



ABH November Committee Meetings

Monday, November 8
Billing, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, November 9
ACCS, 2:30 p.m.

Friday, November 12
Children's Services,
10 a.m.
Corporate Compliance,
10 a.m.

Tuesday, November 16
OTP, 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, November 17
Quality & Outcomes,
10 a.m.

Thursday, November 18
Human Resources,
10 a.m.
RSS/TSS, 10 a.m.
BH CP, 10 a.m.

Friday, November 19
CBHI, 10 a.m.
MIDP/DUIL/SOA,
10 a.m.

Wednesday, November 26
DEI&J, 12 p.m.

ARPA Funding

The Collaborative – the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers, the Association for Behavioral Healthcare, the Children’s League of Massachusetts, and the Providers’ Council — recently testified before the Joint Committee on Ways and Means and the House Committee on Federal Stimulus and Census Oversight regarding the spending of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

As we are all too well aware, the pandemic has exposed the behavioral health system as inadequately resourced to meet an increased demand for services. Workforce shortages directly impact behavioral health services, creating long wait times, erecting barriers to program expansion, and forcing individuals into more acute settings because they cannot access care in their community. The current workforce crisis is the decades-long legacy of underfunding, reflected in inadequate rates paid to programs by the state. While the ARPA funds present an opportunity to lift and stabilize this sector in the short- and medium-term, it also affords our sector the time to permanently and sustainably work with the administration on a bridge to rates that support fair salaries. The Collaborative’s proposal for ARPA funding to improve workforce recruitment and retention includes:

- **\$174 million per year for five years to the human service workforce for enhanced pay and recruitment initiatives.**
 - ◊ This allocation represents \$5,000 per full-time human service worker. Funds may be used to provide supplemental payments to employed workers and/or to create hiring incentives.
 - ◊ This infusion would represent a foundation upon which to build a sustainable increase in rates through the state’s rate-setting process, in order to stabilize the sector in the long-term.
- **\$27 million over five years for the creation of a student loan repayment program designed to help ensure an educated and well-trained workforce.**
 - ◊ Loan repayment programs should be expanded beyond physicians, psychiatrists and other high-paying jobs, and be available to those working full-time and making under \$50,000.
 - ◊ This program could assist over 3,000 workers per year in repaying qualified student loans.
- **\$250,000 for a marketing campaign designed to attract unemployed and underemployed Massachusetts residents to careers in the human services sector.**

See Page 2 for how you can help!

Action Alert! ARPA Funding

As you read on page 1, ABH has joined The Collaborative to advocate for the investment of American Rescue Plan Act dollars into workforce recruitment and retention initiatives within the human service sector.

Nobody understands the depths of the current workforce crisis like you, so we are asking that you contact your state Senator and Representative to urge them to support The Collaborative asks before their Committee on Ways and Means (House Chair Aaron Michlewitz and Senate Chair Michael Rodrigues), as they deliberate spending proposals. While the experiences within your own programs are the most important points to stress, we have also developed a [fact sheet](#) for ease of sharing and referencing during your communications.

Please contact your local Senator and Representative as soon as possible to support:

- \$174 million per year for five years to the human service workforce for enhanced pay and recruitment initiatives.
- \$27 million over five years for the creation of a student loan repayment program designed to help ensure an educated and well-trained workforce.
- \$250,000 for a marketing campaign designed to attract unemployed and underemployed Massachusetts residents to careers in the human services sector.

Contact information for your local Senator and Representative can be found [here](#).

Behavioral Health Workforce Grant Opportunity

As a reminder, Commonwealth Corporation is now seeking applicants for Behavioral Health Workforce Grants. ABH strongly encourages members to reach out to their local WIB to apply.

If your organization is interested in receiving grant funding to address workforce needs, you are encouraged to review the RFP and reach out your local WIB to engage with them as they put together their application for funding. Employers should feel free to connect with more than one board if their organization provides services in several regions.

Questions regarding the RFP will be accepted in writing until October 15, 2021. All relevant questions will be responded to and posted on at <https://commcorp.org/available-funding/>.

Submission Due Date: October 27, 2021, by 5 PM EST. Applications will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis through the final submission due date.

Application materials can be found [here](#).

