

CB13-2018, Behavioral Health Services
County Council Questions Dated March 5, 2018

1. As it relates to salary supplements for Mental Health Authority (MHA) employees moving to the Howard County Health Department (HCHD), how are benefits and pensions also effected?

MHA employees are not part of the county's pension system. MHA offers individual IRAs to employees. Currently, the County has a health insurance agreement with MHA. MHA employees may elect to participate in County health plans. Employees submit health claims to the County, the County pays the claims, then the County bills MHA quarterly based on a rate and participation schedule.

The four MHA employees converting to state employees will become part of the state's pension and benefit system. The one MHA employee converting to an employee of the Howard County Police Department will become part of the county's pension and benefit system.

2. Are there any downsides to merging MHA into HCHD? What, if anything, are we losing from making a change from a quasi-governmental agency to HCHD?

The primary concern raised by mental health stakeholders was that the voice of the mental health community might be diminished by there no longer being a standalone agency managing the County's mental health system. This concern was addressed by increasing the presence of consumers and family members of consumers on the Local Behavioral Health Advisory Board. In addition, membership to the county's Board of Health will increase by two members adding representation by a mental health professional and a substance use disorder professional.

Loss of a quasi-governmental agency means that County grants that the CSA distributes must go through the County's procurement process, which has a longer processing time. The County is taking steps to address this. The County is currently determining whether existing County grants that HCHD will now distribute qualify as a sole source. The County is also working with HCHD to ensure its grants management process will be prepared to administer these grants in the timely fashion that grantees in the past expect and need.

3. Were all stakeholders that might be impacted by this change involved in the process?

The public workgroup consisted of members that operate in the behavioral health space from the following non-County organizations:

- Howard County General Hospital;
- Horizon Foundation;
- Way Station;
- NAMI Howard County;

- On Our Own of Howard County;
- Grassroots; and,
- Department of Family and Children Services.

In addition to these organizations' participation on the work group, the Health Officer and I also met with the boards of NAMI Howard County and On Our Own of Howard County at their request. The County also offered to meet with the boards of the other organizations that had representation on the workgroup, and organizations that would like a briefing on integration.

4. Can you provide a comparison of how other jurisdictions in Maryland integrated mental health and substance use services compared to Howard County?

The table below shows all jurisdictions in Maryland that have merged their CSAs and LAAs. Of the 11 jurisdictions that have integrated, 8 jurisdictions have merged into the local health department. As the table indicates, many of these jurisdictions' CSAs and LAAs were already in the local health department but operated under separate divisions.

Montgomery County merged its CSA and LAA under the county's Department of Health and Human Services. St. Mary's County's CSA and LAA were in separate county agencies and merged into one agency. Baltimore City merged two non-profits that operated the CSA and LAA respectively into one non-profit, Behavioral Health System Baltimore.

The State is classifying Howard County as being midway through the process. All remaining jurisdictions are also pursuing integration, but are at earlier stages of the process.

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Jurisdiction	Originating CSA	Originating LAA	Organization Receiving Merged CSA/LAA
Allegany County	Health Department	Health Department	Health Department
Baltimore City	Non-profit	Non-profit	Behavioral Health System Baltimore (non-profit)
Baltimore County	Health Department	Health Department	Health Department
Carroll County	Health Department	Health Department	Health Department
Charles County	Health Department	Health Department	Health Department
Garrett County	Non-Profit	Health Department	Health Department
Montgomery County	County Gov't	County Gov't	County Gov't
Prince George's County	County Gov't	Health Department	Health Department
St. Mary's County	County Gov't	County Gov't	County Gov't
Wicomico County	Health Department	Health Department	Health Department
Worcester County	Non-Profit	Health Department	Health Department