

# The Mental Health Safety Net Coalition



Alliance of Community Service Providers

Brook Glen Behavioral Hospital

Clarion Psychiatric Center

Community Services Group

Conference of Allegheny Providers (CAP)

Fairmount Behavioral Health System

Family Training and Advocacy Center (FTAC)

Foundations Behavioral Health

Friends Hospital

Horsham Clinic

Keystone Center

Keystone National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)

Lancaster Behavioral Health Hospital

MAX Association

Meadows Psychiatric Center

Mental Health America of Southwestern PA

Mental Health Association of PA (MHA)

Mental Health Partnerships

Pennsylvania Association of County Administrators of Mental Health and Developmental Services (PACA MH/DS)

Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth & Family Services (PCCYFS)

Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumer Association (PMHCA)

Pennsylvania Psychiatric Leadership Council (PPLC)

Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA)

The PANO Group

The Roxbury Treatment Center

Treatment Advocacy Center

## Mental Health Safety Net Services Funding: A FY 2023/24 Budget Imperative

**Problem:** Community mental health services are in crisis. The signs are all around us, including increases in suicides, boarding in emergency departments, wait times for mental health services, and incarceration rates for those suffering from mental illnesses. The increased demand for mental health services is meeting the reality of years of inadequate funding. The counties can no longer compensate for the lack of state funds, and providers can no longer maintain programs in the face of mental health professional shortages and double digit increases in staff costs.

For Pennsylvanians with a mental illness, the impact of the funding shortfalls is already evident. The mental health system is all too often unable to deliver the right care, at the right time, and in the right setting.

The failure to adequately invest in community mental health services is resulting in higher overall costs in other systems like Medicaid, law enforcement, corrections, state-operated mental health hospitals, and community hospital emergency departments. The norm is now responding when people are in crisis and in the most expensive settings, whether it be an emergency department, inpatient hospitalization, or, even worse, jail.

**Solution:** There is no simple fix. The solution will require a sustained, multi-year effort by all stakeholders — the Commonwealth, counties, providers, and advocates — to rebuild our mental health system. If we do not act to change the status quo, the situation can and will get much worse. As a start, the Mental Health Safety Net Coalition urges the Governor and General Assembly to take the following actions:

1. **Release the \$100 million of already appropriated ARPA funds for adult mental health services.** It has been a year since these federal funds were appropriated and nine months since Commission recommendations were submitted. Pass HB 849.
2. **Increase county mental health base funding by \$50 million in FY 2023/24.** This 8% increase in base funding will not make up for a decade of level funding or the 25% increase in labor costs over the past year, but it is a start to a multi-year process that will help to stabilize critically-needed programs.
3. **Appropriate the \$100 million requested to enhance mental health services to school-aged children and adolescents in FY 2023/24.** To expedite the availability of services for children in need, these resources should be coordinated by counties to invest in existing programs like the Student Assistance Program and allocated by formula as opposed to discretionary grant programs.
4. **Pass legislation to appropriately fund the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.**
5. **Establish a Mental Health Commission to take a comprehensive look at the overall mental health system and the full continuum of child, adolescent, and adult mental health issues.** The goal should be to develop a strategic road map to help guide this multi-year effort to rebuild, enhance, and create a comprehensive mental health system in the Commonwealth for the twenty-first century.