

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Mental Health





Cover Art: top - photos from the 2023 Express Yourself Performance – Splash
bottom left: Metro Boston Access Center visit, bottom right: Commissioner Doyle
interviewed by Chronicle to promote the Behavioral Health Help Line

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2023



MISSION

DMH provides access to services and supports to meet the mental health needs of individuals of all ages with severe and persistent mental health conditions across the Commonwealth, enabling them to live, work and participate in their communities. The Department establishes standards to ensure effective and culturally competent care to promote recovery. The Department sets policy, promotes self-determination, protects human rights and supports mental health training and research. This critical mission is accomplished by working in partnership with other state agencies, individuals, families, providers and communities.

VISION

Mental health care is an essential part of health care. The Massachusetts Department of Mental Health (DMH), as the State Mental Health Authority, promotes mental health through early intervention, treatment, education, policy and regulation so that all residents of the Commonwealth may live full and productive lives.

What We Do

DMH is a person- and family-centered agency with the goal of involving people with lived experience and their families to support people recovering from mental illness by following their own individual paths. DMH provides consumers and families with services and supports for successful community living that includes social connections, physical and mental health, employment, education and above all, personal choice in the path to recovery.

DMH Leadership

Brooke Doyle, Commissioner

Beth Lucas, Deputy Commissioner, Mental Health Services

Kathy Sanders, MD, Deputy Commissioner, Clinical & Professional Services

Charlene Zuffante, Deputy Commissioner, Child and Adolescent Services

Stephen Barnard, Deputy Commissioner of & Budget

Lester Blumberg, General Counsel

Crystal Collier, Chief of Staff

Fiscal Year 2023 DMH Annual Report

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) served about 25,000 individuals in FY2023. Our primary goal has been to provide specialized treatment and services for youth and adults who have the most complex clinical needs - and have required more than standard outpatient treatment – to build resilience and strengthen recovery. Despite the challenges our clients and their families have faced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and in its immediate aftermath, DMH remained focused on its mission. In FY23, DMH was not only able to remain fully operational but was also able to expand its offerings to meet these changing needs. This innovation and growth served as the foundation for the year.

DMH's FY23 budget was about \$986 million. This funding allowed us to expand on programs initiated during the pandemic and further support DMH's active role in implementing the Baker-Polito Administration's ground-breaking behavioral health initiative, the Behavioral Health Roadmap.

Many of the DMH services outlined here underscore the same behavioral health values that are also the foundation of the Roadmap: Bringing behavioral health care to people wherever they need it; making that care easily accessible; providing individualized care in all communities – and particularly those communities that have been traditionally underserved.

In FY23, DMH procured funds for the Roadmap's 24/7 Behavioral Health Help Line, which launched in January 2023. The Help Line immediately began to serve as a single point of contact for Commonwealth residents in search of mental health and substance use disorder treatment and for routine, urgent, or crisis needs.

The Behavioral Health Help Line is available 24/7 to all residents of the Commonwealth, to provide live support, clinical assessment, and connection to the right mental health and addiction treatment in real time. This Help Line can connect people with a provider for assessment and appointment prior to a mental health emergency. The Line can also answer questions for callers concerned about a loved one.

Integral and interconnected parts of the Roadmap include same-day evaluation and referral to treatment, evening/weekend hours, timely appointments, and evidence-based treatment in person and via telehealth at designated Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs) throughout the Commonwealth. Staff can also follow up to ensure that the help they received was right for them.

CBHCs and other community partners provide urgent care as a better, more convenient community-based alternative to emergency departments.

DMH strives to ensure that mental health treatment and services are available at the earliest possible time a need is identified and are accessible to all. The reforms in the Roadmap provide the systemic and structural changes that will allow the Commonwealth to better realize the value and benefit of early identification and early intervention for emerging and existing behavioral health treatment needs.

EPIA AND ED DIVERSION

DMH has continued to take the lead in the Commonwealth's efforts to reduce emergency room boarding for individuals in need of psychiatric hospitalization. These efforts have primarily been through the Expedited Psychiatric Inpatient Admission (EPIA) initiative started in 2018, and now includes Emergency Department Diversion programs. During FY21, EPIA temporarily reduced the time for those boarding in emergency rooms to be escalated to DMH's attention and has now permanently reduced that time from 96 to 60 hours before escalation to DMH for assistance with psychiatric admission.

In FY23, EPIA helped 6,997 people to be placed in a psychiatric inpatient bed or back to the community with ongoing services. This number includes 1,970 youth under 18 years of age.

In addition to expediting placement, DMH continued to partner with hospitals and community-based behavioral health providers to scale up emergency department diversion programs for Commonwealth residents who have the capacity to be treated at home. At the end of January 2022, these behavioral health programs had provided services to 165 youth and 301 adults across 38 hospitals statewide, and DMH continues to actively expand the program.

