many clinics have been forced to close intakes or face spiraling waitlists. CBH's annual workforce survey of our members identified a median turnover rate of 34% for frontline staff, as well as ongoing challenges recruiting both licensed clinicians and community health workers.

To retain and recruit staff, mental health and addiction treatment providers increased salaries at unprecedented rates nationwide. Federal data demonstrates that national salaries for key clinical staff far outpaced Maryland Department of Health (MDH) rates increases – more than 3 times faster in some cases. And if Maryland accelerates increases to the minimum wage, salaries for behavioral health staff will increase even more.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates: Maryland" (May 2021) and "State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates: Maryland" (May 2019).

## Difficult Choices

While Medicaid increased rates for mental health and addiction services by 11% between 2019 and 2021, these increases did not keep pace with skyrocketing labor costs. This has forced difficult tradeoffs and reduced treatment capacity statewide. Unlike many other sectors of health care, Maryland's mental health and addiction treatment providers received little pandemic relief to help preserve treatment capacity. According to CBH provider data:

### Adequate behavioral health reimbursement

Increase reimbursement rates for Maryland's mental health and addiction treatment providers to help preserve access to treatment in the face of rising need and an ongoing workforce crisis.

- In residential programs, the ratio of clients to staff increased by 29% from the beginning of 2019 to end of 2021.
- Between March 2020 and May 2022, the use of Medicaid mental health services by children declined by 31% overall, and specialty service use declined by 45%. Nationally, the use of mental health services by Medicaid-insured children declined by only 25%.
- New admissions to mental health programs declined 25%.

A sufficient rate increase for Maryland providers is crucial to stabilize them financially, allow them to compete for a qualified workforce, and meet the rapidly escalating demand for services.