

Gov. Baker highlights 8 years of strengthening access to behavioral health services in Massachusetts

“The Baker-Polito Administration today highlighted eight years of progress strengthening access to behavioral health services in Massachusetts at a ribbon cutting for a newly designated Community Behavioral Health Center (CBHC) in East Boston run by North Suffolk Community Services (formerly North Suffolk Mental Health Association). Opening in early January as part of the implementation of the Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform, twenty-five designated CBHCs across the Commonwealth will offer comprehensive, coordinated mental health care, substance use disorder treatment and community-based crisis intervention to all Massachusetts residents, regardless of ability to pay.

“Over the past eight years, our administration has collaborated with health care providers, medical professionals and our legislative colleagues to make sure Massachusetts treats behavioral health with the same importance as physical health,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “The implementation of the Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform is the latest step in those efforts, which have included historic investments in clinical programming, the addition of over 3,000 treatment beds and landmark mental health legislation.”

“It’s critical we provide residents and families with access to behavioral health services so they can lead healthier lives, and we are proud of our administration’s work to do just that over the past eight years,” said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. “These investments and initiatives will continue to make a big difference for residents who need access to these

services for years to come.”

“Since day one, this administration has made behavioral health a priority, and when we talk about health, it is whole health: physical and mental,” said Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders. “Through the Roadmap for Behavioral Health reform – including newly designated Community Behavioral Health Centers such as this one and the soon-to-launch Behavioral Health Help Line – we are creating a true front door to behavioral health care, so that every Massachusetts resident has access to high-quality behavioral health treatment, when and where they need it.”

As part of the implementation of the Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform, Community Behavioral Health Centers are launching in early 2023 along with other initiatives, including a new 24/7 Behavioral Health Help Line and strengthened community based crisis intervention services.

Baker-Polito Administration’s Record Strengthening Access to Behavioral Health:

Boosted Behavioral Health Investments: Since 2015, the Baker-Polito Administration has invested more than \$26.5 billion in behavioral health across multiple initiatives and state agencies: the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Department of Public Health (DPH), MassHealth, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA), and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC). The Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) budget signed by Governor Baker in July includes \$4.1 billion in behavioral health initiatives across these state agencies.

Increased Inpatient and Community Based Residential Services: Across the spectrum of behavioral health, the Administration has worked with providers to increase program capacity by more than 3,000 beds since taking office in 2015, ranging from inpatient treatment to supportive community residential services, including more than 500 additional inpatient

psychiatric beds.

Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform: In early 2021, the Administration launched the Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform, a multi-year blueprint that is based on listening sessions and feedback from nearly 700 individuals, families, providers and other stakeholders who identified the need for expanded access to treatment, more effective treatment, and improved health equity. The goal was to create a “front door” to treatment—a new, centralized service for people or their loved ones to call, text or walk in to get connected to mental health and addiction treatment. In addition to this front door, the Roadmap proposed reforms to make outpatient assessment and treatment more readily available through a number of changes.

Three major outcomes of the Roadmap are launching in the next several weeks:

- A network of 25 Community Behavioral Health Centers in communities across the state, designated and funded by the Administration, which will serve as an entry point for timely, high-quality and evidence-based treatment for mental health conditions and substance use disorders, including routine appointments, urgent visits, and
- 24/7 community-based crisis intervention as an alternative to hospital emergency departments.
- A new, 24/7 Behavioral Health Help Line, which will offer a single point of contact for residents to receive real-time support, initial clinical assessment, and connection to the right mental health and SUD evaluation and treatment, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. The phone and chat line will offer real-time clinical triage and service navigation in more than 200 languages to help individuals and families access the range of treatment for mental health and addiction offered in the Commonwealth, including outpatient,

urgent and immediate crisis intervention.

2022 Mental Health Legislation: In 2022, Governor Baker signed An Act Addressing Barriers to Care for Mental Health. This landmark mental health reform legislation takes several steps to strengthen behavioral health treatment and access. The legislation streamlines access to acute mental health treatment, expedites behavioral health care for youth and young adults, expands behavioral health services in schools, and requires mental health parity in insurance coverage.

ARPA Resources: The first ARPA legislation signed by Governor Baker in December 2021 included \$400 million for addiction treatment and related behavioral health services, workforce, and infrastructure. Last month, the Administration announced that it is utilizing ARPA funding to support a \$130 million program loan repayment program to support and retain the behavioral health and primary care workforce. The program is being administered in partnership with the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers.

MassHealth Waiver: This past fall, the Baker-Polito Administration received federal approval for its latest five-year Medicaid (MassHealth) Section 1115 Waiver. Valued at \$67 billion over five years, this new Waiver sustains and builds on previous efforts to strengthen access to behavioral health. It continues and strengthens the Accountable Care Organization model and Behavioral Health and Long-Term Services and Supports Community Partners programs, increasing expectations while making improvements based on lessons learned. The Waiver also supports the implementation of the Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform and invests \$43 million over five years in loan repayment and residency training to strengthen and diversify the primary care and behavioral health workforce serving MassHealth members.”