In February 2022, MassHealth expanded its intensive crisis intervention services and in-home therapy services for youth. DMH and MassHealth's hospital emergency department diversion programs combined to relieve longstanding challenges with emergency department boarding that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, while also expediting behavioral health treatment for residents.

DMH continues to offer a number of additional treatments that allow individuals to remain in the community and to maintain positive connection with the additional support of friends and family and other natural supports.

Adult Clinical Community Services model (ACCS) were fully funded at \$360M in contracted services this year. ACCS provides clinical treatment for adults with serious mental health conditions and is fully integrated with the health care and employment delivery systems. In the

last fiscal year, ACCS served more than 11,100 individuals, and 90 percent of them were able to remain in the community without needing hospitalization, or other inpatient placements.

DMH currently provides Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) services to more than 1,300 adults in 19 programs across the state. PACT was funded at \$10M. PACT is an evidenced-based, community treatment model for individuals with serious mental illness who have needed a specialized approach to treatment that goes beyond traditional behavioral health programs or office-based interventions.

In March of 2022, DMH procured expanded adult PACT, with services that launched in the summer of 2022. Additionally, DMH continued to develop a youth PACT model, adapting the evidence-based model to serve youth exhibiting symptoms of serious emotional disturbance who have not been successfully served with traditional community-based treatments.

DMH clients were further supported in the community through clubhouses in FY23, which were funded at \$26.8M including \$2.2M in Human Services Transportation (HST) services, which continued to thrive and innovate throughout the pandemic. Annually, DMH clubhouses serve approximately 5,000 members, providing service flexibly on site and through remote methods based on members' preferences. Clubhouses maintained a strong emphasis on employment with 25 percent of clubhouse members employed as of December 2021. DMH built on this success by reprocurring Clubhouse services in FY23, strengthening our commitment to diversity and equity in services, and ensuring clubhouses have the flexibility to serve members in a variety of ways.

As the licensing authority for inpatient psychiatric units, DMH monitors the network to ensure quality of care and adequacy of supply to meet identified needs. While the pandemic often forced creative management of available beds in our in-patient settings, it also prompted DMH and its sister agencies in EOHHS to pursue expanded bed capacity through a series of incentives for providers.

After an initial drop in demand for inpatient psychiatric treatment early in the pandemic, COVID dramatically increased the existing need for additional psychiatric beds. Since June 2020, emergency department boarding increased by 200-400 percent as compared to the same month in the prior year and remains 2 to 3 times higher than it was pre-COVID.

Incentive funding through MassHealth lead to an increase inpatient psychiatric bed capacity in FY23. Providers receive both one-time funding for each new bed they bring online, as well as a substantial rate increase. More than 325 additional psychiatric beds were added during this fiscal year.

There are currently nearly 3,000 licensed acute psychiatric inpatient treatment beds across 65 locations. In addition to licensing inpatient units, DMH operates 32 acute psychiatric inpatient

treatment beds for adults in 2 locations in the Southeast Area and 633 adult inpatient continuing care beds across 6 locations (2 of which are co-located within DPH hospitals).

Beginning in the spring of 2020, COVID protocols forced DMH to reduce the number of beds at Lemuel Shattuck and Tewksbury hospitals to accommodate distancing and quarantining requirements. DMH is worked to replace those 30 lost beds from our operational capacity by opening space at the Worcester Recovery Center and Hospital (WRCH). In partnership with DCAMM, we renovated Allen Hall, formerly occupied by DYS and located in Westborough, for use as an adolescent locked, intensive residential treatment program (IRTP). Construction and technology were completed by summer 2022.

For youth ages 13-18 with the most significant behavioral health needs that require treatment in a secure setting, DMH contracts with the University of Massachusetts to operate two 15-bed units at the Worcester Recovery Center. DMH also provides treatment for youth in five 15-bed intensive residential treatment programs (IRTP) for youth ages 13-18, and one 12-bed clinically intensive residential treatment program in Western Mass. for youth ages 6-12.

Work is continuing on the expansion of our Recovery from Addiction Program (RAP). With Governor Baker and the Legislature's support in FY22, DMH began creating four new Section 35 treatment units for men on the grounds of Taunton State Hospital. The men's units have been added to the successful Women's Recovery from Addictions Program. The units are now up to full capacity as staff have been fully onboarded. Combined, the Recovery from Addictions Program total 120 beds (45 women and 75 men) in seven units, with 350 total FTEs.

As part of DMH's effort to provide appropriate treatment at moments of significant need in an individual's life, we have continued to offer Jail Diversion Programs to first responders and to expand our addiction services.

- Over \$14 million in grant funding was made available for Jail Diversion Programs (JDP) in FY2.
- 114 projects were funded through these grants.

Rental subsidies and supports to end homelessness also play a key role in DMH's ability to support residents at critical junctures in their lives.

In FY23, the total funding for the DMH Rental Subsidy Program was increased to \$22 million, serving over 2,200 clients.