The primary WIB contacts for each of the 7 regions are:

MAHire Cape and Islands WIB; kara@masshire-capeandislandswb.com

MAHire Berkshire WIB; Heather@MassHireBerkshire.com

MAHire NorthShore WIB; msarris@masshire-northshorewb.com

MAHire Central MA WIB; turgeonj@masshirecentral.com

MAHire Hampden WIB; dcruse@massshirehcwb.com; pporter@massshirehcwb.com

MAHire Boston WIB; Ashley.Hazleton@bostonpic.org

MAHire Greater New Bedford WIB; Jim@masshiregreaternewbedford.com; and, Jacqueline@masshiregreaternewbedford.com

ABH COVID-19 Landing Page

ABH has created a COVID-19 resource page where we are collecting the guidance most relevant to ABH members:

<https://www.abhmass.org/newsroom/announcements/guidance-on-covid-19.html>

ABH's Salute to Excellence Award Winners!

Please join us in celebrating ABH's 2021 Virtual Salute to Excellence Award Winners!

Outstanding Leadership Award

Wiremu Kiwi'au Diaz

Vinfen

Tracy Desruisseaux

Spectrum Health Centers

Excellence in Service Transformation Award

Cape Cod Emergency Services Team

Bay Cove Human Services

Excellence in Best Practices Award

STaR Team

Clinical & Support Options (CSO)

Rising Leader Award

Courtney Furtado

Steppingstone, Inc.

Excellency in Advocacy and Engagement Award

Debra Flynn-Gonzalez

Gandara Center

Excellence in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Award

BAMSI Racial and Social Justice Committee

BAMSI

Excellence in Human Resources and Employee Relations Award

Laurie Connors

Beth Israel Lahey Behavioral Health Services

Excellence in Care Integration Award

Joel Berger

Eliot Community Human Services

Excellence in Youth Engagement and Support Award

Therapeutic Mentoring Team

Child & Family Services

Register below for this year's virtual Salute to Excellence where you will hear from special guest Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker, along with other surprise guest speakers. Please join us in congratulating our 2021 Salute to Excellence Awardees!

[REGISTER HERE!](#)

As always, we will have our annual raffle. Please note: You must be pre-registered and online at the time of the raffle selection to win. Raffle winners will be drawn periodically throughout the Salute to Excellence event. You must register by midnight on Wednesday, October 13th to be eligible for the raffle.

Mental Health Center Annual Reporting Deadline Extended

MassHealth has recently informed ABH that the deadline to submit an annual report has been extended until October 31, 2021, from the initial September 30th deadline. For more information, including the reporting template and submission instructions, please see [Mental Health Center Bulletin 31](#).

Behavioral Health Open Access

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation recently released a new report, *Opening the Door to Behavioral Health Open Access in Massachusetts*. This “report identifies organizations that operate open access today and highlights the approaches that have been most successful.” The report also includes policy recommendations and “keys to success.” While the report looks at a multitude of factors and components of open access, it does address the importance of adequate rates:

Across these models, with the exception of private pay, a persistent challenge is the reimbursement rate for behavioral health services and the resulting compensation for clinicians. It was the consensus of the organizations interviewed that current outpatient reimbursement rates in MassHealth (Massachusetts’ Medicaid program) and commercial insurance plans are insufficient to attract and retain a salaried full-time clinical staff necessary to meet the demand for services...It merits noting that among providers not accepting insurance, reimbursement rates are a key factor driving that decision. Addressing rates and types of payments for behavioral health services will be critical to enabling timely access to behavioral health services. (13)

Other key components to successful implementation of open access include leadership commitment to open access, fidelity to an effective open access model, staffing flexibility to facilitate open access, effective scheduling systems and strategies, and timely access to follow-up care,

To read the report, click [here](#).

Interesting Reads

- [Black Opioid Deaths Increase Faster Than Whites, Spurring Calls For Treatment Equity](#). NPR News.
- [Urgent Calls For Supervised Drug Consumption At State House Hearing](#). WBUR.
- [Mass. Locked Up People With Mental Illness For Decades. Now Advocates Want Their Stories Told](#). WBUR.
- [Labor Secretary Marty Walsh opens up about his sobriety as the nation faces addiction crisis during Covid-19 pandemic](#). CNN.

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