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To:
Clerks of the Massachusetts Senate
Clerks of the House of Representatives
Executive Office for Administration and Finance
House Committee on Ways and Means
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Joint Committee on Mental Health
Joint Committee on Substance Use and Recovery
Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

**FY24 Legislative Report
Behavioral Health Trust**

Funded under Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023 | GAA: 4000-0054; \$192,000,000

Overview

Pursuant to Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023 this report provides a high-level summary of current and future Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) initiatives funded by the Behavioral Health Trust Fund. The Fund was established under the Acts of 2022 Chapter 77 and credited with \$192M in federal COVID-19 ARPA recovery funds for the purpose of “*addressing barriers to the delivery of an equitable, culturally competent, affordable and clinically appropriate continuum of behavioral health care and services.*” A Behavioral Health Advisory Commission comprised of 22 members with various backgrounds convened in FY23 to make recommendations on the disbursement of money in the Fund. The Majority of the Commission’s recommendations were aimed at growing, supporting, and sustaining the Commonwealth’s behavioral health workforce (inclusive of mental health and SUD/ODU roles) and includes loan forgiveness, scholarships, clinical supervision, and internship supports, peer support for workers, behavioral health workforce research and benchmarking, and the establishment of a Behavioral Health Workforce Center, among other initiatives.

The efforts laid out in this report represent a broad mix of open procurement, cross-agency collaboration, and cross-secretariat collaboration conducted in FY24 to realize the goals of the



Behavioral Health Trust Fund and Commission. The majority of Funds directed at the behavioral health workforce and behavioral health employer-providers that have not been distributed in FY24 will become publicly available in Fall 2024. EOHHS has filed language for line item 4000-0054 in a supplemental budget and plans to implement several Interdepartmental Service Agreements (ISA), contracts and programs in FY25 once authorized by the legislature.

Detail

<p>\$100,000,000</p>	<p><i>...to enhance an existing student loan repayment assistance program for health professionals providing mental and behavioral health care;...</i></p> <p>Executed an amendment to the existing 10-year Master Agreement between EOHHS and the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers (Mass League) to authorize the implementation of the Expanded Behavioral Health Professional Student Loan Repayment Program. The program is designed to provide student loan repayment to a variety of behavioral health professionals in exchange for a four-year part-time or full-time service commitment. Eligible Settings or Types of Services include: 1) a community health center; 2) a community mental health center; 3) an inpatient psychiatric hospital; 4) an acute care hospital; 5) outpatient treatment; 6) substance use disorder treatment; 7) assessment and treatment of children with co-occurring developmental needs; or 8) state or state-contracted programs or settings, including school-based behavioral health providers. The Mass League has designed an application and is working with their subcontractor to build out the application portal. They have begun creating materials for the program such as emails, website content, FAQ, etc. and will begin collecting applications for review in late summer 2024.</p>
<p>\$500,000</p>	<p><i>... a campaign to promote and bring awareness to the public about programs designed to bolster the behavioral health workforce...</i></p> <p>Funds will be administered by DMH in FY25 pending passage of the supplemental budget through the newly established Office of Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention upon completion of an Interdepartmental Service Agreement. EOHHS has designated the Department of Mental Health (DMH) as the host agency to support this Office, which was established by statutory requirement via Chapter 177 of the Acts of 2022. In June, DMH hired Dr. Funmi Aguocho to oversee the work of the Office as Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention.</p>
<p>\$700,000</p>	<p><i>...a public awareness campaign to promote the availability and utilization of a no-cost annual mental health wellness exam and other consumer protection provisions...</i></p> <p>Funds will be administered by DMH in FY25 pending passage of the supplemental budget through the newly established Office of Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention upon completion of an Interdepartmental Service Agreement. EOHHS has designated the Department of Mental Health (DMH) as the host agency to support this Office, which was established by statutory requirement via Chapter 177 of the Acts of 2022. In June, DMH hired Dr. Funmi Aguocho to oversee the work of the Office as</p>

	Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention.
\$25,000,000	<p><i>...for a scholarship program...</i></p> <p>An Interdepartmental Service Agreement will be executed between EOHHS and the Department of Higher Education in FY25 pending passage of the supplemental budget. The agreement will support certain eligible Massachusetts residents in completing behavioral health degrees on a part-time or full-time basis at eligible public and private Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) in Massachusetts. Scholarship recipients will commit to working in a behavioral health role in inpatient, outpatient, acute care, substance use treatment, community-based, or clinic-based settings, or for Massachusetts state organizations or organizations that are under contract with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. EOHHS has identified a need for more master’s level behavioral health workers in the Commonwealth and has further prioritized graduate-level behavioral health degrees and graduate-level behavioral health certificates for this program. Awards to eligible students will be prioritized in the following manner: a) students enrolled at eligible institutions in localities of highest need per the Advancing Health Equity in Massachusetts Priority Geographies; b) students who are culturally and linguistically diverse; and c) incumbent workers seeking career advancement in behavioral health. EOHHS has established a maximum award of \$25,000 per eligible student and a maximum employment service commitment of two years. Funds are anticipated to be available via eligible IHEs to students enrolled in the 2024-2025 and/or 2025-2026 academic years.</p>
\$25,000,000	<p><i>...to provide stipends to support unpaid clinical hours required for field placements, internships, apprenticeships and practicums necessary for completing educational requirements or obtaining certification or licensure;...</i></p> <p>An Interdepartmental Service Agreement is being executed between EOHHS and the Department of Higher Education in FY25 pending passage of the supplemental budget in the legislature. The agreement will provide cost of attendance support for eligible Massachusetts residents in completing unpaid behavioral health field placements, such as internships, apprenticeships, or practicums necessary for degree attainment in eligible behavioral health bachelor’s or master’s degree programs at eligible public and private Institutions of Higher Education in Massachusetts. Awards to eligible students will be prioritized in the following manner: a) students living within or completing field placements within Advancing Health Equity in Massachusetts Priority Geographies; b) students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. EOHHS has established a maximum award of \$20,000 per eligible student. Funds are anticipated to be available via eligible IHEs to students enrolled in the 2024-2025 and/or 2025-2026 academic years.</p>
\$20,000,000	<p><i>...to establish new, or enhance existing, clinical supervision of students pursuing degrees in behavioral health and behavioral health providers-in-training pursuing certification or licensure;...</i></p>

