

January 2024



ASSOCIATION
FOR BEHAVIORAL
HEALTHCARE



We hope this message finds you well. As we embark on a new edition of our eUpdate, we're thrilled to welcome you to another round of engaging content and updates that matter. Thank you for being part of our community. Your feedback and suggestions are invaluable to us. Feel free to reach out and let us know what topics you'd like us to cover or if there's anything specific you'd like to see in future editions.

This Month's eUpdate

Every month, ABH compiles important information and resources to keep you updated and informed. Here is a glimpse of what you can expect in this month's eUpdate:

- [Celebrating 20 Years!](#)
 - [Happy New Year](#)
 - [ABH 2023 Salary Survey Report](#)
 - [ABH Issue Brief: Kids are Waiting--Children's Behavioral Health Services Crisis and Collapse](#)
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Celebrating 20 Years!



We wanted to take a moment to recognize the 20th anniversary of the eUpdate. The first eUpdate was created in a Word document as a way to touch base with our members and make sure we kept everyone informed about behavioral health at the local, state and national level.

20 years later, the eUpdate has gone through two authors and many design iterations, but the goal is the same. Happy reading!

Happy New Year



As we head into 2024, the Association for Behavioral Healthcare (ABH) team wishes you and your loved ones a Happy New Year!

Thank you for your membership, the important work that you do, and for the dedicated support we have received from you this past year. We look forward to our continued collaboration and success as we enter into 2024.

ABH 2023 Salary Survey Report

The Association for Behavioral Healthcare (ABH), in partnership with Gallagher Surveys, developed a salary and benefits survey that focused specifically on mental health and substance use disorder providers. The final product included extensive input and guidance from the ABH Human Resources Committee, the ABH Human Resources Salary Survey Subcommittee, and the ABH Senior Leadership Committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice. Thank you to the committee members who worked to develop and refine the survey and to the staff who developed and reported data that made this survey possible.

The results are now in and available for purchase. We anticipate that these results will be a great resource for members.

Survey Cost

As with past surveys, a significant discount will be given to ABH members who participated in the salary survey. The cost to purchase the survey is as follows:

- \$400 for ABH members who participated in the survey
- \$1400 for ABH members who did not participate, but who wish to purchase the survey

This survey is not available to non-members.

Purchasing Information

To purchase the Salary Survey results:

1. Please complete this [Salary Survey Purchasing Request Online Form](#). You will need to use your ABH Members-Only Portal Login credentials to access this form. If you do not have your credentials or need them for the first time, please contact Meg Socha at msocha@abhmass.org.
2. We are also requiring members to review and sign this [ABH Salary Survey Nondisclosure Agreement and Agreement to Pay](#). You may either upload it via the [Salary Survey Purchasing Request Online Form](#) or return it via email to Meg Socha at msocha@abhmass.org. You can expect the 2023 Salary Survey Report within 2 business days after we receive a signed agreement. The Report will be provided via email to the organizational CEO.

Important Note about Demographic Data

In consultation with the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Senior Leadership Committee, this year's salary survey again asked for staff demographic data. The final report includes baseline demographic data. Please note that the salary data is not tied to the demographics. These data are included for informational purposes only.

Questions?

If you have any questions, please contact Meg Socha at msocha@abhmass.org.

ABH Issue Brief: Kids are Waiting -- Children's Behavioral Health Services Crisis and Collapse



KIDS ARE WAITING Children's Behavioral Health Services Crisis and Collapse

Recently, ABH released survey findings showing that children with complex behavioral health needs are waiting as long as six months for services, and the number of children waiting for some services has increased by as much as 41% since 2022.

ABH surveyed 30 provider organizations that operate 208 sites across Massachusetts and served 15,540 children and adolescents from July 1, 2022, to May 31, 2023. These safety-net providers deliver an array of home and community behavioral health services for children known collectively as the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI).

The survey report, titled [*Kids Are Waiting: Children's Behavioral Health Services Crisis and Collapse*](#), found that families with MassHealth were waiting as long as 20.5 weeks for services and those with private insurance were waiting even more, as long as 26.5 weeks. The cause for these delays is primarily a 35% total position vacancy rate among the providers delivering these services. Sadly, the survey data showed there were 4,214 children on waiting lists for all CBHI services. The increase since 2022 in the number of children waiting for In-Home Therapy is the highest of any category, at 41%.

The soaring job vacancy rates at behavioral health providers, which result in part because state and private insurance reimbursement rates are not sufficient for recruiting and retaining clinicians, are leading to the closure of programs.

From Fiscal Year 2019 through the first 11 months of Fiscal Year 2023:

- 17 in-home therapy programs closed;
- 15 therapeutic mentoring programs closed; and
- Six in-home behavioral services programs closed.

