

# Maryland Behavioral Health Coalition

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December 18, 2017

Dennis R. Schrader  
Office of the Secretary  
Maryland Department of Health  
201 West Preston Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201-2399

Dear Secretary Schrader:

We write to share our support for the Behavioral Health Administration's Outcomes Measurement System (OMS), and to ensure you are aware there is support within the advocacy community for this system. The OMS collects important data about the delivery and outcome of behavioral health services.

Stakeholders participated in an October meeting with representatives from Medicaid and the Behavioral Health Administration where issues related to the data collection process within the OMS were raised. It was a productive conversation. Participants voiced support for the OMS, suggested possible modifications to OMS procedures, requested additional opportunities to discuss data collection, and departmental staff committed to establishing a workgroup to address these and broader data concerns.

We have gotten to an important turning point with respect to the use of data to transform health care. The importance of data-driven care and the use of measurement-based care in behavioral health was a remote concept in the field just a few years ago. Today we are in a very different place, and the fact that stakeholders and government have collectively embraced the goal of building and improving accountable data systems is huge. These efforts both improve outcomes for the public and ensure efficient use of scarce resources. We strongly urge that behavioral health data be required across the system of care, regardless of whether the services take place in a psychiatrist's office or a primary care provider's.

We hope the November meeting of the data workgroup, which was abruptly canceled, will soon be rescheduled, and we want to assure you that we have no interest in dismantling the OMS system that the Behavioral Health Administration has invested significant resources in creating. We look forward to supporting your efforts to infuse a measurement-based care approach to service delivery that is practical, reliable, efficient, transparent and useful across the broad range of participants in our health care system, from government funders and regulators, to insurers, providers and end users of the system.

Establishment of outcome measurement tools has lagged behind in the behavioral health field due to the unique characteristics of these illnesses. However, significant advances have occurred in recent years and the OMS is a solid foundation from which to build, providing a rich

trove of eleven years of historical data. The collection of OMS and related data is also tied to nearly \$40 million in yearly federal block grant funding for mental health and substance use disorder services. Like any other information technology, there is room for improvement, but we stand ready to work with your department to identify and address any challenges to help this valuable tool evolve in a changing environment.

Thank you for your attention, and please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Arundel Lodge  
Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc.  
Baltimore Jewish Council  
Behavioral Health System Baltimore  
Catholic Charities Family Services Division  
Chesapeake Voyagers, Inc.  
Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland  
Cornerstone Montgomery  
Family Services, Inc.  
Good Samaritan Hospital – Division of Psychiatry  
Healthy Harford, Inc.  
Jewish Community Services  
Key Point Health Services  
Maryland Association of Behavioral Health Authorities  
Maryland Behavioral Health Network  
Maryland Coalition of Families  
Maryland Coalition on Mental Health and Aging  
Maryland Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.  
Maryland Psychological Association  
Maryland Psychiatric Society  
Mental Health Association of the Eastern Shore  
Mental Health Association of Maryland  
NAMI Maryland  
NAMI Metro Baltimore  
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Maryland Chapter  
On Our Own of Maryland  
Pro Bono Counseling Project  
Prologue, Inc.

cc: Barbara Bazron, Ph.D, Deputy Secretary for Behavioral Health  
Tricia Roddy, Director, Health Care Financing Office of Planning  
Susan Tucker, Executive Director, Health Care Financing Office of Health Services