	<p>EOHHS is administering the behavioral health clinical supervision program in FY25 pending passage of the supplemental budget with support from a selected vendor whose quote was favorable evaluated as part of the RFQ to PRF76 for Support for Development, Planning, and Implementation of Healthcare Workforce Programs for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. The purpose of the RFQ, issued in April 2024, was for EOHHS to secure support from an approved state-wide vendor to support the effective and efficient execution of workforce programs for the secretariat. The behavioral health clinical supervision initiative is intended to be the first project under a multi-year contract currently being negotiated with the selected vendor. EOHHS anticipates that an application process for eligible behavioral health employer-providers will be issued in Fall 2024.</p>
<p>\$5,000,000</p>	<p><i>...shall be expended to the MASStrong Program to provide evidence-based and trauma-informed group peer behavioral health support to health care workers;...</i></p> <p>An Interdepartmental Service Agreement will be executed between EOHHS and the Center for Health Information Analytics (CHIA) in FY25 pending passage of the supplemental budget. Funds will be administered by CHIA's Betsy Lehman Center for Patient Safety through a contract with a vendor, Group Peer Supports (GPS), who currently runs the MASStrong program. The focus of MASStrong is to provide support to frontline home care and long-term care workers through small, peer led group sessions — prioritizing their resilience and well-being. These workers are primarily women of color, refugees, and immigrants and many do not speak English as a first language.</p>
<p>\$10,000,000</p>	<p><i>...for a bridge program to help students in kindergarten to grade 12, inclusive, to transition into the communities following an extended absence due to mental health crises;...</i></p> <p>An interdepartmental Service Agreement has been executed in FY24 between EOHHS and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) for the purpose of providing technical assistance and support for School-Based Bridge Programs by the Brookline Center's BRYT program. The BRYT (Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition) Program is designed to support students with SED/SMI who have missed significant amounts of school or are returning after absences due to hospitalization or out-of-home placement. Recent funding from the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and additional Behavioral Health (BH) Trust Funds have bolstered the BRYT initiative for K-12 students. DMH has allocated ARPA funds to provide technical assistance to eight schools, while the BH Trust Funds will support 25-30 more schools. This funding aims to focus on schools with high proportions of students at risk of dropping out, particularly from marginalized racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Implementation has begun and will continue through FY25.</p>
<p>\$3,000,000</p>	<p><i>...to assist mental and behavioral health professionals with 1-time training or practice costs including, but not limited to, exam preparation, license and certification fees and continuing education;...</i></p>

	<p>A multi-year Interdepartmental Service Agreement has been executed in FY24 between EOHHS and Department of Public Health (DPH) to implement key behavioral health workforce retention and support strategies, including providing eligible behavioral health workers with waivers for one-time costs associated with MA licensure, re-licensure, and certification in FY25 and FY26 (\$2.4M). Fee waivers will begin on July 1, 2025 and are anticipated to support approximately 5,000 workers a year. Additional funds will be used to operationalize the Unified Recovery and Monitoring Program (URAMP) within the DPH Bureau of Health Professions Licensure in FY25 and FY26. (\$600,000) URAMP provides voluntary continuing education and supports the return of licensed healthcare professionals to the workforce following mental health and substance use challenges.</p>
<p>\$500,000</p>	<p><i>... for a comprehensive study and analysis of rates paid for behavioral health services by both private and public payers and the adequacy of said rates to support the provision of equitable, quality behavioral health service...</i></p> <p>This behavioral health rates study is incorporated into an Interdepartmental Service Agreement between EOHHS and the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission (HPC). HPC will conduct the survey in collaboration with EOHHS, the Division of Insurance, and other stakeholders as needed and appropriate to deliver a report and analysis in FY25 pending passage of the supplemental budget in the legislature.</p>
<p>\$500,000</p>	<p><i>...to conduct a study of licensure and certification processes for the behavioral health workforce;...</i></p> <p>This behavioral health workforce study is incorporated into an Interdepartmental Service Agreement between EOHHS and the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission (HPC). HPC will conduct the study, which also includes a demographic analysis of the current behavioral health workforce, in collaboration with the Department of Public Health and other stakeholders beginning in FY25 pending passage of the supplemental budget in the legislature.</p>
<p>\$1,800,000</p>	<p><i>...for a behavioral health workforce development center...</i></p> <p>An Interdepartmental Service Agreement is being executed between EOHHS and Massachusetts Health Policy Commission (HPC) to establish a Behavioral Health Workforce Center within HPC. Guided by an Executive Director and advisory group comprised of government and industry stakeholders, Behavioral Health Workforce Center leadership will develop a plan to recruit, retain, and develop a diverse, experienced behavioral health workforce, and which can provide linguistically and culturally tailored care across the commonwealth, prioritizing rural and underserved communities. Annually, beginning in FY25, the Center will make public any recommendations on policies and strategies to meet the Commonwealth’s behavioral health workforce needs.</p>