For every 10 staff members that have left a position at a behavioral health program, only eight were hired. Clinical vacancy rates for some services run as high as 41%.

The report includes recommendations for state policymakers and health plan leaders to act, including:

1. Making immediate investments in the system through higher rates of reimbursement for services, greater funding for outpatient services, and the development of new programming that is culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse;
2. Continuing investments in education and training opportunities and creating a permanent workforce center;
3. Improving access for children with private health coverage by requiring health plans to indicate on member cards whether the plan is subject to state-mandated benefit laws, and an examination of insurance cost-sharing requirements for mitigation or elimination; and
4. Rebalancing health care spending toward behavioral health and primary care to address chronic and persistent underfunding of these services.

Early media coverage from the *Boston Globe* is [here](#) (paywall).

ABH wishes to thank our members that deliver CBHI and BHCA services for continuing to lift up the voices of families that you serve as well as for prioritizing the data reporting that resulted in this report.

January 2024 Committee Schedule

Friday, January 12

Children's Services, 10 a.m.
Corporate Compliance, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, January 16

OTP, 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, January 17

Quality and Outcomes, 10 a.m.

Thursday, January 18

RRS TSS, 10 a.m.

Friday, January 19

MID DUIL SOA, 10 a.m.

Friday, January 26

CBHI, 10 a.m.

ABH's Committees are the "grassroots" of our organization. To learn more about ABH's Committees, [click here](#).

MassHealth Mental Health Center Request for Information

MassHealth has released a [Mental Health Center Policy and Payment Reform Request For Information \(RFI\)](#) due on **January 31, 2023**. ABH is extremely pleased that MassHealth is engaging with stakeholders on the future of mental health centers as we know that mental health centers bring tremendous value to the Commonwealth as important points of access for individuals with public and private health coverage as well as serving as the engine for the behavioral health workforce.

ABH will be preparing a response on behalf of members, and we strongly encourage all MassHealth-contracted Mental Health Centers to submit individual responses as well. We will be soliciting feedback primarily through ABH Committees.

Again, we encourage all Community Mental Health Centers to consider submission of individual organization responses and to outreach with any questions, contributions, or reporting prior to submission. The [ABH Outpatient Brief](#) can be reviewed for recent data and recommendations.

2024 Massachusetts Loan Repayment Program (MLRP)

The application for the Massachusetts State Loan Repayment Program (MLRP) is **now open, as of December 6, 2023**.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) Health Care Workforce Center has announced the next round of applications for the Massachusetts Loan Repayment Program for Health Professionals (MLRP), a loan repayment program managed by the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers (MLCHC). MLRP is for health care professionals who commit to working full time or part time for two years in an eligible organization (up to \$25,000 per year for two years). This program is funded through a combination of state and federal funds.

[Click here for the application, program details, as well as information on how to apply.](#)

Please pay close attention to eligibility guidelines before applying for this program as only eligible applicants will be considered for funding.

Applications need to be postmarked no later than **Friday, January 19, 2024** and be **mailed** directly to the address listed below:

ATTN:

MLRP Workforce Program

Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, Inc.

40 Court Street, 10th Floor

Boston, MA 02108

Note: Only complete and eligible applications, submitted by mail will be reviewed. No other forms of submission will be accepted.

NatCon24



Don't forget to register for [NatCon24](#)! Your NatCon24 registration allows you to:

- Connect with 5,000+ peers from across the country, share experiences and leave with proven strategies for increasing your community impact.
- Hear from 500+ speakers representing all facets of health care – from policy influencers and medical directors to social workers, researchers, CEOs and clinicians.
- Choose from hundreds of solutions-driven sessions on topics like crisis response, rural health care, workforce and diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Engage 200+ exhibitors and sponsors offering tools and technologies to help you get more out of your mental health and substance use treatment services.
- Earn national and state-specific continuing education and continuing medical education credits by taking advantage of our diverse learning agenda.

- Enjoy a complimentary continental breakfast on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday; boxed lunch on Monday and Tuesday; and coffee breaks throughout the Conference.

Join us in St. Louis from April 15-17 for the largest conference in mental health and substance use treatment — [save your seat today](#)

Interesting Reads

- [Career Path Crumbling for Mental Health Clinicians](#). By Lydia Conley, ABH President/CEO. *Commonwealth Beacon*.
- [Researchers team up with mental health influencers to reach young people online](#). *NPR*.
- [Americans on Medicare now get better access to mental health care. Here's how](#). *NPR*.
- [Many people of color worry good health care is tied to their appearance](#). *Kaiser Health News*.

ABH Staff

[Click here](#) to learn more about ABH staff, and to access and download a staff directory.

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